

**THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT AUSTIN
SCHOOL OF SOCIAL WORK**

Course Number:	SW387R1	Instructor:	Allyson Jervey, LCSW
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Semester:	Spring 2014	Phone:	(512) 663-5870
Meeting Time:	Mondays 2:30-5:30PM	Office:	SSW 3.104A
Meeting Place:	SSW 2.122	Office Hours:	Mondays 1:15-2:15 and by appointment

**LOSS AND GRIEF: INDIVIDUAL, FAMILY AND CULTURAL
PERSPECTIVES**

I. STANDARDIZED COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course will give students an opportunity to explore and understand their perceptions and beliefs of death and dying and how individual cultural differences influence that experience and prepare them for working with clients on grief and loss.

II. STANDARDIZED COURSE OBJECTIVES

By the end of the semester, students should be able to:

1. Demonstrate an understanding of the cultural factors involved in grief and loss.
2. Identify social work values and ethics involved in grief work.
3. Demonstrate a basic working knowledge of grief reactions experienced by children, adults, and elderly within a cultural context.
4. Demonstrate an increased awareness of their own grief reactions and how this awareness can help them to develop skills and tools in grief work.
5. Demonstrate an ability to manage feelings of personal loss and client needs in a healthy way.

III. TEACHING METHODS

This course is designed to include a variety of teaching/learning methodologies to achieve the course objectives. These activities may include reading, writing, discussion, lecture, guest speakers, film, in-class group activities, student presentations, self-reflection, and community

experience.

IV. REQUIRED READINGS

Pomeroy, E., & Garcia, R. (2008). *The Grief Assessment and Intervention Workbook: A Strengths Perspective*. Brooks Cole.

Additional readings will be assigned in class.

V. CLASSROOM REQUIREMENTS

1. **Participation/Attendance:** Punctuality, attendance and quality of contribution (demonstrated by student preparation level and active participation in discussion and presentations) will determine this portion of the grade. Students are expected to **complete the readings prior to class** and should be well prepared to participate in discussions and experiential learning assignments. Failure on the part of the student to demonstrate through class discussion comprehension of the material (or at a minimum, a hearty attempt at understanding) will be considered in assigning the final grade. Punctuality and regular attendance are imperative and are one of the many important standards of professional behavior. Class will begin promptly at 2:30 and end at 5:15. Students are allowed **one excused absence**. A student is considered absent if he arrives more than 10 minutes late to class, leaves early, or is unable to come to class. Any absences beyond the first will result in a reduction of the attendance grade by one letter grade. If a student is going to be absent, efforts should be made to contact the professor in advance. Students are responsible for any material missed due to absence.
2. **Loss History Timeline/Personal Reflection**
2 parts: Loss time-line and written reflection
Detailed instructions are attached to this syllabus
3. **Cultural Variations/Group Presentation**
45-minute group presentation to the class examining a culture's influence on expression of illness, loss and grief
Detailed instructions are attached to this syllabus
4. **Assessment and Referral Paper**
Detailed instructions are attached to this syllabus

VI. COURSE GRADING CRITERIA

Participation/Attendance.....	25 %
Loss History Timeline/Personal Reflection.....	25 %
Cultural Variations/Group Presentation.....	25 %
Assessment and Referral Paper.....	25 %

GRADUATE GRADING SCALE

94.0 and Above	A
90.0 to 93.999	A-
87.0 to 89.999	B+
84.0 to 86.999	B
80.0 to 83.999	B-
77.0 to 79.999	C+
74.0 to 76.999	C
70.0 to 73.999	C-
67.0 to 69.999	D+
64.0 to 66.999	D
60.0 to 63.999	D-
Below 60.0	F

Grades are assigned based on the following criteria:

A grade of “A” is given for outstanding work that engages course materials with original thought and creativity, or a mastery of technical skills.

A grade of “B” is given for doing all of the work well.

A grade of “C” is given for meeting all course requirements.

To obtain a high grade, students must find the time to complete assignments in a way that **integrates and extends** readings, lectures, classroom discussions, and your own critical perspective on the topic.

VII. CLASS POLICIES

- 1. Professional Conduct in Class:** Social work practitioners respect others, and the classroom offers students an opportunity to practice interacting with a professional demeanor and mutual respect. This behavior includes exchanges with the professor and classmates—in person, by e-mail or telephone; arriving to class on time; being prepared to participate in the class discussion; and showing respect for one another’s opinions. We share the class as a time to learn in a safe and nonjudgmental environment. Here, we will be exposed to diverse ideas and opinions, and we will not

always, nor should we, agree with the ideas expressed by others. Differences in values, opinions, and feelings of class members and guest speakers will be celebrated and respected. Disrespect toward others is not tolerated and will be handled directly and in the context in which it occurs.

2. **Late Assignments/Incompletes:** Assignments are to be handed in at the beginning of class on the designated due date. If a due date presents a problem, see me *in advance*, and I will consider negotiating a different due date. Otherwise, assignments turned in after class starts will be considered late. Three (3) points per day (including weekends) will be deducted for late assignments except in the case of extreme emergencies and only with the instructor's permission. Incompletes for the course will only be given in the event of circumstances beyond the student's control.
3. **Writing Assignments:** The ability to write in a professional manner is very important for social workers, particularly in settings where they work as members of interdisciplinary teams. Written work must be typed, edited for grammatical, spelling and typographical errors. Work will be graded based on the American Psychological Association (APA-6th edition) guidelines for references and citations.
4. **Course evaluation:** A mid-semester and end of semester course evaluation will be conducted and input considered for course adjustments. Student feedback is important and welcome. Students are encouraged to be assertive, function as team members, and provide feedback about the course. This can be done during office hours, by phone, by email or by appointment as may be convenient and comfortable for the student.
5. **Class performance:** If you are concerned about your grade in this class, I am willing to work with you to help improve your course grade prior to the end of the semester. Final grades assigned in the course are not negotiable.
6. **Confidentiality:** Learning about grief counseling can raise emotional issues and sometimes involves self-disclosure. The instructor and classmates have the ethical responsibility to see that differences in values, opinions, and feelings of class members and guest speakers will be respected and that an emotionally safe class environment is maintained. Complete confidentiality is expected. All NASW Code of Ethics values will be upheld.
7. **Special Accommodations for Students with a Disability:** Any student with a documented disability (physical or cognitive) who requires academic accommodations should contact the Services for Students with Disabilities area of the Office of the Dean of Students at 471-6259 (voice) or 471-4641 (TTY for users who are deaf or hard of hearing) as soon as possible to request an official letter outlining authorized accommodations. Present this letter to the instructor at the beginning of the semester so that needed accommodations can be discussed. The student should remind the professor of any testing accommodations no later than five business days before an exam. For more information, visit <http://www.utexas.edu/diversity/ddce/ssd/>.
8. **Policy on Religious Holy Days:** A student who is absent from a class or examination, or who will need a different due date for assignments due to observance of a religious holy day, may complete the work missed within a reasonable time after the absence or delay, if proper notice has been given. By UT policy, notice of the dates the student will be absent must be given at least fourteen days prior to the classes scheduled. For religious holy days that fall within the first two weeks of the semester, notice should be given on the first day of the semester.

9. **The University of Texas Honor Code:** The core values of The University of Texas at Austin are learning, discovery, freedom, leadership, individual opportunity, and responsibility. Each member of the university is expected to uphold these values through integrity, honesty, trust, fairness, and respect toward peers and community.
10. **Policy on Scholastic Dishonesty:** Students are encouraged to study and work together; however, all independent work is expected to reflect your own work and to conform to rules of scholastic honesty as described in the General Information Bulletin of The University of Texas at Austin. Students who violate University rules on scholastic dishonesty are subject to disciplinary penalties, including the possibility of failure in the course and/or dismissal from the University. Since such dishonesty harms the individual, all students, and the integrity of the University, policies on scholastic dishonesty will be strictly enforced. For further information, students may refer to the web site of the Student Judicial Services, Office of the Dean of Students (<http://www.utexas.edu/depts/dos/sjs>).
11. **Use of E-Mail for Official Correspondence to Students:** Email is recognized as an official mode of university correspondence; therefore, students are responsible for reading their email for university and course-related information and announcements. Students are responsible for keeping the university informed about changes to their e-mail address. Students should check their e-mail regularly and frequently—daily, but at minimum twice a week—to stay current with university-related communications, some of which may be time-sensitive. Students can find UT Austin’s policies and instructions for updating their e-mail address at <http://www.utexas.edu/its/policies/emailnotify.php>.
12. **Behavior Concerns Advice Line (BCAL):** If students are worried about someone who is acting differently, they may use the Behavior Concerns Advice Line to discuss by phone their concerns about another individual’s behavior. This service is provided through a partnership among the Office of the Dean of Students, the Counseling and Mental Health Center (CMHC), the Employee Assistance Program (EAP), and The University of Texas Police Department (UTPD). Call 512-232-5050 or visit <http://www.utexas.edu/safety/bcal>.
13. **Emergency Evacuation Policy:** Occupants of buildings on The University of Texas at Austin campus are required to evacuate buildings when a fire alarm is activated. Alarm activation or announcement requires exiting and assembling outside. Familiarize yourself with all exit doors of each classroom and building you may occupy. Remember that the nearest exit door may not be the one you used when entering the building. Students requiring assistance in evacuation shall inform their instructor in writing during the first week of class. In the event of an evacuation, follow the direction of class instructors. Do not re-enter a building unless given instructions by the following: Austin Fire Department, The University of Texas at Austin Police Department, or Fire Prevention Services office.
14. **Policy on Social Media and Professional Communication:** Public social networks are not private. Even when open only to approved or invited members, users cannot be certain that privacy will exist among the general membership of sites. If social work students choose to participate in such forums, please assume that anything posted can be seen, read, and critiqued. What is said, posted, linked to, commented on, uploaded, subscribed to, etc., can be accessed and archived, posing potential harm to professional

reputations and prospective careers. Social work students who use social media (i.e. Facebook, Twitter, etc.) and other forms of electronic communication (i.e. blogs, etc.) must be mindful of how their communication may be perceived by clients, colleagues, faculty, and others. Social work students are expected to make every effort to minimize material which could be considered inappropriate for a professional social worker in training. Because of this, social work students are advised to manage security settings at their most private levels and avoid posting information/photos or using any language that could jeopardize their professional image. Students are asked to consider the amount of personal information posted on these sites and are obliged to block any client access to involvement in the students' social networks. Client material should not be referred to in any form of electronic media, including *any* information that might lead to the identification of a client or compromise client confidentiality in *any* way. Additionally, students must critically evaluate any material that is posted regarding community agencies and professional relationships, as certain material could violate the standards set by the School of Social Work, the Texas Code of Conduct for Social Workers, and/or the NASW Code of Ethics. Social work students should consider that they will be representing professional social work practice as well as the University of Texas at Austin School of Social Work program while in the classroom, the university community, and the broader area communities.

15. **Safety:** As part of professional social work education, students may have assignments that involve working in agency settings and/or the community. As such, these assignments may present some risks. Sound choices and caution may lower risks inherent to the profession. It is the student's responsibility to be aware of and adhere to policies and practices related to agency and/or community safety. Students should notify the professor regarding any safety concerns.

VIII. COURSE OUTLINE (TENTATIVE)

January 13

Topics:

Introduction to the Course:

Review Syllabus

Introductions

Defining Grief and Loss

Discuss assignment: Loss History Graph/Personal Reflection

January 20

*******Martin Luther King Day—No class*******

January 27

Topics:

Theoretical Perspectives--Theories of Grief and Loss

Overview of Attachment Theory and Its Relationship to Grief

Practice Models--Frameworks for Coping with Loss

Small Group Work: Loss Timeline

Readings:

Pomeroy and Garcia (2008). Chapter 1: Understanding Grief and Loss – An Introduction
Chapter 3: Expected Grief Experience in Adults
Chapter 4: Complex Grief in Adults

February 3 ***LOSS HISTORY TIMELINE/PERSONAL REFLECTION DUE*******

Topics:

Factors Influencing Reactions to Loss
Normal versus Pathological Grief

Readings:

Rando, T. (1993). Chapter 1: Introduction. In *Treatment of complicated mourning*. Champaign, IL: Research Press.
Rando, T. (1993). Chapter 2: A Perspective on Loss, Grief and Mourning. In *Treatment of Complicated Mourning*. Champaign, IL: Research Press

February 10

Topics:

Children and Adolescents Facing Grief and Loss

Readings:

Pomeroy and Garcia (2008) Chapter 5: Grief Reactions in Children and Adolescents.

February 17

Topics:

Grief in Families
The Elderly and Loss

Readings:

Pomeroy and Garcia (2008) Chapter 6: Grief Reactions in the Older Adult Population and
Chapter 7: Grief Reactions and Special Considerations.

February 24

Topics:

Terminal and Chronic Illness/The “Good” Death
Hospice/Hospitals/Medical Perspectives
End of Life Decisions

Readings:

TBA

March 3

Topics:

HIV and AIDS
Disenfranchised Grief
Mid-Term Evaluation

Readings:

TBA

March 10

*******Spring Break—No class*******

March 17

Topics:

Religious and Spiritual Perspectives of Death and their Relationship to Grief
Social Support/Support Groups
 Responding to the Unique Needs of Different Populations

Readings:

TBA

March 24

Topics:

Grief/Loss and Specific Situations/Populations

Readings:

TBA

March 31

Topics:

2 Cultural Variations/Group Presentations

Readings:

None

April 7

Topics:

2 Cultural Variations/Group Presentations

Readings:

None

April 14

Topics:

1 Cultural Variations/Group Presentation

Readings:

None

April 21

Topics:

The funeral industry
Preparations for death

Readings:

TBA

April 28

****** Assessment and Referral Paper Due******

Topics:

Transcendence, Transformation and Hope
Care of Self/Personal Awareness Revisited
Course Wrap Up and Evaluation

Readings:

Pomeroy and Garcia (2008): Chapter 8: Practice Implications for the Professional.
TBA

Assignment #1
Loss History Timeline/Personal Reflection

Due Date: Monday, February 3, 2014

GOAL: The purpose of this assignment is to assist students in developing an awareness of the many faces of loss, and the very unique, personal and changing responses each of us has to loss throughout our lifespan. It is critical that we recognize the ways in which our own experiences and style of dealing with loss influence our clinical practice. Understanding your attitudes, values, and reactions surrounding loss, and responding to remaining grief issues and unfinished business will be an important part of the reflection that you do to prepare for your work with grieving clients.

Maximum length: 5-6 double-spaced pages (excluding loss history timeline)
Please label each section of the paper with its corresponding heading.

Part I: Loss History Timeline as an Assessment Tool

Considering the broad definition of loss discussed in class, construct a loss history timeline that represents the loss events in your life. On an 8.5" x 11" piece of unlined paper, draw a timeline lengthwise on the paper. This timeline represents your life span up to your current age. Label the time line with the various losses you have experienced throughout your lifetime (both death and non-death losses).

Indicate:

1. Your age at the time of each loss and your age now
2. Nature of the loss: move, pet death, parents divorced, etc.

You may have had losses that you choose not to disclose. The main goal is to learn to use the tool while thinking about how the losses in your life influence your clinical practice with individuals who are dealing with issues of grief and loss.

If you like, you may be creative by adding symbols or graphics or anything else! Use anything that you think will add meaning to this assessment tool. This is not required, but is encouraged.

Part II: Autobiographical Reflection on Your Losses

Part IIa: Personal Style for Dealing with Loss

1. What losses have you experienced that you would consider significant? What determines significance for you?
2. How did you respond to/cope with your losses? How did your personality and learned coping strategies affect your response to loss, positively and negatively? What patterns do you notice as you reflect on your response to various life losses?

3. How have the following influenced your coping style:
 - people around you?
 - your cultural background, ethnicity, religion?
 - your personal values, attitudes, and beliefs?
4. How did the earlier loss experiences in your life impact your responses to later losses?
5. How does your loss history impact your life choices today?

Part IIb: Impact of Personal Experience on Clinical Practice

1. How do you think that personal loss experiences (or the absence of them) have influenced your comfort level in working with others who are dealing with issues of grief and loss?
2. How might your coping style (related to loss) influence the way you work with others?
3. How else might your experiences have an impact on your work?
 - Do you think your experiences will help you in your work?
 - Do you think your experiences might hinder your work in some way?

Part III: Potential Challenges or Dilemmas

Based upon your experiences or your personal belief system:

- Are there any specific issues or situations that might be challenging or difficult for you?
- Identify any value-oriented or ethical dilemmas related to grief and loss issues that may arise in your work.

Part IV: Coping Strategies/Identification of Resources

Identify coping strategies and/or resources that could assist you in dealing with the dilemmas or challenges identified in Part III.

Rubric for Loss History Timeline/Personal Reflection

- 95-100%** Demonstrates exceptional insight related to the impact of losses, patterns of personal response, and the ways in which this history will influence work as a social worker in this field. Paper is written in a professional manner demonstrating proficiency in written communication skills.
- 90-94%** Demonstrates helpful insights related to loss history, patterns of response, and it's impact on life and work. Proficiency in written communication is demonstrated.
- 80-89%** Gives a thorough timeline of losses, both death and non-death, offers a good review of these losses and any response patterns, with some insights on the impact of this on life and work. Proficiency in written communication is demonstrated.
- 70-79%** Offers a complete timeline of losses with limited review of response to these losses and a general explanation of how losses impact life and work. Written presentation of thoughts is poorly organized and contains grammatical and/or mechanical errors.
- 60-69%** Offers a loss timeline including death losses only, provides some description of response to these losses, little or no insight related to the impact of these losses in life or in work. Poorly written with numerous grammatical and mechanical errors.
- 50-59%** Offers a very sketchy timeline including death losses only, vague description of response to loss and little discussion of current impact or professional impact as a result of these losses. Poorly written.
- 49%** Does not contain the required content of the assignment. Poorly written.

Assignment #2 Cultural Variations/Group Presentation

GOALS:

- 1) To encourage you to seek information and understanding about issues related to illness, health, grief and loss in a culture/community different from your own.
- 2) To remind you that your cultural background can influence your perception of other cultures' expressions of illness, grief, and loss.
- 3) To provide a forum for the class to benefit from the information and knowledge that you have gained.

Part I:

Form a group of 2-3 students to work collectively on this assignment. You will be required to meet outside of class to complete the assignment and will receive a grade as a group. Group members will decide how to divide the assignment as well as how to divide responsibilities for the class presentation.

Identify a population/community of interest that differs from your own backgrounds (i.e., different racial or ethnic heritage; different religious or spiritual background).

Part II:

Identify a member of the community that you have selected who can be interviewed for 30-60 minutes to facilitate your understanding of this population.

Part III:

Research the beliefs, values, customs and rituals of the members of your chosen group regarding the following:

a) beliefs, values, and practices related to:

- * illness and medical care
- * health and healing
- * euthanasia, suicide
- * death and the process of dying
- * the afterlife, spiritual beliefs

b) practices, customs and rituals following a death

c) cultural "norms" regarding grief (expression, duration, rituals)

d) societal and historical issues for the cultural group you are addressing

e) current social work literature discussing common issues and concerns for this group

You may want to reflect on geographic or generational differences and issues of acculturation and social justice. Remember to use cultural humility throughout—recognizing that your

cultural/ethnic/spiritual background will inform your understanding of this culture.

Part IV:

In addition to illness and death-specific beliefs and practices, discuss other attitudes, beliefs, values within this culture that may influence your social work interactions with members of this cultural group (i.e., attitudes about seeking help, comfort with disclosure of personal information, etc.). How do social work values and ethics inform your work with this group?

Part V:

Re-contact your interviewee and share with her your research findings. Ask her to reflect upon this information and its relevance (or not) to her specific life experiences. The goal is not to have perfect agreement but to integrate the academic research with real life experiences. Each interviewee is the expert in her own life and culture. This second conversation may result in changes in your presentation so allow enough time before your scheduled date to do so.

You are required to hand in a detailed written outline of the information, including references. The outline should have enough information on it to communicate your key points in this presentation. Follow the content outline from the assignment. Bring copies of your outline and handouts to distribute to the class.

Include a list of references or sources of information in APA format. Include the name of the person you interviewed, telephone number, and agency or organizational affiliation (if relevant). Also, list the dates you interviewed him.

As always, you are encouraged to be creative with this assignment! Feel free to include photography, artwork, poetry, popular culture, videos, food, visual aids, music or anything that will illustrate your points about the culture that you are researching. Each group will have one hour for its presentation.

Assignment #3 Assessment and Referral Paper

GOALS:

- 1) To identify and describe the distinct features associated with a particular kind of loss
- 2) To identify potential warning signs associated with complicated grief for that particular type of loss
- 3) To become familiar with the range of resources which are available for use with clients experiencing losses of that nature

PROCESS: Identify a grief/loss event of interest.

PRODUCT: Using the following headings and guidelines, you will produce a paper 5-6 pages long. You will use course materials and other empirical and anecdotal (memoirs, essays, blogs) literature (at least 7 references) to inform your responses. You will create a reference list or bibliography page.

Section I. Loss Event and Rationale

Identify the loss event that you have selected for this assignment.

- a) Based upon the literature (and perhaps your personal or professional experience), describe the elements of this loss, as well as the possible secondary losses associated with it.
- b) Discuss the importance and relevance of this topic for social work practice. How common is it? How can social workers make a difference in the lives of those experiencing this grief or loss event? Why is social work a logical discipline to assist clients who are experiencing this grief or loss event? Think about the values and philosophies underlying social work practice as well as social work's mission.
- c) Write about why you chose this particular kind of loss. Does it hold personal or professional interest for you? Why?

For Sections II and III, please list or "bullet" the responses rather than writing about them in sentence/paragraph format.

Section II. Distinctions Specific to the Loss

Identify the key distinctions and/or difficulties of this loss. This section should be a list of what someone who was going through this particular kind of loss might anticipate in the way of internal responses, and possibly reactions from others, to the loss. You should have 7-10 items in your list. You may have explanatory text at the beginning or end of your list.

Section III. **Warning Signs of Complicated Grief**

This section will be a list of 5-10 indicators (specific to this particular kind of loss) of the possible need for professional help. You may have explanatory text at the beginning or end of your list.

Section IV. **Potential Referral Resources**

a) Based upon the literature (and perhaps your personal or professional experience), list potential service-related and resource-related needs (consider immediate needs as well as longer term needs).

b) Consider resources that might be useful to a client dealing with this loss event. Then, create a mini-directory with *at least one* resource in each of the following categories that might be appropriate as a referral resource to address the loss event you have chosen:

- 1) a community or national agency or organization—briefly describe the grief or loss-related services they provide;
- 2) a local support group (based in the community or online); and
- 3) educational materials (books, videotapes, pamphlets, online information).

Include enough information about each resource that a client could access the resource if desired (i.e., copy of the resource or information about how to obtain it; name of contact person and telephone number, Web site address, etc).