

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

Course Number:	393R18	Instructor:	Allyson Jervey, LCSW
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Semester:	Fall 2014	Phone:	(512) 663-5870
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Meeting Place:	SSW 2.112	Office Hours:	By appointment

GRIEF COUNSELING

I. STANDARDIZED COURSE DESCRIPTION

The framework for this course involves theories of grief and loss, assessment, and intervention with children, adolescents, adults, and families. The interplay between normal grief and bereavement, and clinical syndromes is analyzed for the purpose of developing empirically based interventions grounded in social work values and an ethical decision making process. Childhood, adolescence, adulthood and aging, as distinct life stages, require different knowledge and skills to assess and treat varied grief reactions. Students will develop an advanced understanding of the grief process experienced by people from diverse backgrounds, affirming and respecting their strengths and differences. This course is designed to help students engage clients in appropriate working relationships, and to identify needs, resources and assets for coping with grief reactions. Students will examine, in depth, their own responses and reactions to grief work.

II. STANDARDIZED COURSE OBJECTIVES

Upon completion of this course, students will be able to:

1. Demonstrate an in-depth understanding of the concept of loss and its implications for individuals throughout the life span;
2. Demonstrate the ability to assess, through empirical means, the physical and psychological responses to loss (both typical and atypical), coping mechanisms, and available support systems as they pertain to individuals and intergenerational families;

3. Demonstrate an advanced clinical knowledge of the relationship between adaptive mechanisms and counseling strategies for the grief processes of children, adolescents, adults, and elders as they relate to the strengths, capacities and resources of those individuals and families;
4. Demonstrate the ability to adapt an assessment model of normal and traumatic grief to reflect an understanding of persons from diverse backgrounds, including (but not limited to) race, ethnicity, culture, class, gender, sexual orientation, religion, physical or mental ability, age, and national origin;
5. Demonstrate an ability to evaluate outcomes and effectiveness of grief interventions;
6. Demonstrate advanced knowledge of social work values and the ethical decision making processes as they relate to ethical dilemmas in grief work and practice;
7. Identify and evaluate counselor loss and grief, burnout, and healthy adaptation.

III. TEACHING METHODS

A variety of teaching methods will be used to aid in student mastery of theoretically-grounded, advanced practice skills in grief counseling methods, including: reading, writing, lectures, class discussions, case examples, video presentations, role plays/demonstrations, and guest speakers with information addressing specific grief situations, particular types of interventions, and diverse populations. Self-awareness in relation to grief counseling will be stressed in both written assignments and in class discussion. Teaching and learning will be collaborative and interactive and student participation is expected.

IV. REQUIRED TEXTS

O'Rourke, Meghan (2011). *The Long Goodbye*. New York: Riverhead Books.

Pomeroy, Elizabeth and Garcia, Renee Bradford (2009). *The Grief Assessment and Intervention Workbook*. Belmont, CA: Brooks/Cole.

Rando, T.A. (1993). *Treatment of Complicated Mourning*. Champaign, IL: Research Press.

Webb, N.B. and Doka, Kenneth J. (2002). *Helping Bereaved Children* (3rd ed.). New York: Guilford Press.

V. COURSE REQUIREMENTS

1. Participation/Attendance

Punctuality, attendance and quality of contribution (demonstrated by student preparation level and active participation in discussion, role plays and group projects) will determine this portion of the grade. Students are expected to complete the readings prior to class and be prepared to participate in an

interactive framework between students and professor. Failure on the part of the student to demonstrate in class discussion comprehension of the material (or as 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. The other students in the class are dependent on you for a quality learning experience; when you are absent from class, the entire class suffers. Thus, students are expected to be in class, or in extenuating circumstances, to notify the professor that they will be absent. Students are responsible for any material missed due to absences. Roll will be taken at the beginning of each class period (to be counted present a student must be present for the entire class period). A student will be considered absent if he arrives more than 15 minutes late to class, leaves early, or is unable to come to class. In cases where a student misses more than one class, the instructor will lower the attendance grade by 10 points for each class missed beyond the first one. An individual exception will be made only in the event of circumstances beyond the student's control.

2. Personal Loss Autobiography

2 parts: Loss Time-Line and Written Reflection
Detailed instructions are attached to this syllabus

3. Non-death Loss Research

Detailed instructions attached to this syllabus

4. Video-taped Grief Therapy Session/Role Play

25-30 min. video-taped individual grief therapy session
Detailed instructions attached to this syllabus

5. Child/Teen Intervention

Exploration of therapeutic interventions for a child or teen based on case studies to be provided by the instructor; this will be presented to the class along with a 2-3 page paper describing the intervention, its theoretical basis, behavioral objectives, etc.; further details will be provided by the instructor

VI. STUDENT PERFORMANCE EVALUATION

Course Requirements	Percentage of Final Grade
Attendance/Participation	20
Personal Loss Autobiography	20
Non-Death Loss Research	20
Video-taped Grief Therapy Session/Role Play	20
Child/Teen Intervention	20

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.

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

VII. CLASS POLICIES

- 1. Professional Conduct:** 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—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 should 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 respected. However, the professor does require that students engage one another with respect and professionalism. 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. Please inform me of your concern; we will set a time to meet and make an effort to address the issue. 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. **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.
8. **Classroom Civility:** A course brings together a group of diverse individuals with various backgrounds. Students are influenced and shaped by such factors as ethnicity, gender, sex, physical abilities, religious and political beliefs, national origins, and sexual orientations, among others. We expect to learn from each other in an atmosphere of positive engagement and mutual respect. Social Work deals with complex and controversial issues. These issues may be challenging and uncomfortable, and it would be impossible to offer a substantive classroom experience that did not include potentially difficult conversations relating to challenging issues.
9. **Unanticipated Distress:** Students may experience unexpected and/or distressing

reactions to course readings, videos, conversations, and assignments. If so, students are encouraged to inform the instructor. The instructor can be responsive and supportive regarding students' participation in course assignments and activities, but students are responsible for communicating clearly what kind of support is desired. If counseling is needed, students can contact a service provider of their choosing, including the UT Counseling Center at 512-471-3515 or online at www.utexas.edu/student/cmhc/.

10. **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.

11. **Policy on Scholastic Dishonesty:** 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, the student may refer to the Web Site of the Student Judicial Services, Office of the Dean of Students (<http://deanofstudents.utexas.edu/sjs/>).

- 12. Use of Class Materials:** The materials used in this class, including, but not limited to, exams, quizzes, and homework assignments are copyright protected works. Any unauthorized copying of the class materials is a violation of federal law and may result in disciplinary actions being taken against the student. Additionally, the sharing of class materials without the specific, express approval of the instructor may be a violation of the University's Student Honor Code and an act of academic dishonesty, which could result in further disciplinary action. This includes, among other things, uploading class materials to websites for the purpose of sharing those materials with other current or future students.
- 13. Documented Disability Statement:** Any student who requires special accommodations must obtain a letter that documents the disability from the Services for Students with Disabilities area of the Division of Diversity and Community Engagement (471- 6259 voice or 471-4641 TTY for users who are deaf or hard of hearing). Present the letter to the professor 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/>.
- 14. Religious Holidays:** By UT Austin policy, students must notify the professor of a pending absence at least fourteen days prior to the date of observance of a religious holy day. If the student must miss a class, an examination, a work assignment, or a project in order to observe a religious holy day, the professor will give the student an opportunity to complete the missed work within a reasonable time after the absence.
- 15. 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 to keep 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>.
- 16. 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.

17. **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>.

18. **Emergency Evacuation Policy:** Occupants of buildings on the UT Austin campus are required to evacuate and assemble outside when a fire alarm is activated or an announcement is made. Please be aware of the following policies regarding evacuation:
 - Familiarize yourself with all exit doors of the classroom and the building. Remember that the nearest exit door may not be the one you used when you entered the building.

 - If you require assistance to evacuate, inform the professor in writing during the first week of class.

 - In the event of an evacuation, follow the professor's instructions.

 - Do not re-enter a building unless you are given instructions by the Austin Fire Department, the UT Austin Police Department, or the Fire Prevention Services office.

VIII. COURSE OUTLINE (TENTATIVE)

<u>DATE</u>	<u>REQUIRED</u>
<u>READING</u>	
9/8/13	
Syllabus Overview	
Introduction to Grief/Loss	
Introductions	
Attachment and its Relationship to Loss	
Discussion of Assignment—Loss Timeline	
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9/15/13	
Theoretical Perspectives—Theories of Grief and Loss	Rando: Chapters 1 & 2
Practice Models—Frameworks for Coping with Loss	Rando: Chapter 3

1

Small groups: Grief Experiences (using Personal Loss exercise)

9/22/13

Factors Influencing Reactions to Loss

Complicated Outcomes of Loss

Complicated Mourning

4

Rando: Chapters 4 & 5

Pomeroy/Garcia: Chapter

Assignment 1 Due: Personal Loss Autobiography

9/29/13

Assessment Of Grief

Grief vs. Trauma

2

Rando: Chapter 6

Pomeroy/Garcia: Chapter

10/06/13

Therapeutic Approaches to Complicated Mourning

Rando: Chapters 7 & 8

10/13/13

Anticipated Death Losses:

Treatment Implications for the Dying

3

and Family members

Rando: Chapters 8-9, 14

Pomeroy/Garcia: Chapter

Mid-Term Evaluation

Assignment 2 Due: Non-Death Loss Research

Small groups: Non-Death Losses

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10/20/13

Specific Clinical Problems

The Elderly and Loss

Sudden Death

6, 7

Suicide and Homicide

Rando: Chapters 10-12

Pomeroy/Garcia: Chapters

10/27/13

Understanding Children's Grief

Webb: Chapters 1, 3 & 5

11/03/13

Children's Grief in the Family Context

Webb: Chapters 2 & 11-

14

Assessment of Child and Adolescent Grief

Child Therapeutic Interventions

Assignment 3 Due: Video-taped Grief Therapy Session/Role Play

11/10/13

Adolescent Grief:

Pomeroy/Garcia: Chapter

5

Therapeutic Interventions

11/17/13

Child and Adolescent Response to Trauma

Webb: Chapters 6-10 &

16

Spirituality and Grief

Class presentation of interventions begin

11/24/13

The Grief Therapist: At risk

Webb: Chapter 15

Compassion Fatigue and Vicarious Trauma

Pomeroy/Garcia: Chapter

8

Class presentations of interventions continue

12/01/13 FINAL CLASS

Use of Rituals

Closure in Grief Therapy

Complete presentations of interventions

Assignment 4 Due: Child/Teen Intervention

Assignment 1: LOSS AUTOBIOGRAPHY

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 any remaining grief issues or unfinished business will be an important part of the reflection that you do to prepare for your work with grieving clients.

Part I: Loss Time Line

On an 8.5" x 11" piece of unlined paper, draw a timeline lengthwise. 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.
3. Highlight this information using a "keyed" color code to show: losses you remember grieving, losses which you have not yet grieved

Part II: Autobiographical Reflection on Your Losses

(Part II of your paper should be 5-6 double-spaced typed pages in length.)

In this portion of your project you will address the following:

1. What losses have you experienced that you would consider significant? What determines significance? How did you decide (what criteria did you use) whether or not you had grieved a loss?
2. How did you respond to the various losses? What coping strategies did you use as you faced the various experiences? What personal strengths helped you? What personal limitations may have hindered your process? What patterns do you notice as you reflect on your response to various life losses?
3. How have the following influenced your coping style and defensive structure:
 - people around you?
 - your cultural background, ethnicity, religion?
 - your personal values, attitudes, and beliefs?
4. How have the various losses in your life impacted your response to later losses?
5. How does your loss history impact your life choices today?
6. How might your loss history strengthen your work as a professional social worker? How might it limit your work? As you reflect on the impact of your own loss

history, what clinical concerns do you have? Are there any specific issues or situations that might be challenging or difficult for you?

Rubric for Loss Autobiography:

- 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: NON-DEATH LOSS RESEARCH

The purpose of this assignment is to give students the opportunity to delve deeply into current research on a particular type of non-death loss; to fully understand the issues related to this kind of loss as well as the preferred treatments/interventions. Students should assume that the client experiencing the non-death loss in this exercise is an **adult**.

Requirements of the assignment:

1. Choose a specific type of non-death loss and designate this choice on the sign-up sheet provided by the instructor.
2. Use a minimum of 5 research articles focused on particular therapy issues related to this circumstance of loss AND/OR focused on a particular kind of therapeutic intervention found to be effective in cases with this kind of loss.
3. Read the identified articles and summarize what you've learned in a 3-5 page paper (not including cover page and bibliography) covering the following:
 - Explanation of the non-death loss
 - The primary grief issues related to this particular kind of loss
 - Suggested therapeutic interventions with this loss and with whom they are most successful
 - The primary challenges of working with a client with this particular kind of loss (challenges may be professional, personal, or even ethical challenges)
4. Be prepared to present #3 to a small group of class members.

Rubric for Non-Death Loss Research:

Up to 20 %	Writing proficiency/APA format
Up to 40 %	Relevant, current and useful research articles
Up to 40 %	Excellent and thorough exploration of issues #1-3 listed above

Assignment 3: VIDEO-TAPED GRIEF THERAPY SESSION/ROLE PLAY

The purpose of this assignment is to give students the opportunity to practice and demonstrate:

1. An understanding of the needs of the grieving client
2. The ability to validate a client who is in emotional pain
3. Utilization of a particular grief theory
4. Interaction with the client from a strengths perspective
5. Use of an appropriate therapeutic intervention to assist the client with a particular issue

Requirements of the assignment:

Student must present a one-page (maximum) summary of the case being portrayed in the video. This should include a brief case description, identifying what session this portrays (i.e. #3, #4, etc.), what issues have been covered in previous sessions, and a specific treatment objective using a particular grief theory for the taped session.

Student should work with a partner from within this class. Each person will take a turn as the client for the other.

Each video session should be 15-20 minutes in length, so 30-40 minutes total.

All video work should be previewed to be absolutely certain both the **therapist and client can be heard clearly**. The instructor must be able to hear the session in order to adequately grade the work.

1-2 page paper should follow the case summary. The contents of the final 1-2 pages should include the following: what did the student learn in regard to grief therapy in this session, what strengths did the therapist demonstrate, what aspects of the role play experience are areas of challenge?

Rubric for Video-Taped Grief Therapy Session/Role Play

- | | |
|-------------|--|
| 45% | Role play includes each of the 5 specified skills listed above – variance in points related to level of proficiency demonstrated |
| 40% | 1-page Summary of Case and 1-2 page Conclusion |
| 15 % | Excellence in writing |