

**The University of Texas at Austin  
School of Social Work  
Summer 2014**

**Course Number:** SW N387R / SW N360K

**Professor's Name:** Dede Sparks, LMSW

**Unique Number:** 93910 (G) / 93855 (U)

**Email address:** dsparks@austin.utexas.edu

**Semester:** Summer 2014

**Office Phone:** 512-471-9063

**Meeting Time/Place:** T/TH 2:00-4:30  
SSW 2.122

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**Office Hours:** Tuesdays 12:30-1:30pm  
and by appointment

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**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. Recommended Readings

##### **Required Text (at University Co-op)**

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

##### **Required Readings**

The readings will be available on Canvas. Additional readings may be assigned as required or recommended readings throughout the semester as appropriate.

#### V. Classroom Policies and Practices

1. **Class Participation:** Students are expected to attend class regularly and to participate in an interactive framework between collegiate students, professor and invited guest speakers. Students are expected to complete the readings prior to class and should be well prepared to participate in discussions and experiential learning assignments. Failure to attend class and demonstrate through discussions that one has comprehended (or attempted to understand) the readings will be considered in assigning the final grade.
2. **Attendance:** Punctuality is one of the many important standards of professional behavior. Class will begin promptly at 2:00 and end at 4:30. A student is considered absent if they arrive more than 10 minutes late to class, leave early, or are unable to come to class. Absences may result in a reduction by one letter grade. Students are allowed **one excused absence**. 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.
3. **Professional Conduct in Class:** The professor expects students to act as professionals in class. This means students should arrive on time for class, be prepared to participate in the class discussion, and show respect for one another's opinions. We will not, nor should we, always agree with one another. In this environment we should be exposed to diverse ideas and opinions, and sometime we will not agree with the ideas expressed by others. However, the professor does require that students engage one another with respect and professionalism.
4. **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.

5. **Late Assignments:** Except in the case of extended emergencies, and then only with the permission of the professor, **late assignments will not be accepted without penalty.** Students are expected to turn in all required assignments on the agreed upon due date **at the beginning of class.** Assignments turned in after class begins will be considered late. If accepted, late assignments will be assessed point penalties at the rate of three (3) points each day late. If the due date is a problem, the student can see the professor and negotiate another due date well in advance.
6. **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 – 6<sup>th</sup> edition) guidelines for references and citations.
7. **Class Performance:** If students are concerned about their class performance, the professor is more than willing to work with them to help improve their understanding of the class material of the assignments *prior to the end of the semester.* **Final grades assigned in the course are not negotiable.**
8. **Confidentiality:** Learning about grief and loss can elicit difficult emotions and may involve 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. All students are expected to maintain confidentiality regarding all shared professional and personal information related agencies, clients or the experiences of other students, as required by Section 1.07 of the National Association of Social Workers Code of Ethics.

9. **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.
10. **Course Evaluation:** Social work practitioners are assertive and function as team members. Therefore, feedback about the course is welcome, and the course will be viewed as a joint effort between students and the instructor. Feedback can be given during office hours, by phone, email or appointment, as may be convenient and comfortable for the student. The professor will always return phone calls and emails during scheduled office hours, and will do so intermittently throughout the work week.
11. **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.
12. **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/>.
13. **Policy on Scholastic Dishonesty:** Social work practitioners assume responsibility for themselves. Students are often 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, the student may refer to the Web Site of the Student Judicial Services, Office of the Dean of Students (<http://deanofstudents.utexas.edu/sjs/>).

14. **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.
15. **Religious Holidays:** A student who is absent from a class, an examination, a work assignment, or a project for the observance of a religious holy day may complete the work missed within a reasonable time after the absence, if proper notice has been given. 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.
16. **Use of Email 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>.
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:
  - i. 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.
  - ii. If you require assistance to evacuate, inform the professor in writing during the first week of class.
  - iii. In the event of an evacuation, follow the professor's instructions.
  - iv. Do not re-enter a building unless you're given instructions by the Austin Fire Department, the UT Austin Police Department, or the Fire Prevention Services office.

## VI. Course Grading Criteria

### Undergraduate Grading Scale

Attendance and Participation	10%
Loss History/Personal Awareness Assignment	30%
Group Presentation	30%
Cultural Diversity & Grief Interview	30%
<hr/> TOTAL	100%

### Graduate Grading Scale

Attendance and Participation	10%
Loss History/Personal Awareness Assignment	25%
Group Presentation	30%
Cultural Diversity & Grief Interview	25%
Personal Reflection Paper	10%
<hr/> TOTAL	100%

- VII. **Course Schedule** (subject to change due to the need to reschedule guest speakers)  
**Other methods of teaching, such as TED talks and videos will be added onto Canvas throughout the semester. Professor Sparks will announce additional material in class, however, students are expected to check the Canvas modules for additionally assigned material.**

### June 5

#### **Topics:**

Introduction to the Course  
Personal Awareness & Defining Loss  
Theoretical Perspectives - Theories of Grief and Loss  
Practice Models - Frameworks for Coping with Loss  
Importance of Self-Care

#### **Readings:**

Pomeroy and Garcia (2008). Chapter 1: Understanding Grief and Loss – An Introduction  
Pomeroy and Garcia (2008). Chapter 2: Grief Interviewing and Assessment

### June 10

#### **Topics:**

Disenfranchised Grief  
Culture and Grief

#### **Readings:**

Doka, K. (1989). *Disenfranchised grief: Recognizing hidden sorrow* (pp.13-23).  
Massachusetts/Toronto: Lexington Books.  
Doka, K. (2002). *Disenfranchised grief: New directions, challenges, and*

- strategies for practice* (pp. 23-28). Champaign, Illinois: Research Press.
- Wilkie, D. J., Judge, M.K.M., Brown, M.A., Shannon, S., Farber, S., Corless, I. (2002). Grief module. *Toolkit for nurturing excellence at end-of-life transition*. Retrieved from: <http://www.tneel.uic.edu/tneel-ss/demo/grief/frame1.asp>
- May, K.T. (2013). 11 fascinating funeral traditions from around the globe. *TEDtalk*. Retrieved from: <http://blog.ted.com/2013/10/01/11-fascinating-funeral-traditions-from-around-the-globe/>

## **June 12**

### **Topics:**

Adoption and Foster Care

### **Readings:**

- Schachter, S. and Schachter, J. (2011). Adoption: A life begun with loss. *Counting Our Losses: Reflecting on Change, Loss and Transition in Everyday Life*. pp. 75-89.
- Lifton, B. (2010). Ghosts in the Adopted Family. *Psychoanalytic Inquiry*, 30: 71-79.
- Edelstein, S., Burge, D., and Waterman, J. (2001). Helping foster parents cope with separation, loss and grief. Child Welfare League of America, pp. 5-25.

*\*\*Loss History/Personal Awareness assignment due*

## **June 17**

### **Topics:**

Grief with Special Populations (Veterans, Incarcerated Individuals, Persons with Intellectual Challenges, Persons with Mental Illness)

### **Readings:**

- Pomeroy and Garcia (2008). Chapter 7: Grief Reactions and Special Considerations
- Doka, K. and Davidson, J. (1998). *Living with grief: Who we are and how we grieve* (pp.180-206). Philadelphia, PA: Brunner/Mazel.
- Schetsky, D.H. (1998). Mourning in prison: Mission impossible. *Journal of American Academy of Psychiatric Law*, 26(3), 383-391.

## **June 19**

### **Topics:**

Reproductive Grief & Loss  
Perinatal Loss  
Grief Associated with Abortion

### **Readings:**

- Brier, N. (2008). Grief Following Miscarriage: A Comprehensive Review of the

- Literature. *Journal of Women's Health*, 17. pp. 451-464.
- Angelo, E.J. (1992). Psychiatric Sequelae of Abortion: The Many Faces of Post-Abortion Grief. *Linacre Quarterly*, Vol. 59, no. 2.
- Lopez, S.A. (2011). Culture as an influencing factor in adolescent grief and bereavement. *The Prevention Researcher*, 18(3), 10-13.
- Cousineau, T.M., Domar, A.D. (2007). Psychological impact of infertility. *Best Practice and Research Clinical Obstetrics and Gynaecology*, 21(2), 293-308.

### **June 24**

#### **Topics:**

Complicated Grief and Mourning

#### **Readings:**

Complicated mourning reading: Rando, T. (1993). *Treatment of complicated mourning* (pp.149-184). Illinois: Research Press.

### **June 26**

#### **Topics:**

Children, Adolescents & Teens

#### **Readings:**

Christ, G., Christ, A., and Siegel, K. (2002). Adolescent Grief: "It Never Really Hit Me, Until It Actually Happened." *Journal of American Medical Association*, 10.

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

### **July 1**

#### **Topics:**

Community Tragedy and Trauma  
Disoriented Grief

#### **Readings:**

Lattanzi-Licht, M. and Doka, K. (2003). *Living with grief: Coping with public tragedy* (pp.139-189). New York: Brunner-Rutledge.

Malone, P., Pomeroy, E., and Jones, B. (2011). Disoriented grief: A lens through which to view the experience of Katrina evacuees. *Journal of Social Work in End-of-Life and Palliative Care*, 7:23, 241-262.

### **July 3**

#### **Topics:**

Adults and Geriatrics

#### **Readings:**

Pomeroy and Garcia (2008). Chapter 3: Expected Grief Experience in Adults



Pomeroy and Garcia (2008). Chapter 4: Complex Grief in Adults  
Pomeroy and Garcia (2008). Chapter 6: Grief Reactions in the Older Adult  
Population

**July 8**

**NO CLASS**

**July 10**

**Topics:**

Sudden and Traumatic Death

Suicide

**Readings:**

Armour, M. (2007). Violent death. *Journal of Human Behavior in the Social Environment*, 14:4, 53-90

Zayas, L. (2011). *Latinas attempting suicide: When cultures, families and daughters collide* (pp.133-158). New York: Oxford University Press.

**July 15**

**Topics:**

End of Life Issues

Hospice and Palliative Care

**Readings:**

Brody, J. (2009). Guide to the great beyond (pp.9-22). New York: Random House

Brody, J. (2009). Guide to the great beyond (pp. 73-93). New York: Random House.

**July 17**

**Topics:**

Living with Chronic Illness

*\*\*Cultural Diversity & Grief Interview assignment due*

**Readings:**

Doka, K. (2006). Grief: The constant companion of illness. *Anesthesiology Clinics of North America*, 24, 205-212.

**July 22**

Group Presentations: *Cultural Diversity and Illness, Death and Grief*

**July 24**

**Topics:**

Trauma Stewardship

Compassion Fatigue and Secondary Trauma

PTSD with Social Workers and Critical Care Team Members  
Support Groups, Social Support and the Role of Social Media in Grieving

**Readings:**

- Seligson, H. (2014). An online generation redefines mourning. The New York Times. <http://nytimes.NAS9G1>
- Wolfet, A.D. (2007). Growing through grief: The role of support groups. From: Center for Loss and Life Transition. [http://griefwords.com/index.cgi?action=page&page=articles%2Fgrowing.html&site\\_id=2](http://griefwords.com/index.cgi?action=page&page=articles%2Fgrowing.html&site_id=2)
- Ineni, C. (date of publication not available). Using the creative arts in grief therapy (dates unavailable).

*\*\*Personal Reflection due*

**July 29**

**Topics:**

Transcendence, Transformation & Hope  
Importance of Continued Self Care for Social Workers  
Personal Awareness Revisited

**Readings:**

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

**VIII.** The following scale will be used to determine your final letter grade:

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