

**The University of Texas at Austin
School of Social Work
Fall 2017**

Course Number: SW 360K

Professor's Name: Dede Sparks, LMSW

Unique Number: 61390

Email address: dsparks@austin.utexas.edu

Semester: Fall, 2017

Preferred Phone: 512-731-3705

Meeting Time/Place: Tues., 2:30 – 5:30
SSW 2.130

Office Hours: Tuesdays 10:00 – 11:00 am
and by appointment

TA:

Office: SSW 3.124B

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

I. Standardized Course Description

The course examines issues of death and dying, placing a special emphasis on non-death losses that elicit grief responses and exploring ways the mourner finds meaning in life after a significant loss. We will look at grief from individual, family, community and society views and the impact (impede or facilitate) these systems have on the grief experience. An emphasis will be placed on examining multiple cultures and the impact culture has on grief response. The course will provide many opportunities (formal and informal) to examine personal grief histories, perceptions and beliefs about death, dying and loss, and how personal beliefs, experiences and culture can impact professional development and therapeutic services with diverse populations. The philosophy underlying this course is in line with the “Statements on Death, Dying and Bereavement” (1994) of the International Work Group on Death, Dying and Bereavement. The introduction states: “Death, dying and bereavement are fundamental and pervasive aspects of the human experience. Individuals and societies can only achieve fullness of living by understanding and appreciating these realities. The absence of such understanding and appreciation may result in unnecessary suffering, loss of dignity, alienation, and diminished quality of living. Therefore, education about death, dying and bereavement is an essential component of the educational process at all levels, both formal and informal.” (IWG, 1994) We will explore how this statement on death, dying and bereavement extends to include all areas of grief work, including disenfranchised grief.

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 understanding of disenfranchised grief and how this affects clients in multiple practice environments.
5. Demonstrate an increased awareness of their own grief reactions and how this awareness can help them to develop skills and tools in grief work.
6. 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. Text and Readings

Required Text

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

Lipsky, L.V. (2009). *Trauma stewardship: An everyday guide to caring for self while caring for others*. San Francisco, CA: Berrett-Koehler Publishers, Inc.

All additional readings will be available on Canvas.

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. Each student has one excused absence without explanation. Absences may result in a reduction 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.

3. **Professional Conduct in Class:** The classroom is an opportunity to practice professional demeanor and mutual respect. 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 respected. Consequently, disrespect toward others is not tolerated and will be handled directly and in the context in which it occurs. In order to facilitate classroom communication and learning, cell phones and all communication devices are restricted from being on, or should be placed in 'silent' mode while in class. Laptop computers will not be used during class unless specifically authorized by the professor for a particular student or situation.
4. **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.
5. **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 – 5th edition) guidelines for references and citations, unless otherwise stated in the guidelines for the assignment.
6. **Class Performance:** If students have concerns 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.**
7. **Classroom 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. Information shared in class about agencies, clients, and personal matters is considered confidential per the NASW Code of Ethics on educational supervision and is protected by FERPA regulations as well. Discussions with individuals outside of the educational context are not permitted. Violations of confidentiality could result in actions taken according to the policies and procedure for review of academic performance located in sections 3.0, 3.2, and 3.2 of the Standards for Social Work Education.

VI. University Policies

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.

PROFESSIONAL CONDUCT AND CIVILITY IN THE CLASSROOM. 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. 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 also 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. In this environment we will be exposed to diverse ideas and opinions, and sometimes we will not agree with the ideas expressed by others. Nevertheless, the professor requires that students engage one another with civility, respect, and professionalism.

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 professor. The professor 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 may contact a service provider of their choosing, including the UT Counseling and Mental Health Center at 512-471-3515 or online at www.utexas.edu/student/cmhc/.

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.

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/>).

USE OF COURSE MATERIALS. The materials used in this course, including, but not limited to exams, quizzes, and homework assignments, are copyright protected works. Any unauthorized duplication of the course materials is a violation of federal law and may result in disciplinary action being taken against the student. Additionally, the sharing of course materials without the specific, express approval of the professor 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 sharing includes, among other things, uploading class materials to websites for the purpose of distributing those materials to other current or future students.

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). A student should present the letter to the professor at the beginning of the semester so that needed accommodations can be discussed and followed. 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/>.

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, examination, work assignment, or 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.

TITLE IX REPORTING. In accordance with Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972, the University of Texas at Austin is committed to maintaining a learning environment that is free from discriminatory conduct based on gender. Students who report incidents of sex discrimination, sexual harassment, sexual violence, or sexual misconduct to faculty, instructors, and/or staff who supervise students, will be provided a list of University resources. If the incident is impacting the academic environment, a report will be provided to the University's Title IX Coordinator. Further information, including student resources related to Title IX, may be found at <http://socialwork.utexas.edu/dl/files/academic-programs/other/qrg-sexualharassment.pdf>.

CAMPUS CARRY POLICY. The University's policy on concealed fire arms may be found here: <https://campuscarry.utexas.edu>. You also may find this information by accessing the Quick Links menu on the School's website.

CLASSROOM CONFIDENTIALITY. Information shared in class about agencies, clients, and personal matters is considered confidential per the NASW Code of Ethics on educational supervision and is protected by regulations of the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) as well. As such, sharing this information with individuals outside of the educational context is not permitted. Violations of confidentiality could result in actions taken according to the policies and procedure for review of academic performance located in sections 3.0, 3.1, and 3.2 of the Standards for Social Work Education.

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 a change of 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>.

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.

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 between 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>.

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 in the classroom and the building. Remember that the nearest exit door may not be the one you used when entering 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.

VII. Course Grading Criteria

Grading Scale

Attendance and Participation	10%
Loss History/Personal Awareness Assignment	20%
Group Presentation	30%
Journals (2.25 pts. each)	10%
<u>Personal Interest Article Assignment</u>	<u>30%</u>
TOTAL	100%

VIII. Course Schedule (subject to change)

Other methods of teaching, such as TED talks and videos will be added onto Canvas throughout the semester. Students are expected to check the Canvas modules for additionally assigned material.

*****Please note that all assignments will be posted on Canvas with requirements and instructions.**

September 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

September 12

Topics:

Disenfranchised Grief
Culture and Grief

Journal #1 due (prompt will be provided and is optional)

Readings:

Trauma Stewardship: Introduction, Chapter 1 & Chapter 2

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>

September 19

Topic:

Adoption and Foster Care

Loss History/Personal Awareness Assignment due

Readings:

Trauma Stewardship: Chapter 3

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.

September 26

Topic:

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

Readings:

Trauma Stewardship: Chapter 4

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.

October 3

Topic:

Reproductive Grief & Loss
(including Perinatal Loss & Grief Associated with Abortion)
Journal #2 due (prompt will be provided and is optional)

Readings:

Trauma Stewardship: Chapter 5

October 10

Topic:

Death & Dying

Readings:

Trauma Stewardship: Chapter 6

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.

October 17

Topic:

Children, Adolescents & Teens

Readings:

Trauma Stewardship: Chapter 7

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.

Lopez, S.A. (2011). Culture as an influencing factor in adolescent grief and bereavement. *The Prevention Researcher*, 18(3), 10-13.

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

October 24

Topics:

Adult and Geriatrics

Living with Chronic Illness

Readings:

Trauma Stewardship: Chapter 8

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

October 31

Topics:

Disoriented Grief

Community Tragedy & Trauma

Journal #3 due (prompt will be provided and is optional)

Readings:

Trauma Stewardship: Chapter 9

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

November 7

Topic:

Complicated Grief & Mourning

GROUP PRESENTATION – GROUP 1

GROUP PRESENTATION – GROUP 2

Reading:

Trauma Stewardship: Chapter 10

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

November 14

Topics:

Sudden and Traumatic Death

Suicide

Journal #4 due (prompt will be provided and is optional)

GROUP PRESENTATION – GROUP 3

Readings:

Trauma Stewardship: Chapter 11

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.

November 21

NO CLASS TODAY!

November 28

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

Personal Interest Article Assignment due

GROUP PRESENTATION – GROUP 4

Readings:

Trauma Stewardship: Chapter 12

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.

Ineni, C. (date of publication not available). Using the creative arts in grief therapy (dates unavailable).

December 5

Topics:

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

Readings:

Trauma Stewardship: Conclusion

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

IX. 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