

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

Course Number: SW 393R18	Instructor: Pamela Malone, Ph.D., LCSW
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Semester: Fall 2011	Phone: 512-444-8889
Class Time: Wednesdays 2:30-5:15pm	Office: SSW 3.104A
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 are analyzed for the purpose of developing empirically based interventions grounded in social work values and an ethical decision making process. Childhood, adolescents, 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 for students to engage clients in appropriate working relationships and identify needs, resources and assets for coping with grief reactions. Exploration of social workers' own responses and reactions to grief work will be examined by students in depth.

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 individual through 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;

Demonstrate an advanced clinical knowledge of the relationship between

3. adaptive mechanisms and counseling strategies of 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 an advanced knowledge of social work values and the ethical decision making processes as they relate to ethical dilemmas in grief work and practice; and,
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 to include reading, writing, lectures, class discussions, case examples, video presentations, role plays, group role plays, 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 lecturing will be collaborative and interactive, and student participation is expected.

IV. REQUIRED TEXTS

Bonanno, G. B. (2009). *The other side of sadness: What the new science of bereavement tells us about life after loss*. Philadelphia, PA: Perseus Books.

Jeffreys, J. S. (2011). *Helping grieving people - When tears are not enough: A handbook for care providers*. New York, NY: Routledge.

Neimeyer, R. A., Harris, D. L., Winokuer, H. R., & Thornton, G. F. (Eds.). (2011). *Grief and bereavement in contemporary society: Bridging research and practice*. New York, NY: Routledge.

Pomeroy, E. C., & Garcia, R. B. (Eds.). (2011). *Children and loss: A practical handbook for professionals*. Chicago, IL: Lyceum.

Required weekly articles under course documents on Blackboard.

V. COURSE REQUIREMENTS

1. Participation/Attendance

Punctuality, attendance, and quality of contribution (demonstrated by student preparation level and active preparation 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 at a minimum, a hearty attempt at understanding) will be considered in assigning the final grade.

Due to the format and content of this course, attendance is imperative. 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. You will be allowed one (1) absence which will not count against your grade. To be counted as in attendance, a student must be present for the entire class period. A student is considered absent if she/he arrives more than 10 minutes late to class or leaves early. In cases where a student misses more than one class, the professor will lower the attendance grade by one letter grade for each class missed beyond the first one. Individual exceptions will be made only in the event of circumstances beyond the student's control.

Participation Note Cards

For each class period bring a 3x5 note card to include: 1) Your name; 2) A question based on the readings for that class or a discussion topic of particular interest generated from the readings for that class. The questions or topics will be discussed in small groups and the note cards handed in.

2. Personal Loss Autobiography

The purpose of this assignment is to assist students in developing awareness of the many facets 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.

Loss Timeline: On an 8.5 x 11" piece of unlined paper, draw a lengthwise timeline. This timeline should represent your lifespan up to your current age. Label the timeline with the various losses experienced in your lifetime. Identify both death and non-death losses. For each loss indicate your age at the time of the loss, the nature of the loss, and whether or not you believe you grieved the loss.

Autobiographical Reflection: Criteria and grading rubric are on Blackboard under Assignments. This will be a 5-6 double-spaced typed paper. In narrative form describe the losses you have experienced that are significant to you. For each loss address the following:

- Why was the loss significant to you? What determines significance?
- How did you respond to the various losses?
- What defense mechanisms did you use as you faced the various experiences of loss?
- What personal strengths helped you?
- What personal limitations may have hindered your process?

- Describe patterns that you notice as you look at your response to each of the individual losses.
- How have the following influenced your coping style?
 - People around you?
 - Your cultural background, ethnicity, religion?
 - Your personal values, attitudes, beliefs?
- Describe how the various losses in your loss impacted your response to later losses.
- Describe how your loss history affect you life choices today.
- How might your loss history strengthen your work as a professional social worker?
 - How could it potentially 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?

3. Non-Death Loss Research Assignment

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, and to fully understand the issues related to this kind of loss as well as the preferred treatments/interventions. Criteria and grading rubric are on Blackboard under Assignments.

The focus of this assignment is from the perspective of an adult client. This will be a 3-5 page paper (not including cover page and bibliography) addressing the following:

1. Choose a specific type of non-death loss on the sign-up sheet provided by the professor.
2. Literature review must include a minimum of 5 research articles focused on particular therapy issues related to this circumstance of loss and/or an intervention found to be effective for this kind of loss.
3. Read and summarize the research articles to include the following:
 - a. Explanation of the non-death loss
 - b. The primary grief issues related to this particular kind of loss
 - c. Therapeutic interventions with this loss and their efficacy with particular populations
 - d. The primary challenges of working with clients with this particular kind of loss; challenges may be professional, personal, or ethical.
4. Be prepared to present #3 to a small group of class members.

4. Symbols

Develop a memory box. This is a container that holds symbols or creative representations of a particular loss, the idea of the loss of an assumptive world. You are encouraged to be creative and use any type of container

that is easily transported to the classroom, materials, and symbols that communicate this effectively. Students will have an opportunity during class to explain the meaning of their memory box.

5. Intervention Paper

Students will design an intervention for any age group. This 8-10 page paper will describe the intervention, its theoretical basis and behavioral objectives. Criteria and grading rubric are on Blackboard under Assignments.

VI. STUDENT EVALUATION

Course Requirements	Percent of Grade
Attendance/Participation	15%
Personal Loss Autobiography	20%
Non-Death Loss Research	20%
Symbols	15%
Intervention Paper	30%
Total	100%

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. Grades are assigned based on the following criteria:

A = outstanding work that engages course materials with original thought and creativity, or a mastery of technical skills.

B = doing all the work well.

C = for meeting all course requirements.

Grading Scale

- 100 – 94 = A
- 93 – 90 = A-
- 89 – 87 = B+
- 86 – 84 = B
- 83 – 80 = B-
- 79 – 77 = C+
- 76 – 74 = C
- 73 – 70 = C-
- 69 – 67 = D+
- 66 – 64 = D
- 63 – 60 = D-
- 59 and below = F

VII. COURSE SCHEDULE (subject to change)

Date	Topic	Required Reading
8-24-11	Syllabus overview Introductions Beginning discussion about grief counseling Grief and loss across the lifespan	Bonanno, Chapter 1; Jeffreys, Chapter 1, 2, 4; Bbd: Beder; Breen & O'Connor; Gamino et al.; Harris; Howarth
8-31-11	Review of grief theories, processes, and responses <i>Small group discussion</i> <i>Sign up for non-death loss topic</i>	Bonanno, Chapter 2; Jeffreys, Chapter 3; Neimeyer et al., Chapters 2, 3, 4, 5; Pomeroy & Garcia, Chapter 1; Bbd: Berzoff; Bosticco & Thompson Due: Personal Loss Autobiography
9-7-11	Non-death losses Ambiguous loss Assessment of grief: Tools and implications <i>Small group discussion</i>	Bonanno, Chapter 3; Jeffreys, Chapter 9; Neimeyer et al., Chapter 6, 13; Pomeroy & Garcia, Chapters 3, 4; Bbd: Altmaier
9-14-11	Complicated grief <i>Small group discussion</i>	Bonanno, Chapter 4; Jeffreys, Chapter 10; Neimeyer et al., Chapter 12, 18; Bbd: Neimeyer Due: Non-Death Loss Research Paper
9-21-11	In-class movie <i>Small group discussion</i>	Bonanno, Chapter 5; Neimeyer et al., Chapter 24
9-28-11	Presentation of Symbols Project <i>Small group discussion</i>	Bonanno, Chapter 6; Due: Symbols Project
10-5-11	Impact of type of death <i>Small group discussion</i> Mid-semester course evaluation	Bonanno, Chapter 7; Neimeyer et al., Chapters 14, 17, 20; Bbd: Beck & Jones; Young
10-12-11	Unexpected, sudden, multiple and traumatic deaths Disasters & public tragedy <i>Small group discussion</i>	Bonanno, Chapter 8; Neimeyer et al., Chapter 15; Bbd: Corr; Gamino; Gallo-Silver & Damkos
10-19-11	Understanding children's and adolescents' response to grief & trauma <i>Small group discussion</i>	Bonanno, Chapter 9; Jeffreys, Chapter 5; Pomeroy & Garcia, Chapters 2, 5, 6, 7; Bbd:

		Balk; Noppe & Noppe; Stokes, Reid & Corr
10-26-11	Grief work with children and adolescents <i>Small group discussion</i>	Bonanno, Chapter 10; Neimeyer et al., Chapter 23; Bbd: Malone; Morgan & Roberts; Tedeschi; Valentine
11-2-11	Grief and loss among couples and families Grief groups <i>Small group discussion</i>	Bonanno, Chapter 11; Jeffreys, Chapter 6; Neimeyer et al., Chapters 9, 10, 16, 22, 28; Bbd: Coifman et al.; Feigelman et al.; Finlay & Krueger; Sutton & Liechty; Waskovic & Chartier; Young; Visit website: www.sos-austin.com
11-9-11	Grief and loss among elderly persons The grief therapist at risk Compassion fatigue and vicarious trauma <i>Small group discussion</i>	Bonanno, Chapter 12; Jeffreys, Chapter 7; Neimeyer et al., Chapter 8; Bbd: Thompson & Thompson
11-16-11	<i>Intervention Presentations</i>	
11-23-11	NO CLASS MEETING	ENJOY THANKSGIVING
11-30-11	<i>Intervention Presentations</i> <i>Class evaluations</i>	Due: Intervention Paper (Bring SASE if you want your paper returned.)

VIII. 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—in person, by e-mail or telephone; arriving to class on time; being prepared to participate in the class discussion; abstaining from texting, emailing, surfing the web; 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 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 professor'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 professor 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 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.

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 email 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 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’re given instructions by the Austin Fire Department, the UT Austin Police Department, or the Fire Prevention Services office.

IX. REFERENCE LIST

All reference articles are posted under course documents on Blackboard.

- Altmaier, E. M. (2011). Best practices in counseling grief and loss: Finding benefit from trauma. *Journal of Mental Health Counseling*, 33(1), 33-45.
- Balk, D. E. (2009). Sibling bereavement during adolescence. In D. E. Balk. & C. A. Corr, (Eds.) *Adolescent encounters with death, bereavement, and coping*. New York, NY: Springer Publishing, pp. 199-216.
- Balk, D.E. & Corr, C.A. (2001). Bereavement during adolescence: A review of research. In M. S. Stroebe & R. O. Hansson. (Eds.) *Handbook of bereavement research: Consequences, coping and care*. Washington, DC: American Psychological Association, pp. 199-218.
- Beck, E., & Jones, S. J. (2007-2008). Children of the condemned: Grieving the loss of a father to death row. *OMEGA*, 56(2), 191-215.
- Beder, J. (2004-2005). Loss of the assumptive world: How we deal with death and loss. *OMEGA*, 50(4), 255-265.
- Berzoff, J. (2011). The transformative nature of grief and bereavement. *Clinical Social Work Journal*.
- Bosticco, C., & Thompson, T. L. (2005). Narratives and story telling in coping with grief and bereavement. *OMEGA*, 51(1), 1-16.
- Breen, L. J., & O'Connor, M. (2007). The fundamental paradox in the grief literature: A critical reflection. *OMEGA*, 55(3), 199-218.
- Coifman, K.G., Bonanno, G. A., & Rafaelli, E. (2006). Affect dynamics, bereavement and resilience; to loss. *Journal of Happiness Studies*, 8, 371-392.
- Corr, C.A. (2001). Loss, grief, and trauma in public tragedy. In M. Lattanzi-Licht, & K. J. Doka (Eds.) *Living with grief: Coping with public tragedy*. Washington, DC: Hospice Foundation of America, pp.63-76.
- Corr, C. A. (2004). Bereavement, grief, and mourning in death-related literature for children. *OMEGA*, 48(4), 337-363. *OMEGA*, 58(4), 251-273.
- Feigelman, W., Jordan, J. R., & Gorman, B. S. (2008-2009). How they died, time since loss, and bereavement outcomes.
- Finlay, C. J., & Krueger, G. (2011). A space for mothers: Grief as identity construction On memorial websites created by SIDS parents. *OMEGA*, 63(1), 21-44.
- Gallo-Silver, L., & Damaskos, P. (2004). September 11: Reflections on living with dying in disaster relief. In J. Berzoff & P. R. Silverman. (Eds.) *Living with dying*. New York: Columbia University Press, pp.72-93.
- Gamino, L. A. (2003). Critical incident stress management and other crisis counseling approaches. In M. Lattanzi-Licht, & K. J. Doka (Eds.) *Living with grief: Coping with public tragedy*. Washington, DC: Hospice Foundation of America, pp. 123-138.
- Gamino, L. A., Swell, K. W., Hogan, N. S., & Mason, S., L. (2009-2010). Who needs grief counseling? A report from the Scott & White grief study. *OMEGA*, 60(3), 199-223.
- Harris, D. (2009-2010). Oppression of the bereaved: A critical analysis of grief in western society. *OMEGA*, 60(3), 241-253.
- Howarth, R. A. (2011). Concepts and controversies in grief and loss. *Journal of Mental*

- Health Counseling*, 33(1), 4-10.
- Malone, P. A. (2007). The impact of peer death on adolescent girls: A task-oriented group intervention. *Journal of Social Work in End-of-Life & Palliative Care*, 3(3), 23-37.
- Morgan, J. P., & Roberts, J. E. (2010). Helping bereaved children and adolescents: Strategies and implications for counselors. *Journal of Mental Health Counseling*, 32(3), 206-217.
- Muller, E. D., & Thompson, C. L. (2003). The experience of grief and bereavement: A phenomenological study with implications for mental health counseling. *Journal of Mental Health Counseling*, 25(3), 183-203.
- Neimeyer, R.A. (2005-2006). Complicated grief and the quest for meaning: A constructivist contribution. *OMEGA*, 52(1), 37-52.
- Stokes, J., Reid, C., & Cook, V. (2009). Life as an adolescent when a parent has died. In D. E. Balk & C. A. Corr, (Eds.) *Adolescent encounters with death, bereavement, and coping*. New York, NY: Springer Publishing, pp.177-197.
- Sutton, A. L., & Liechty, D. (2004). Clinical practice with groups in end-of-life care. In J. Berzoff & P. R. Silverman. (Eds.) *Living with dying*. New York, NY: Columbia University Press, pp. 508-533.
- Tedeschi, R.G. (1996). Support groups for bereaved adolescents. In C. A. Corr & D. E. Balk (Eds.) *Handbook of adolescent death and bereavement*. New York, NY, Springer Publishing, pp. 293-311.
- Thompson, S., & Thompson, N. (2004). Working with dying and bereaved older people. In J. Berzoff & P. R. Silverman. (Eds.) *Living with dying*. New York, NY: Columbia University Press, pp. 348-359.
- Valentine, L. (1996) Professional interventions to assist adolescents who are coping with death and bereavement. In C. A. Corr & D. E. Balk. (Eds.) *Handbook of adolescent death and bereavement*. New York, NY: Springer Publishing, pp. 312-328.
- Waskowic, T. D., & Chartier, B. M. (2003). Attachment and the experience of grief following the loss of a spouse. *OMEGA*, 47(1), 77-91.
- Young, E. (2007-2008). Figures of grief: Metaphors from a bereavement writing group. *OMEGA*, 56(4), 359-367.