

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

Course Number: SW 360K **Instructor:** Elaine Cavazos, LCSW
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Unique Number: 61275 **Office:** 3.124

Semester: Spring 2018 **Office Phone:** 512-922-4784

Meeting Time/Place: Mondays **Office Hours:** Mondays from 12-1:00pm
1:00-4:00p **Other times by appointment**
Room 2.132

**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. REQUIRED TEXTS AND MATERIALS

DeSpelder, A. and Strickland, A. (2015). *The Last Dance: Encountering Death and Dying*. McGraw Hill, 10th edition.

Recommended Reading:

Trauma Stewardship: An Everyday Guide to Caring for Self While Caring for Others, by Laura van Dernoot Lipsky

V. COURSE REQUIREMENTS

| | |
|------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| Attendance and Participation | 20 points |
| Group Presentation | 50 points |
| Book Review (Paper) | 50 points |
| Journals (4) | 5 points each (total of 20 points) |
| Quizzes over Readings (4) | 10 points each (total of 40 points) |
| Total for the Course: | 180 points |

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

VI. GRADES

| | |
|----------------|----|
| 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

Professional Accountability/Conduct in Class: The professor expects students to act like 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 sometimes we will not agree with the ideas expressed by others. However, the professor does require that students engage one another with respect and professionalism.

Part of professional accountability includes treating others with respect and courtesy. Within the class this entails listening to the opinions and concerns of others with openness, offering suggestions and ideas in a positive and respectful manner, and being willing to promote group cohesiveness in the learning environment.

The student is expected to bring any concerns directly to the professor on an individual basis, if the issue is not appropriate to be discussed in class. Students should be prepared to discuss the concern openly, with willingness to accept feedback, and offer possible solutions.

Please turn off cell phones and laptops during class. Avoid side conversations. A description of proper classroom etiquette will be provided.

Time Management: Students will lose 5% of the total point value per calendar day that an assignment is late. Assignments are due on Canvas by the beginning of class on the due date (unless otherwise specified). Papers turned in after class begins are considered late. On subsequent days, papers must be submitted before 5:00 p.m. to avoid an additional penalty. The student must email the professor to indicate that the assignment has been submitted. Any assignment will be accepted if it is submitted more than 5 days past the due date.

Students who wish to visit with the professor about a deadline for an assignment must do so in advance of the due date. They will be expected to contact the professor to arrange for an office visit, discuss the reason for the delay, and negotiate a new deadline for the assignment. The professor only grants extensions for illness (with documentation from a medical professional), personal crisis (with documentation from Student Emergency Services), or documentation from the Services for Students with Disabilities office.

Attendance is mandatory and three or more absences may result in the student being dropped from the course. A sign in sheet will be available at the start of class. Late arrivals will be noted if the student is more than 10 minutes after the start of class. Points will be deducted from the Class Participation/Attendance grade for each unexcused absence. Three late arrivals will count as one unexcused absence.

Classroom exercises, discussions, role-plays, guest speakers and other class experiential exercises are essential for the students' professional learning and continued development of self-awareness. This form of learning cannot be "made up" once missed. Students will be expected to contact their peers to secure any missed notes or handouts. All handouts, power points or additional reading materials will be posted to Canvas for that class date under "modules." Please do not contact the professor to ask about missed materials before checking Canvas and talking with a peer. The student may schedule an office visit with the professor if they wish to discuss missed classroom material in more detail.

Students are to notify the instructor prior to class at the given office number if they cannot attend class due to an illness or emergency.

The professor will evaluate each student's class participation based upon their willingness to engage in class discussions, group activities, attentiveness to lectures and guest speakers, and behaviors that reflect presence and readiness to learn. Students who are engage in side conversations or appear to be using their electronic devices for non-class related activities will have their participation grade lowered accordingly and may be asked to meet with the professor to discuss appropriate classroom behavior.

Contacting the Professor: The professor is available to discuss any issues that arise related to class during office hours or by appointment. Additionally, the student can email the professor via Canvas with questions regarding assignments and/or concerns. The student should be prepared that it could take 48-72 hours for the professor to respond.

VIII. 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.

IX. COURSE SCHEDULE

Other methods of teaching, such as TED talks, guest lecturers, additional readings, 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.

| Date | Topic | Assignment Due | Readings |
|------|---|---|---|
| 1/22 | Introduction to Course Review of Syllabus Developing Self-Care Practices | | The Syllabus |
| 1/29 | Terminology for Grief and Loss | <i>Journal One Due by 1p</i> | Assigned readings posted on Canvas under “modules” |
| 2/5 | Terminology and Types of Loss continued | <i>QUIZ 1 Taken on Canvas and due by the beginning of class</i> | Assigned readings posted on Canvas under “modules” |
| 2/12 | Understanding Death | | “The Last Dance,” Chapter 1, pp. 6-47 |
| 2/19 | Developmental Perspectives of Death | | “The Last Dance,” Chapter 2, pp. 50-87 |
| 2/26 | Cultural Belief and Grief | <i>Journal 2 Due by 1p</i> | “The Last Dance,” Chapter 3, pp. 92-136 |
| 3/5 | Understanding the Experience of Loss | <i>QUIZ 2 Taken on Canvas and due by the beginning of class</i> | “The Last Dance,” Chapter 9, pp. 343-382 |

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|------|---|---|---|
| 3/12 | Spring Break | | No Class |
| 3/19 | Types of Loss: Reproductive Loss | <i>Journal 3 Due by 1p</i> | “The Last Dance,” Chapter 11, pp. 418-445 and additional readings on Canvas |
| 3/26 | Children and Teens | <i>Group One Presentation and Group Two Presentation</i> | |
| 4/2 | Older Adults and Loss | <i>QUIZ 3 Taken on Canvas and due by the beginning of class Group Three Presentation</i> | |
| 4/9 | Loss after Natural Disasters/Community Loss | <i>Group Four Presentation Journal 4 due by 1p</i> | |
| 4/16 | Sudden/Unexpected Death | <i>Group Five Presentation</i> | |
| 4/23 | Trauma Stewardship and Cultivating Self-Compassion | <i>QUIZ 4 Taken on Canvas and due by the beginning of class</i> | “The Last Dance,” Chapter 15, pp. 570-597. Assigned readings on Canvas under “modules” |
| 4/30 | Last Class | <i>Book Review (Paper) Assignment Due</i> | |

