

THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT AUSTIN

STEVE HICKS SCHOOL OF SOCIAL WORK

Course Number:	SW 360K	Instructor:	Becky Morales, LCSW-S
Unique Number:	58990	Email:	beckymorales@utexas.edu
Semester:	Spring 2020	Office:	3.104A
Meeting Time/Place:	Mondays 1:00pm – 4:00pm SSW 2.132	Office Phone:	512-461-8904
		Office Hours:	Mondays, 12:00pm– 12:45pm Other time by appointment

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 and learning methodologies to achieve the course objectives. These methods intentionally draw on diverse pedagogical approaches to be inclusive of a variety of learning styles; activities include readings, writings, discussions, lectures, guest speakers, videos, in-class group activities, student presentations, and self-reflection. This course will highlight diverse perspectives of thought, and encourages students to engage in new ways of thinking that may be represented by speakers, the professor, and classmates from diverse backgrounds.

IV. REQUIRED TEXT AND MATERIALS

Walter, C. A., & McCoyd, J. L. (2016). *Grief and loss across the lifespan: A Biopsychosocial Perspective* (2nd ed.). New York: Springer Publishing Company.

Recommended Reading:

Lipsky, L. V., & Burk, C. (2009). *Trauma stewardship: An everyday guide to caring for self while caring for others*. Oakland, CA: Berrett-Koehler.

V. COURSE REQUIREMENTS

A total of 200 Points are assigned to the course requirements in the following ways:

1. *Attendance and Participation*. Participation and discussion are critical parts of this course. Students are expected to attend all class sessions. Points will be deducted from the Attendance and Participation grade for each unexcused absence. In addition to class attendance, contributions to and participation in the discussion should reflect critical thinking, analysis, and synthesis of the content presented during class and in the required readings. Attendance and participation are worth a total of 20 points.
2. *Group Presentation*. Students will collaboratively work with a small group of classmates to complete this assignment. Students are asked to imagine that they are forming a task group at a grief and loss agency that is considering expanding culturally sensitive support services to individuals and groups who have experienced a loss. Students are to research one of the listed populations or types of loss below and create an educational presentation about the unique responses to these losses for the agency's Board. Objectives of the presentation are to: 1) encourage students to seek information and understanding about issues related to illness, death, and loss; 2) remind students that one's cultural background can influence one's perception of other cultures' expressions of illness, death, and loss; 3) identify and understand the layers of losses that are unique to each of these populations; 4) provide a forum for the "Board" to benefit from the information and knowledge that has been gained. Populations or types of loss to be researched are: loss of

a parent, loss of a child, loss of physical health (disability), loss due to immigration, sudden/unexpected loss, and cultural beliefs & death loss. Students will meet outside of class to complete the assignment and will receive a grade as a group. When needed and when appropriate, the professor reserves the right to award group assignment grades on an individual basis. The group presentation is worth a total of 50 points. Additional requirements and instructions will be reviewed on the first day of class and posted on Canvas.

3. *Book/Movie Review.* Students are asked to select one book or one movie to read/watch in order to submit a written review (approximately 4-5 pages in length) using standardized questions developed by the professor. The book/movie review is worth a total of 50 points. Additional requirements and instructions will be reviewed on the first day of class and posted on Canvas.
4. *Journals.* Students will complete three journals over the course of the semester. These journals will consist of five questions for students to reflect on about ideas/concepts learned, in addition to a self-assessment of their participation in class. The journals are worth a total of 30 points, with each journal being worth 10 points. Additional requirements and instructions will be reviewed on the first day of class and posted on Canvas.
5. *Quizzes over Readings.* Student will complete five quizzes over the course of the semester. These quizzes will consist of questions related to assigned readings and will be a combination of multiple-choice questions and short essays. The quizzes are worth a total of 50 points, with each quiz being worth 10 points. Additional requirements and instructions will be reviewed on the first day of class and posted on Canvas.

Attendance and Participation	20 points
Group Presentation	50 points
Book/Movie Review (Paper)	50 points
Journals (3)	30 points (each is worth 10 points)
Quizzes over Readings (5)	50 points (each is worth 10 points)
Total for the Course:	200 points

Extra Credit: Two extra credit assignments will be given during the semester. Information about these opportunities will be given after the start of the class.

*****PLEASE NOTE – expectations for all course assignments will be thoroughly reviewed on the first day of class and additionally posted on Canvas with all requirements and detailed 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.

In order to facilitate classroom communication and learning, cell phones and other communication devices are restricted and must be turned off when class begins and remain off throughout the duration of the class. Text messaging is not allowed during class time without special circumstances about which the professor has been made aware. Laptops may be used during class only to take notes for this course and text message (i.e. iMessage) capabilities should be disabled accordingly. These are issues of professionalism and failure to comply with this expectation may result in a grade reduction in class participation grade.

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). Assignments turned in after class begins are considered late. On subsequent days, papers must be submitted before 1:00 p.m. to avoid an additional penalty. The student must email the professor to indicate that the assignment has been submitted. An assignment will not be accepted if it is submitted more than 7 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 for each class session in its entirety 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 and students are expected to take responsibility in signing in for themselves each class

session. Late arrivals will be noted if the student is more than 10 minutes after the start of class (late arrival = 1:10pm or later). Three late arrivals will count as one absence. Points will be deducted from the Class Participation/Attendance grade for each unexcused absence. Points will be deducted from the Class Participation/Attendance grade for any departures from class prior to class being dismissed.

Classroom exercises, discussions, 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, PowerPoints, 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 engaged 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.

Student Feedback: Student feedback is welcome either informally or formally about class room learning and content, the teacher's teaching strategies, peer relationships, scheduling, or other items. Students are also encouraged to provide feedback during office hours, by phone, by e-mail, and by appointment if they desire.

Concerns about Grades

Students with concerns or questions about grades are invited to discuss these with the professor. The professor cannot consider grade revisions beyond two weeks after the assignment is returned to the student.

Students with concerns related to equitable distribution of work on a group assignment should first give the colleague in question a chance to address the concerns. Discussing the problem with your peer first is requested, using skillful and direct communication provided in a way that can be heard. If significant concerns remain, the student(s) is/are encouraged to approach the professor during the assignment's completion process, **before** the assignment is due. When needed and when appropriate, the professor reserves the right to award group assignment grades on an individual basis.

Course Modifications: Should any modifications or changes need to be made to the course (e.g. calendar, reading assignments), students will be notified in class and/or by email.

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 with

questions regarding assignments and/or concerns. The student should be prepared that it could take up to 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 race, 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. This atmosphere includes working intentionally to recognize and dismantle racism, sexism, heterosexism, and ableism in the classroom. 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 Center at 512-471-3515 or online at <https://cmhc.utexas.edu/>.

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 (e.g. Facebook, Twitter, Instagram) and other forms of electronic communication (e.g. blogs) 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://diversity.utexas.edu/disability/>.

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 on the basis of sex <https://titleix.utexas.edu/>. Faculty, field

instructors, staff, and/or teaching assistants in their supervisory roles are mandated reporters of incidents of sex discrimination, sexual harassment, sexual violence, stalking, dating violence, or any other forms of sexual misconduct. Students who report such incidents will be informed of University resources. Incidents will be reported to the University's Title IX Coordinator. Further information, including student resources related to Title IX, may also be found at <https://titleix.utexas.edu/>.

CAMPUS CARRY POLICY. The University's policy on concealed firearms 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 have concerns about their behavioral health, or if they are concerned about the behavioral health of someone else, students may use the Behavior Concerns Advice Line to discuss by phone their concerns. 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

Date	Topic	Assignment Due	Readings
1/27	Introduction to Course, Review of Syllabus, and Developing Self-Care Practices		The Syllabus
2/3	Social Work Ethics and Terminology for Grief and Loss	<i>Journal 1 Due by 1:00pm</i>	Read: Chapter 1, Grief Across the Lifespan, pp. 1-26, and “Counseling Strategies for Grief and Loss, Chapter 1” located on Canvas under “Modules”
2/10	Terminology and Types of Loss continued	<i>Quiz 1 Taken on Canvas and Due by 1:00pm</i>	Read: “Counseling Strategies for Grief and Loss, Chapter 2” located on Canvas under “Modules” Listen to: “What’s Your Grief Podcast, Season 1: Expanding Our Understanding of Grief,” https://whatsyourgrief.com/grief-podcast/
2/17	Understanding Loss: Children		Read: Chapter 3, Grief and Loss Across the Lifespan, pp. 59-82 and Chapter 4, pp. 83-109 Listen To: Episode 102 of https://www.dougy.org/index.php/grief-resources/grief-out-loud-podcast/page/P16

2/24	Understanding Loss: Tweens, Teens and Emerging Adults	<i>Quiz 2 Taken on Canvas and Due by 1:00pm</i>	Read: Chapter 5 and 6, Grief and Loss Across the Lifespan, pp. 111-170 listen to: https://www.thisamericanlife.org/339/break-up
3/2	Understanding Perinatal Attachment and Loss	<i>Journal 2 Due by 1:00pm</i>	Read: Chapter 2, Grief and Loss Across the Lifespan, pp. 27-57 Listen to: http://www.npr.org/2009/07/27/111063912/parents-of-stillborn-babies-find-joy-in-grief
3/9	Understanding Loss: Adults		Read: Chapter 7 and 8, Grief and Loss Across the Lifespan, pp. 171-234 and listen to: “Terrible, Thanks for Asking: Nathan” https://www.apmpodcasts.org/ttfa/2018/09/nathan/
3/16	NO CLASS – SPRING BREAK		
3/23	Group Presentation Work Day and <u>Required</u> Check-In with Professor	<i>Quiz 3 Taken on Canvas and Due by 1:00pm</i>	No Assigned Readings/Group Presentation Prep
3/30	Understanding Loss: Older Adults		Read: Chapter 9 and 10, Grief and Loss Across the Lifespan, pp. 235-287 https://whatsyourgrief.com/grief-and-faith-grief-belief/
4/6	Group Presentations:	<i>Journal 3</i>	Readings as assigned

	Group 1 – Loss of a Parent Group 2 – Loss of a Child	<i>Due by 1:00pm Group Presentation Outlines Due</i>	
4/13	Group Presentations: Group 3 – Loss of Physical Health Group 4 – Loss Due to Immigration	<i>Quiz 4 Taken on Canvas and Due by 1:00pm</i>	Readings as assigned
4/20	Group Presentations: Group 5 – Sudden/Unexpected Loss Group 6 – Cultural Beliefs and Death Loss		Readings as assigned
4/27	Social Justice and Loss	<i>Quiz 5 Taken on Canvas and Due by 1:00pm</i>	Read: Chapter 11, Grief Across the Lifespan, pp. 289-299 “The Rhetoric of Shared Grief: An Analysis of Letters to the Family of Michael Brown,” Found on Canvas under “Modules” and readings as assigned
5/4	LAST CLASS Trauma Stewardship and Cultivating Self- Compassion	<i>Book/Movie Review Due by Midnight</i>	Listen to: Witness to Suffering: Mindfulness and Compassion Fatigue Among Traumatic Bereavement Professionals and Volunteers. (n.d.). Retrieved from http://www.insocialwork.org/episode.asp?ep=157

X. BIBLIOGRAPHY

The reading list for this course was designed to represent the perspectives of diverse scholars.

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- Robert A. Neimeyer on Constructivist Therapy and Grief Therapy. (2016, July 24). Retrieved from https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tMX_1yeKNol
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