Grief Counseling

I. STANDARDIZED COURSE DESCRIPTION

The framework for this course involves theories of grief and loss and 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 the ethical decision-making process. Childhood, adolescence, 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 for 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. Students will examine, in depth, their own responses and reactions to grief work.

II. STANDARDIZED COURSE OBJECTIVES

Upon completion of this course, the students will be able to:

1. Demonstrate an in-depth understanding of the concept of loss and its implications for individuals during 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;
3. Demonstrate an advanced clinical knowledge of the relationship between 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 assessment models 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 advanced knowledge of social work values and the ethical decision making
processes as they relate to ethical dilemmas in grief work and practice.
7. Identify and evaluate counselor loss and grief, burnout, and healthy adaptation.

III. REQUIRED TEXTS AND MATERIALS


Social Work Desk Reference, 3rd Edition (required by the MSSW program)

Recommended:


*All readings from the recommended section will be available in Canvas*

IV. TEACHING METHODS:

A variety of teaching methods will be utilized, including lectures, class discussions, case examples, video presentations, role plays, and guest speakers with information addressing diverse populations, including ethnicity, culture, gender, age, sexual orientation, and the economically and/or socially disadvantaged.

V. COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Course Assignments:

The course assignments are listed below. Detailed instructions for each assignment will be given to students during class well in advance of the due date. The due dates for each assignment are listed both on Canvas and the course schedule (below).

1. Class Participation 20 points
2. 2 Case Assessments (10 points each) 20 points
3. Thought Papers (5 points each) 20 points
4. Non-Death Loss Literature Review 40 points
5. Biopsychosocial Group Presentation 40 points
VI. GRADES

GRADING SCALE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Score Range</th>
<th>Grade</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>94.0 and Above</td>
<td>A</td>
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<tr>
<td>90.0 to 93.999</td>
<td>A-</td>
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<tr>
<td>87.0 to 89.999</td>
<td>B+</td>
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<tr>
<td>84.0 to 86.999</td>
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<td>80.0 to 83.999</td>
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<td>74.0 to 76.999</td>
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<tr>
<td>70.0 to 73.999</td>
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<tr>
<td>67.0 to 69.999</td>
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<td>64.0 to 66.999</td>
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<tr>
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<td>D-</td>
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<tr>
<td>Below 60.0</td>
<td>F</td>
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Graduate students must earn a minimum grade of C in the course for credit.

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.

Office hours should be utilized by students to discuss concerns about the class that are of a personal nature (such as due dates for assignments, personal stressors, clarification of assignment expectations beyond what’s been discussed during class). All office hours will be conducted via Zoom. If the student is not able to meet with the professor during their designated office hours, the student will contact the professor by email or during class to discuss an alternative time to meet.

Personal cell phones and notifications on other devices will be silenced during class.

Time Management: Students will lose 5% of the total point allotted to an assignment for each day that it is late. Please talk with the professor prior to the due date if you foresee any
challenges with submitting an assignment on time. Assignments are submitted via Canvas by midnight on the due date (unless otherwise specified). **No assignment will be accepted if it is submitted more than 7 days past the due date.**

**Attendance:** It is important for students to be punctual, and attendance is expected, as is handing in assignments on time. Students have one unexcused absence per semester in this course. Two points will be deducted from the Class Participation/Attendance grade for each unexcused absence after that. Three or more unexcused absences may result in the student being dropped from the course. Late arrivals will be noted 10 minutes after the start of class. 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. 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 via email 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. All office hours will be conducted via Zoom (online). Additionally, the student can email the professor with questions regarding assignments and/or concerns. The student should be prepared that it could take 24-48 hours for the professor to respond.

**Communication.** The professor relies heavily on Canvas as a tool to help with communication between class sessions. The student is responsible for routinely checking Canvas for course updates and announcements as well as email communications. All assignments for this course will be submitted via Canvas. Failure to regularly check the course Canvas site could result in mistakes being made with regard to the submission of assignments and subsequent point deductions.

**VIII. UNIVERSITY POLICIES**

**COVID-19 RELATED INFORMATION.** The University’s policies and practices related to the pandemic may be accessed at: [https://protect.utexas.edu/](https://protect.utexas.edu/)

**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.

**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/](http://diversity.utexas.edu/disability/).

**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/](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/](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.

**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.

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 campus carry may be found here: https://campuscarry.utexas.edu.

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 and COVID-19 ADVICE LINE (BCCAL). 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 and COVID-19 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 https://safety.utexas.edu/behavior-concerns-advice-line. The Behavior Concerns and COVID-19 Advice Line has been expanded to support The University of Texas at Austin community during the COVID-19 pandemic. By calling 512-232-5050 - Option 2 for COVID-19, students, faculty and staff can be assisted in English and Spanish with COVID-19 support.

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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Assigned Readings</th>
<th>Listen To</th>
<th>Optional Listen</th>
<th>Optional Reading</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>8/30/21</td>
<td>Review Syllabus and Ethical Obligation of Self-Care</td>
<td><strong>Assigned Readings:</strong> The Syllabus</td>
<td><strong>Listen To:</strong> Grief Out Loud: Grieving While Black—Breeshia Wade</td>
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<tr>
<td>9/06/21</td>
<td>Labor Day Holiday: No Class</td>
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<td>9/13/21</td>
<td>Grief Counseling Introduction Ethical Considerations and Theoretical Perspectives for Grief Counseling</td>
<td><strong>Assigned Readings:</strong> Principles and Practice of Grief Counseling, Chapters 2 and 3, pp 15-44 And “Ways of Grieving Among Ojibwe Elders—‘They’re All Around Us. They’re Always,” found on Canvas</td>
<td><strong>Due:</strong> Thought Paper #1, by midnight</td>
<td><strong>Listen to:</strong> “Grief for Beginners: 5 Things to Know about Processing Loss,” Life Kit Podcast (NPR), David Kessler and Brenè on Grief and Finding Meaning, Spotify</td>
<td><strong>Optional Listen:</strong> “How To Say the Right Thing at the Worst Time”</td>
<td><strong>Optional Reading:</strong> Ch. 1 and 2 of Principles and Practice of Grief Counseling, pp. 3-25 (scanned and located on Canvas)</td>
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<tr>
<td>9/20/21</td>
<td>Complicating Factors: Ambiguous Loss and Disenfranchised Grief</td>
<td><strong>Assigned Readings:</strong> Principles and Practice of Grief Counseling, Ch. 4, pp. 45-62 Grieving While Black, Part 1</td>
<td><strong>Listen To:</strong> Living the Questions It’s really settling in now, the losses large and small, On Being</td>
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<td><strong>Due:</strong> Submit Topic for Non-Death Loss Paper</td>
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<td>Date</td>
<td>Activity</td>
<td>Assigned Readings</td>
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| 9/27/21    | Optional Listen: “What’s Your Grief: Is Grief Ever ‘On Hold’?”| **Assigned Readings:** Principles and Practice of Grief Counseling, Ch. 6 and 7, pp. 79-120  
Optional Readings: Grief Across the Lifespan, Chapters 3 and 4 (located on Canvas) |
| 10/04/21   | Understanding Grief in the Body: Maternal Mortality and Perinatal Loss | **Assigned Readings:** “Perinatal Loss and Attachment,” from Grief and Loss Across the Lifespan, found on Canvas  
Due: Thought Paper #2, by midnight  
Listen to (and read): “Black Mothers Keep Dying After Giving Birth. Shalon Irving’s Story Explains Why.”  
And  
“Disenfranchised Grief,” Bereaved But Still Me |
| 10/11/21   | In Class Case Assessment #1                                   | **Assigned Readings:** “Grief in GLBT Populations: Focus on Gay and Lesbian Youth” and Rosenblatt, located on Canvas  
**Assigned Viewing:**  
Guest Lecture Recording: Erin Spalding, The Christi Center, located on Canvas  
Optional Listen: “Black Queer Grief,” Black Radical Queer |
| 10/18/21   | Making Room for Big Emotions: Interventions Aimed at Containing Grief | **Assigned Readings:** Principles and Practice of Grief Counseling, Ch. 11, pp 187-215  
Techniques of Grief Therapy, Part XII, pp. 65-72, located on Canvas  
Due: Thought Paper #3, by midnight |
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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Assigned Readings</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>10/25/21</td>
<td>Interventions, Con’t</td>
<td>Listen To: “Continuing Bonds with Deceased Loved Ones,” What’s Your Grief</td>
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<td>Assigned Readings: Techniques of Grief Therapy, Part XV, pp. 313-336, located on Canvas</td>
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<td>Due: Non-Death Loss Literature Review</td>
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<td>Listen to: “ep.153: big emotions in grief - jenny delacruz, lpc,” from The Dougy Center and “A Sherpa Named Zoi: How to Walk Through Grief and Live,” Mindfulness and Grief Institute</td>
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<tr>
<td>11/01/21</td>
<td>Diagnosing and Treating Complicated Grief</td>
<td>Assigned Readings: Principles and Practice of Grief Counseling, Ch. 9 and 10, pp. 139-186 And “Prolonged grief disorder in refugees from Syria: qualitative analysis of culturally relevant symptoms and implications for ICD-1,” located on Canvas</td>
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<td>11/08/21</td>
<td>In Class Case Assessment #2</td>
<td>Assigned Readings: Grieving While Black, Part 2, other readings TBD</td>
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<td>11/15/21</td>
<td>Self-Care for the Grief Professional</td>
<td>Assigned Readings: Principles and Practice of Grief Counseling, Ch. 13, pp. 237-258</td>
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<tr>
<td>11/22/21</td>
<td>Case Assessment Presentations</td>
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<td>11/29/21</td>
<td>Case Assessment Presentations</td>
<td>Thought Paper #4, by midnight</td>
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<tr>
<td>12/06/21</td>
<td>Last Class</td>
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### X. Bibliography


Transcript - how to say the right thing at the worst time. Slate Magazine. (2021, August 18). https://slate.com/transcripts/ejICZTJMMk96Tkt0WjdvdkswSkRRbW9tVTEzNIvzVVJkQXNUdVAyYmQ4cz0=.


