

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

<b>Course Number:</b>	SW 393R18	<b>Instructor:</b>	Sam Synett, LCSW-S
<b>Unique Number:</b>	61640	<b>Email:</b>	Samantha.synett@utexas.austin.edu
<b>Meeting Time:</b>	Wednesdays	<b>Cell Phone:</b>	254-307-1477
	2:30pm – 5:30pm	<b>Office:</b>	3.104A
<b>Meeting Place:</b>	SSW 2.112	<b>Office Hours:</b>	Wednesdays, 1:00pm – 2:30pm and by appt, all office hours conducted via Zoom unless otherwise specified

**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. 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.

### IV. REQUIRED TEXT AND MATERIALS

Kosminsky, P. S., & Jordan, J. R. (2016). Attachment-informed grief therapy: The clinicians guide to foundations and applications (1st ed.). New York, NY: Routledge/Taylor & Francis Group.

Neimeyer, R. A. (2016). Techniques of Grief Therapy (1st ed.). New York, NY: Taylor and Francis.

#### **Recommended:**

\*Worden, J. W. (2018). Grief counseling and grief therapy: A handbook for the mental health Practitioner (5th ed.). New York, NY: Springer Publishing.

\*Lipsky, L.V. (2009). Trauma stewardship: An everyday guide to caring for self while caring for others. San Francisco, CA: Berrett-Koehler Publishers, Inc. Rando, T.A. (1993). Treatment of Complicated Mourning. Champaign, IL: Research Press.

\*Rando, T.A. (1993). *Treatment of Complicated Mourning*. Champaign, IL: Research Press.

Social Work Desk Reference, 3rd Edition

*\*These recommended readings will be available in Canvas.*

### 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	30 points
2. 2 Reflections	30 points
3. Case Assessment	50 points
4. Non-Death Loss Literature Review	100 points
5. Grief Assessment Group Project	100 points
6. Loss History Timeline	40 points
<b>Total</b>	<b>350 Points</b>

## VI. GRADES

332.5-350	A
315-331	A-
304.5-314	B+
294-303	B
280-293	B-
269.5-279	C+
259-268	C

### GRADING SCALE

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

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.

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 during class.

**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. Points

will be deducted from the Class Participation/Attendance grade for each unexcused absence after that. Students with more than two unexcused classes will lose a letter grade. Three or more unexcused absences may result in the student being dropped from the course. Late arrivals will be noted if the student is more than 10 minutes after the start of class. Three late arrivals will count as one unexcused absence.

**Late Assignments:** Except in the case of extended emergencies, and then only with the permission of the professor, **late assignments will not be accepted without penalty**. Students are expected to turn in all required assignments on the agreed upon due date. If accepted, late assignments will be assessed point penalties at the rate of three (3) points each day late. If the due date is a problem, the student can see the professor and negotiate another due date well in advance.

Classroom exercises, discussions, role-plays, guest speakers and other class experiential exercises are essential for the students' professional learning and continued development of selfawareness. 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, canvas or text 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 hours for the professor to respond.**

## **VII. UNIVERSITY POLICIES**

**COVID-19 RELATED INFORMATION.** The University's policies and practices related to the pandemic may be accessed at: <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/>.

**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 ACADEMIC INTEGRITY.** Students who violate University rules on academic 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 academic dishonesty will be strictly enforced. For further information, please visit the Student Conduct and Academic Integrity website at: <http://deanofstudents.utexas.edu/conduct>.

**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.

**UNIVERSITY ELECTRONIC MAIL STUDENT NOTIFICATION.** Electronic mail (email), like postal mail, is a mechanism for official University communication to students. The University will exercise the right to send email communications to all students, and the University will expect that email communications will be received and read in a timely manner. Students can find UT Austin's policies and instructions for updating their e-mail address at <https://it.utexas.edu/policies/university-electronic-mail-student-notification-policy>.

**RELIGIOUS HOLY DAYS.** A student who misses classes or other required activities, including examinations, for the observance of a religious holy day should inform the instructor as far in advance of the absence as possible so that arrangements can be made to complete an assignment within a reasonable period after the absence. A reasonable accommodation does not include substantial modification to academic standards, or adjustments of requirements essential to any program of instruction. Students and instructors who have questions or concerns about academic accommodations for religious observance or religious beliefs may contact the [Office for Inclusion and Equity](#). The University does not maintain a list of religious holy days.

**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.

## VIII. COURSE SCHEDULE

Date	Topic	Assignments, Readings, and Activities
8/24/22	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Review Syllabus</li> <li>• Ethical Obligation of Self-Care</li> </ul>	<p><b>Assigned Readings:</b> The Syllabus</p> <p><b>Canvas:</b> Bordere “Social Justice Conceptualizations in Grief and Loss”</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Introduction - Social Justice Issues in Grief</li> </ul>	<b>Listen to:</b> <a href="#">Grief Out Loud: Grieving While Black—Breeshia Wade</a>
<b>8/28/22</b>	<b>Assignment</b>	<b>First Reflection Due</b>
<b>8/31/22</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Theoretical Perspectives and terminology for Grief and Loss Practice</li> </ul>	<b>Assigned Readings:</b> Techniques of Grief Therapy, Ch. 1 and 2.  <b>Listen to:</b> <a href="#">“Grief for Beginners: 5 Things to Know about Processing Loss.”</a>
<b>9/7/22</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Theoretical Perspectives Continued &amp; Theories behind Trauma Counseling</li> </ul>	<b>Assigned Readings:</b> Techniques of Grief Therapy, Ch. 3  <b>Listen to:</b> <a href="#">David Kessler and Brené on Grief and Finding Meaning</a> , Spotify  <b>Optional Listen:</b> <a href="#">“How To Say the Right Thing at the Worst Time”</a>
<b>9/14/22</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Grief, Loss, and COVID-19</li> </ul>	<b>Assigned Readings:</b>  <b>Canvas:</b> Goveas, “Grief and the COVID-19 Pandemic in Older Adults”  Fitzgerald, “What we have learnt about trauma, loss, and grief for children in response to COVID-19”  Holmes, “Impact of COVID-19 Pandemic on Posttraumatic Stress, Grief, Burnout, and Secondary Trauma of Social Workers in the United States”  Listen to: <a href="#">“Shared Trauma in the COVID19 Pandemic: Interview with Carol Tosone, Ph.D.”</a> , from the Social Work Podcast
<b>9/16/22</b>	<b>Assignment</b>	<b>Submit Topic for Non-Death Loss Paper</b>
<b>9/21/22</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Effect of Developmental Level on Bereavement in Children and Teens</li> </ul>	<b>Assigned Readings:</b> Attachment-Informed Grief Therapy, Ch.1-3  <b>Canvas:</b> Goldman/Livotti, “Grief in GLBT Populations: Focus on Gay and Lesbian Youth”



		<p><b>Listen to:</b> <a href="#">Into the Fold, Episode 13: Deportation Threat and the Children of the Undocumented,</a>” Into the Fold.</p> <p><b>Optional Listen:</b> <a href="#">Grief is a Sneaky Bitch: Talking About Death with Kids</a></p>
9/28/22	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Introduction to Assessment and Interventions for Adults with Grief, Loss and Trauma</li> </ul>	<p><b>Assigned Readings:</b> Techniques of Grief Therapy, ch.6-9</p> <p><b>Canvas:</b> Review Assessment questions from “The Grief Assessment Intervention Workbook” Pomeroy and Garcia</p>
10/5/22	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Assessment Continued</li> <li>• Early Intervention Practice Assessment Small Groups</li> </ul>	<p><b>Assigned Readings:</b> Attachment Informed Grief Therapy ch. 5</p>
10/12/22	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Grief and Cultural/Gender Differences</li> </ul>	<p><b>Assigned Readings:</b></p> <p><b>Canvas:</b> Rosenblatt, “Cultural Competence and Humility”</p> <p>Stewart, “The Rhetoric of Shared Grief”</p> <p>Almack, K., Seymour, J., &amp; Bellamy, G. “Exploring the Impact of Sexual Orientation on Experiences and Concerns about End of Life Care and on Bereavement for Lesbian, Gay and Bisexual Older People.”</p> <p><b>Listen to:</b> “<a href="#">Black Queer Grief,</a>” Black Radical Queer</p>
10/16/22	<b>Assignment</b>	<b>Non-Death Loss Literature Review Due</b>
10/19/22	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ambiguous Loss</li> <li>• Disenfranchised Grief</li> <li>• Disoriented Grief</li> <li>• <i>Guest Speaker</i></li> </ul>	<p><b>Assigned Readings:</b> Techniques of Grief Therapy, ch. 25 &amp; 27</p> <p><b>Canvas:</b> “Disoriented Grief: A Lens Through Which to View the Experience of Katrina Evacuees”</p> <p><b>Listen to:</b> “<a href="#">Disenfranchised Grief,</a>” Bereaved But Still Me</p> <p><b>Optional Listen:</b> “<a href="#">What’s Your Grief: Is Grief Ever ‘On Hold’?</a>”</p>

10/26/22	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Grief and Trauma</li> <li><i>Time in Groups</i></li> </ul>	<p><b>Assigned Readings:</b> Techniques of Grief Therapy Ch. 4</p> <p><b>Canvas:</b> Shapiro, “EMDR Treatment of Recent Trauma”</p>
11/2/22	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Unexpected Traumatic Loss: Homicide, Suicide and Overdose</li> <li><i>Guest Speaker</i></li> <li><i>Time in Groups</i></li> </ul>	<p><b>Assigned Readings:</b> Attachment Informed Grief Therapy Ch. 6 Techniques of Grief Therapy Ch. 48</p> <p><b>Canvas:</b> “Is Suicide Bereavement Different: Perspectives from Research and Practice”</p>
11/6/22	<b>Assignment</b>	<b>Second Reflection Due</b>
11/9/22	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Prolonged Grief Disorder in DSM-V</li> <li>Complicated Mourning</li> <li><i>Time in Groups</i></li> </ul>	<p><b>Assigned Readings:</b> Techniques of Grief Therapy, Ch. 14 &amp; 28 Attachment-Informed Grief Therapy, Ch. 4</p> <p><b>Canvas:</b> “Prolonged grief disorder in refugees from Syria: qualitative analysis of culturally relevant symptoms and implications for ICD-1”</p>
11/16/22	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Clinical Skill Development: Exploring Resistance</li> <li><i>Group Case Assessment Presentations</i></li> </ul>	<p><b>Assigned Readings</b> Techniques of Grief Therapy Ch. 17 &amp; 41 Attachment-Informed Grief Therapy, Ch. 8 and 9</p> <p><b>Canvas:</b> “Predictors of grief following the death of one's child: the contribution of finding meaning,”</p> <p><b>Listen To:</b> <a href="#">“Continuing Bonds with Deceased Loved Ones,”</a> What’s Your Grief</p> <p><a href="#">ep.153: big emotions in grief - jenny delacruz, lpc,</a>” The Dougy Center</p> <p><a href="#">“A Sherpa Named Zoi: How to Walk Through Grief and Live,”</a> Mindfulness and Grief Institute</p>
11/18/22	<b>Assignment</b>	<b>Grief Assessment Group Assignment Due</b>
11/23/22	<b>Fall Break</b>	<b>No Class!</b>
11/30/22	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Final Reflections</li> <li>Class Good-bye</li> </ul>	<p><b>Assigned Readings:</b></p> <p><b>Canvas:</b> Goelitz, “You can be affected too”</p>

<b>12/9/22</b>	<b>Final Assignment</b>	<b>Loss History Timeline Due</b>
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## IX. BIBLIOGRAPHY

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