

**The University of Texas at Austin
Steve Hicks School of Social Work
Spring 2023**

Course Number: SW 387 R 1

Professor's Name: Erin Spalding, LCSW-S

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Semester: Spring 2023

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2.122

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SW 387R1 Loss and Grief: Individual, Family, and Cultural Perspectives

I. Standardized Course Description

This course will give students an opportunity to explore and understand their perceptions and beliefs of death and dying and how individual cultural differences influence that experience and prepare them for working with clients on grief and loss. The course examines issues of death and dying, grief processes, sense of meaning, including coping and adaptation for individuals and families as they deal with various kinds of loss. We will look at a range of factors (involving the individual, family, community, and society) that can impact, impede, or facilitate the experiences of individuals and families. Grief will be explored from a lifespan developmental perspective (from prenatal development through late adulthood) within the context of varied types of family and socio-cultural systems. An emphasis will be placed on both personal and professional applications of course information. 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)

II. Course Objectives

At the end of this course, students are expected to be able to:

1. Critically analyze and assess values and ethical dilemmas regarding death, dying, grief and loss (such as end of life decision making).
2. Demonstrate and appraise diverse cultural, geographical, spiritual, ethnic, and psychosocial factors related to grief, loss, and mourning;

3. Demonstrate strategies designed to reduce discrimination and oppression regarding death and dying issues and explore the various determinants of grief and their impact on the tasks of mourning with various populations at risk;
4. Compare and contrast theories examining the developmental impact of bereavement, grief, and mourning within the life span of an individual, family, groups and communities;
5. Examine and critically evaluate various community referral networks for loss-specific services and policy implications of end-of-life decision making;
6. Identify their own loss histories and beliefs and differentiate their personal boundaries from their professional roles and apply a health perspective in assessments and clinical interventions;
7. Critically evaluate research issues relating to the emotional, behavioral, cognitive, physical and spiritual expressions that accompany bereavement, grief, and mourning;
8. Demonstrate practice competence in grief and loss issues within an ecological framework.

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 Text and Materials

Required Text

Harris, D. L., & Bordere, T.C. (2016) *Handbook for Social Justice in Loss and Grief: Exploring Diversity, Equity and Inclusion*. New York, NY: Routledge.

Lipsky, L.V. (2009). *Trauma stewardship: An everyday guide to caring for self while caring for others*. San Francisco, CA: Berrett-Koehler Publishers, Inc.

Optional Text

Neimeyer, R. A., Harris, D. L., Winokuer, H.R., & Thorton, G. F. (2011). *Grief and Bereavement in Contemporary Society: Bridging Research and Practice*. New York, NY: Routledge.

Additional readings will be available on Canvas.

V. Course Requirements

Assignment	Total Points
1. Attendance Class Participation	50 points
2. Learning Reflection Papers (2)	50 points
3. Loss History/Personal Awareness Assignment	100 points
4. Community Interview Paper	100 points
5. Group Presentation	100 points
Total	400 points

Letter grades will be assigned as follows:

Point Total	Grade
376-400 points (94.0 and above)	A
360-375 points (90.0-93.999)	A-
348-359 points (87.0-89.999)	B+
336-347 points (84.0-86.999)	B
320-335 points (80.00-83.99)	B-
308-319 points (77.0-79.999)	C+
296-307 points (74.0-76.999)	C
280-295 points (70.0-73.999)	C-
268-279 points (67.0-69.999)	D+
256-267 points (64.0-66.999)	D
240-255 points (60.0-63.999)	D-
239 points or below (59.999 and below)	F

VI. Class Policies

- Class Participation:** Students are expected to attend class regularly and to participate in an interactive framework between collegiate students, professor and invited guest speakers. Students are expected to complete the readings prior to class and should be well prepared to participate in discussions and experiential learning assignments. Failure to attend class and demonstrate through discussions that one has comprehended (or attempted to understand) the readings will be considered in assigning the final grade.

2. **Attendance:** Punctuality is one of the many important standards of professional behavior. Class will begin promptly at 2:30 and end by 5:15. A student is considered absent if they arrive more than 10 minutes late to class, leave early, or are unable to come to class without an approved excuse. Each student has one excused absence without explanation. Absences may result in a reduction by one letter grade. If a student is going to be absent, efforts should be made to contact the professor in advance. Students are responsible for any material missed due to absence.
3. **Professional Conduct in Class:** The classroom is an opportunity to practice professional demeanor and mutual respect. We share the class as a time to learn in a safe and nonjudgmental environment. Here, we will be exposed to diverse ideas and opinions, and we will not always, nor should we, agree with the ideas expressed by others. Differences in values, opinions, and feelings of class members and guest speakers will be respected. Consequently, disrespect toward others is not tolerated and will be handled directly and in the context in which it occurs. In order to facilitate classroom communication and learning, cell phones and all communication devices are restricted from being on, or should be placed in 'silent' mode while in class. Laptop computers will not be used during class unless specifically authorized by the professor for a particular student or situation.
4. **Late Assignments:** 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. If an unexpected emergency has caused the delay, please reach out to the professor ASAP to discuss the new due date and possible penalties.
5. **Writing Assignments:** The ability to write in a professional manner is very important for social workers, particularly in settings where they work as members of interdisciplinary teams. Written work must be typed, edited for grammatical, spelling and typographical errors. Work will be graded based on the American Psychological Association (APA – 5th edition) guidelines for references and citations, unless otherwise stated in the guidelines for the assignment.
6. **Class Performance:** If students have concerns about their class performance, the professor is more than willing to work with them to help improve their understanding of the class material of the assignments *prior to the end of the semester*. **Final grades assigned in the course are not negotiable.**
7. **Classroom Confidentiality:** Learning about grief and loss can elicit difficult emotions and may involve self-disclosure. The instructor and classmates have the ethical responsibility to see that differences in values, opinions, and feelings of class members and guest speakers will be respected and that an emotionally safe class environment is maintained. 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 FERPA regulations as well. Discussions with individuals outside of the educational context are 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, 3.2, and 3.2 of the Standards for Social Work Education.

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.

DISABILITY ACCOMODATION STATEMENT. If you are a student with a disability, or think you may have a disability, and need accommodations please contact Disability and Access (D&A). You may refer to D&A's website for contact and more information: <http://diversity.utexas.edu/disability/> . If you are already registered with D&A, please deliver your Accommodation Letter to me as early as possible in the semester so we can discuss your approved accommodations and how they apply in my class.

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 (subject to change)

Other methods of teaching, such as podcasts 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:	Readings:	Due:
Monday, Jan. 9	Introduction to the Course Personal Awareness & Defining Loss Theories of Grief and Loss Intro Importance of Self-Care	Harris & Bordere. Chapter 1: <i>Social Justice Conceptualizations in Grief and Loss</i> <u>Listen to: "Shared Trauma in the COVID19 Pandemic: Interview with Carol Tosone, Ph.D.,"</u> from the Social Work Podcast	
Sunday, Jan. 15			1st Learning Reflection Due
Monday, Jan. 16		UT Closed for Martin Luther King Holiday	
Monday, Jan. 23	Continuation of Theories of Grief and Loss Practice Models - Frameworks for Coping with Loss Ambiguous and Disenfranchised Grief Intro	<i>Trauma Stewardship: Ch. 1 & 2</i> Neimeyer, R., et. al (Eds). Ch. 18: <i>Giving Voice to Nonfinite Loss and Grief in Bereavement.</i> Chung, D. (2008). <i>Supporting Women After Domestic Violence: Loss, Trauma and Recovery - By Hilary Abrahams. Health & Social Care in the Community</i> Additional readings on Canvas	

<p>Monday, Jan. 30</p>	<p>Children and Teens</p>	<p>Trauma Stewardship: Ch. 3</p> <p>Lopez, S.A. (2011). <i>Culture as an influencing factor in adolescent grief and bereavement.</i></p> <p>Webb, N., (Eds). Ch. 1: <i>The Child and Death</i></p> <p>Dawson, A., Brookes, L., Carter, B., Larman, G., & Jackson, D. (2013). <i>Stigma, Health and Incarceration: Turning the tide for children with a parent in prison.</i> Journal of Child Health Care</p> <p>Listen to: Into the Fold, Episode 13: Deportation Threat and the Children of the Undocumented,” Into the Fold.</p> <p>Optional Listen: Grief is a Sneaky Bitch: Talking About Death with Kids</p>	
<p>Monday, Feb. 6</p>	<p>Grief with Special Populations (Veterans, LGBTQ, Incarcerated Individuals, Persons with Intellectual Challenges,, etc.)</p>	<p>Harris & Bordere. Chapter 12: <i>The Silenced Emotion: Older Women and Grief in Prison.</i></p> <p>Neimeyer, R., et. al (Eds). Ch. 20: <i>Traumatic Death in the United States Military: Initiating the Dialogue on War-Related Loss.</i></p> <p>Neimeyer, R. et. al (Eds). Ch. 19: <i>Grief in GLBT Populations: Focus on Gay and Lesbian Youth.</i></p> <p>Grief Out Loud: Grieving While Black—Breeshia Wade</p>	

<p>Monday, Feb. 13</p>	<p>Reproductive Grief & Loss (including Perinatal Loss & Grief Associated with Abortion)</p> <p>Ambiguous and Disenfranchised Loss continued</p>	<p>Trauma Stewardship: Chapter 5</p> <p>Harris & Bordere. Chapter 5: <i>Inequality, Exclusion and Infant Mortality: Listening to Bereaved Mothers.</i></p> <p>McBain, T. D., & Reeves, P. (2019). <i>Women's Experience of Infertility and Disenfranchised Grief</i></p> <p>Wahlig, J.L. (2015). <i>Losing the child they thought they had: Therapeutic suggestions for an ambiguous loss perspective with parents of a transgender child.</i> Journal of GLBT Family Studies</p> <p>Parents of Stillborn Babies Find Joy in Grief. (2009, July 27). Retrieved from http://www.npr.org/2009/7/27/111063912/parents-of-stillborn-babies-find-joy-in-grief</p>	
<p>Monday, Feb. 20</p>	<p>Death & Dying</p>	<p>Trauma Stewardship: Chapter 6</p> <p>Neimeyer, R., et. al (Eds). Ch. 6: <i>A Task-Based Approach to Counseling the Bereaved.</i></p> <p>Harris & Bordere. Chapter 14: <i>Social Expectations of the Bereaved.</i></p> <p>Listen To: "Continuing Bonds with Deceased Loved Ones," What's Your Grief</p> <p>Additional readings/podcasts on Canvas</p>	
<p>Sunday, Feb. 26</p>			<p>Personal Loss History Paper</p>

Monday, Feb. 27	Adoption and Foster Care	<p>Trauma Stewardship: Chapter 7 Schachter, S. and Schachter, J. (2011). <i>Adoption: A life begun with loss.</i></p> <p>Mitchell, M. B. (2018). “No one acknowledged my loss and hurt”: Non-death loss, grief, and trauma in foster care. <i>Child & Adolescent Social Work Journal</i>, 35(1), 1–9.</p> <p>Gupta, A., & Featherstone, B. (2020). <i>On hope, loss, anger, and the spaces in between: Reflections on living with/in adoption and the role of the social worker.</i> <i>Child & Family Social Work.</i></p> <p>Morgan, H. C., Nolte, L., Rishworth, B., & Stevens, C. (2019). ‘My children are my world’: Raising the voices of birth mothers with substantial experience of counselling following the loss of their children to adoption or foster care.” <i>Adoption & Fostering</i></p>	
Monday, March 6	Adult and Geriatrics Living with Chronic Illness Caregiver Grief Group Assignments	<p>Trauma Stewardship: Chapter 8</p> <p>Harris & Bordere. Chapter 21: <i>Care for the Caregiver: A Multilayered Approach</i></p> <p>Utz, R. L, et al. (2002). <i>The effects of widowhood on older adults’ social participation: An evaluation of activity, disengagement, and continuity theories.</i> <i>Gerontologist</i>,42(4), 522-33.</p> <p>Wu, Z. & Schimmele, C. M. (2007). Uncoupling in late life. <i>Generations</i></p> <p>Additional readings on Canvas</p>	
Monday, March 13	Spring Break		Have Fun!!!
Monday, March 20	Disoriented Grief Community Tragedy & Trauma	<p>Trauma Stewardship: Chapter 9</p> <p>Lattanzi-Licht, M. and Doka, K. (2003). <i>Living with grief: Coping with public tragedy</i></p> <p>Malone,P., Pomeroy, E., and Jones, B. (2011). <i>Disoriented grief: A lens through which to view the experience of Katrina evacuees.</i></p> <p>Listen to: “Shared Trauma in the COVID19 Pandemic: Interview with Carol Tosone, Ph.D.” from the Social Work Podcast</p>	

Sunday, March 26			Community Interview Paper Due
Monday, March 27	Complicated Grief & Prolonged Grief Disorder	<p>Trauma Stewardship: Chapter 10 & 11</p> <p>Rando, T. (1993). <i>Treatment of complicated mourning</i> (pp.149-184).</p> <p>Neimeyer, R. et. al (Eds). Ch. 12: <i>Treating Complicated Grief: Converging Approaches</i>.</p>	
Monday, April 3	Sudden and Traumatic Death Suicide, Overdose and Loss to Crime	<p>Armour, M. (2007). Violent death.</p> <p>Zayas, L. (2011). <i>Latinas attempting suicide: When cultures, families and daughters collide</i>.</p> <p>Neimeyer, R., et. al (Eds). Ch. 17: <i>Is Suicide Bereavement Different? Perspectives from Research and Practice</i></p> <p>Trauma Stewardship: Chapter 12 & Conclusion</p>	
Monday, April 10	Group Presentations	Neimeyer, R., et. al (Eds). Ch. 28: <i>Technology and Grief Support in the 21st Century: A Multimedia Platform</i> .	
Monday, April 17	Group Presentations	Harris & Bordere. Chapter 22: <i>The Liberating Capacity of Compassion</i> .	
Sunday, April 23			All Group Project Reports Due

Monday, April 24	Transcendence, Transformation & Hope Personal Awareness Revisited		
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IX. Bibliography

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