Course Description

This course addresses the theoretical framework of human loss and grief from a culturally and philosophically diverse perspective. It seeks to provide information about why and how humans grieve and how grieving is affected by type of loss, socioeconomic and cultural factors, individual personality and family functioning. Attention is focused on life span development and the meaning of death and loss at different ages. Various types of loss are discussed from an individual, family and socio/cultural perspective. The importance of understanding trauma and its relationship to grief and loss will be addressed. Coping and resiliency in loss are explored, emphasizing the diversity of human response and focusing on the significance of social groups in integrating loss. The formation and practice of rituals, and diversity in religious and spiritual experience as a component of coping with loss will be discussed.

While some interpersonal practice methods will be discussed, this course is not designed nor designated by the School of Social Work as a methods class.

Course Objectives

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

1. Understand the implications for practice and policy of the changing patterns of death/dying in the U.S., regarding socioeconomic status, age, gender, and cultural/ethnic patterns.
2. Understand the different meanings of loss and the impact of loss on those grieving, caregivers, and larger social groups.
3. Identify and describe responses and reactions of the various caregivers (including social workers) to death and loss and the impact of these reactions on client systems.
4. Demonstrate increased awareness of the medical ethical issues in death and dying.
5. Summarize the different theoretical models for understanding bereavement and grieving.
6. Identify the practical issues and problems that arise for individuals and families following a death or major loss in the family and the significance of social groups in bereavement.

7. Examine the variables impacting mourning (e.g. ability, age, class, color, culture, ethnicity, family structure, gender (including gender identity and gender expression), marital status, national origin, race, religion or spirituality, sex, and sexual orientation) in the experience and expression of grief for the family and/or person facing death and bereavement.

8. Discuss the ways in which violence affects the experience of death or loss, and the impact of layered loss when continually exposed to loss or violence.


10. Discuss dominant themes of complicated mourning, including multiple losses, traumatized loss; disenfranchised and stigmatized loss, cultural genocide, and historical transmission of loss.

11. Discuss typical ethical concerns related to death, loss, and grief.

**Relationship of the Course to Four Curricular Themes**

- **Multiculturalism and Diversity** will be addressed through the discussion of worker-client differences and power/privilege differentials based on culture, ethnicity, race, gender, age, and social class. Social system and case examples, possible interventions, and readings will reflect this theme.

- **Social Justice and Social Change** will be addressed through discussion of differences between problems that are responsive to interpersonal practice interventions and those which result from poverty, discrimination, and disenfranchisement and require systemic as well as individual intervention.

- **Promotion, Prevention, Treatment, and Rehabilitation** will be addressed through identification of ways to provide early intervention, guidance, and advocacy within systems, methods of preventing or mitigating later problems in loss and bereavement, and discussion of intervention theories and health care and social policies which support adaptive responses to loss that enhance later adjustment.

- **Behavioral and Social Science Research** will inform this course, especially current research in the following areas: bereavement and complicated mourning attachment and developmental requirements, response to trauma and maltreatment and resiliency/coping/adaptation.

**Relationship of the Course to Social Work Ethics and Values**

Social work ethics and values will be addressed in this course using the NASW Code of Ethics. This course will increase awareness of the medical-ethical issues and decision making in death and dying. In addition, students will evaluate ethical issues involved in death and loss, and discuss the impact of the social worker’s values and reactions to these issues.

**Intensive Focus on Privilege, Oppression, Diversity and Social Justice (PODS)**

This course integrates PODS content and skills with a special emphasis on the identification of theories, practice and/or policies that promote social justice, illuminate injustices and are consistent with scientific and professional knowledge. Through the use of a variety of instructional methods, this course will support students developing a vision of social justice, learn to recognize and reduce mechanisms that support oppression and injustice, work toward social justice processes, apply intersectionality and intercultural frameworks and strengthen critical consciousness, self knowledge and self awareness to facilitate PODS learning.
Class Norms

1. Attendance and participation are vital to the learning experience and are expected. If absent, you are responsible for what is covered and any class announcements/additional assignments.
2. We will begin class promptly and resume class promptly after the designated break, based on mutually agreed upon times to be discussed in the first class session.
3. Approximately one-half to two-thirds of the class will be didactic presentation by the instructor or guest speakers. The remainder will consist of discussion and experiential activities in which academically sound participation is encouraged and expected.
4. Use of personal computer in the classroom will be limited to course related activities.
5. You are responsible for keeping all class folder materials for your use throughout the course.
6. Other norms which may be important to the class will be discussed and incorporated.
7. Further specific expectations regarding attendance, class participation and professional use of self will be provided in a separate handout.

Accommodations for Students with Disabilities

Students needing accommodation for a disability should notify me as soon as possible at the beginning of the semester to ensure needs are met in a timely way. Resources are available to assist (i.e. services for students with disabilities, adaptive technology computing site, etc.). To the extent permitted by law, information will be treated as private and confidential.

Religious Observations

Students who have conflicts with class attendance due to religious observances should contact me as soon as possible at the beginning of the semester and appropriate arrangements will be made.

Three Required Course Texts


Recommended Additional Diversity Text


Additional Readings:

The amount of required text reading has been designed to provide you with a basic foundation while giving you freedom to individualize supplemental readings. YOU ARE EXPECTED AND ENCOURAGED TO DO LITERATURE SEARCHES AND ADDITIONAL READING IN AREAS OF PERSONAL INTEREST AND IN ORDER TO COMPLETE ASSIGNMENTS AND TO PURSUE YOUR AREAS OF INTERESTS. In addition, handouts may be distributed in class for reading.
Relevant Journals and Organizations:

OMEGA, Journal of Death and Dying
Baywood Publishing
26 Austin Ave. P.O. Box 337
Amityville, NY  11701
800-638-7819

Mortality
Taylor & Francis Ltd.
4 Park Square
Milton Park
Abingdon, OX14  4RN   UK
www.tandf.co.uk/journals

The Thanatology Newsletter
c/o Health and Nutrition Sciences
Brooklyn College
Brooklyn, NY  11210-2889
718-951-5553

Bereavement Magazine
5125 N. Union Boulevard, Suite 4
Colorado Springs, CO 80918-2956
719-266-0006

Centering Corporation
Grief Digest
P.O. Box 4600
7230 Maple Street
Omaha, NE  68104
402-553-1200

Journal of Social Work in End of Life
and Palliative Care
Haworth Press
800 Haworth
www.haworthpress.com/web/JSWEL

Illness, Crisis and Loss
American Journal of Hospice & Palliative Medicine
Sage Publication
P.O. Box 5084
Thousand Oaks, CA  91359
800-818-7243

Journal of Near Death Studies
Human Sciences Press
233 Spring Street
New York, NY 10213-0196
212-620-8000

Center for Loss & Life Transition
3735 Broken Bow Road
Fort Collins, CO  80526
970-226-6050

Compassion Books
477 Hannah Branch Rd.
Burnsville, NC  28714
828-675-5909
www.compassionbooks.com

Journal of Trauma & Loss
Death Studies
Bereavement Care
Taylor & Francis Journals Dept.
325 Chestnut Street
Philadelphia, PA 19106
800-354-1420 x 216
www.sample-lat@taylorandfrancis.com

Bereavement Care
Taylor and Francis
www.tandf.co.uk/journals/bereavementcare

Additional books and reference materials specific to class topics will be discussed throughout the term. Please refer to Internet list and to grief resource catalogs provided for additional reference materials.

You may also refer to http://guides.lib.umich.edu.grief for other resource information.
Assignments and Grading
Assignments are designed to use a variety of evaluation methods including written papers, oral presentations and a final exam to allow opportunities to address strengths and preferences of diverse individual students.

The goal of the course assignments and grading system is to promote integration and meaning of the material and to promote competency in services provided to clients. You are empowered to self-direct your learning and assignments and to choose topics of interest to you. Hard copies of written assignments are to be handed in during class on the date due. If you are unable to hand in written assignments, please make other arrangements to get a hard copy of your paper to class.

Late completion of assignments will result in grading deduction as defined below for each assignment. In the interest of fairness to all students and modeling professional practice expectations as well as advanced planning and time management skills, excused extensions for assignments without point deductions will be given only in rare and extraordinary circumstances (i.e. hospitalization, death in the family) and will not be provided for commonly occurring life experiences (i.e. multiple demands/busy schedule, traveling, computer problems).

1. REQUIRED READINGS
Readings are considered a foundation of the course and you will be expected to know the content of the readings and to incorporate this knowledge into your assignments. It is expected that assigned readings will be completed prior to each class (including the readings listed for each date) to enhance discussion and interaction. Grades of A will require completion of all assigned readings. SCANNING the readings does not meet the definition of completing the readings.

Students should be prepared each week to be called on to share understanding, ideas and reactions from readings in weekly class discussions and these responses will be used as a part of the assignment of grading for class participation. In addition, students will be given an assigned “awareness role” for which they will be responsible for raising issues and providing information in class discussions related to their assigned area.

In addition to weekly assigned readings, additional literature review and readings will be necessary to complete some written assignments.

2. WRITTEN ASSIGNMENTS
Written skills are essential to effective social work practice and as professionals we will be continually assessed and judged on our ability to express ourselves clearly and professionally on behalf of our clients, our organizations, our profession and ourselves. Graduate level writing skills will be expected in this course including appropriate grammar, in-text citations, references, organization of thought, clarity of expression and creativity in your writing. Writing labs are available through the Sweetland Writing Clinic in Angel Hall for any graduate student and through the social work office of student services for students whom English is a second language.

APA format is the definitive source for standardized writing in the behavioral and social sciences and is required when appropriate for the assignment. Deductions will be made for failure to follow this format. Please refer to the APA Style manual in various UM libraries or to: http://apastyle.apa.org/manual/ and http://www.apastyle.org/learn/tutorials/brief-guide.aspx for assistance.
Written application & discussion assignments 4 points x 6 assignments /24 points total

RTAN Assignments: Read/Think/Analyze/Notice 1 point deduction for each day late

These written assignments are designed to help integrate course readings and class discussions. **Students should be prepared to be called on to share ideas and reactions from RTANS in weekly class discussions.** Please see separate sheet for specific RTAN assignments.

**Written RTAN assignments should:**
- illustrate reading and comprehension of all assigned material (READ)
- address assigned questions (see specific questions below) integrating your own thoughts, feelings, reactions to readings (THINK)
- illustrate ability to analyze, compare/contrast, and integrate various reading assignments from week to week throughout the course (ANALYZE)
- include any thoughts regarding the readings/class and what you’ve noticed related your learning about loss and grief (NOTICE)

Grading will be based on the level at which your journal reflects reading, thinking analyzing, noticing and thoughtful application of the assigned materials.

4 points **EXCELLENCE**
3 points **SATISFACTORY**
2 points **MARGINAL**
1 point **VERY LIMITED**
0 point Not completed or does not illustrate reading and thoughtful application of the assigned material.

3. **Diversity Class Presentation** 20 Points

Group class presentation focusing on diversity issues related to death, loss and grief. Each group will be responsible for making a 30 minute group presentation with an additional 10 minutes for questions and discussion. Please provide class handouts for each student on resources and literature references related to the specific group chosen. **Please plan carefully as 30 minutes goes by quickly!**

**Integrate the assigned readings, lecture and discussion materials and your own additional literature review into your presentation. Additional references beyond course readings are expected. APA style reference notation is required.**

Grading will be done based on depth and effectiveness of addressing these areas:
- **Analysis of death, loss, grief issues of a particular ethnic, cultural, gender, sexual orientation, disability, religious, etc. diverse population or topic.**
- **Specific assessment and intervention issues** relevant to the chosen diversity topic regarding grief and bereavement.
- **Provide a handout to class members of a minimum of 5 literature references (beyond texts) on your specific diversity topic - websites do not count as literature references but can be included on the reference list provided) AND additional relevant resources (i.e. agencies, websites, videos).**
- **Application of course readings, lectures and discussion to illustrate self-awareness of diversity issues.**

Grading information continued on next page.
Creativity of class presentation. Each group must incorporate an interactive, creative activity/modality using a variety of formats including lecture, group exercises, discussion, videos, handouts, music, art, role plays, food, costumes, etc. **Be creative and have fun!**

— Provide copy of PowerPoint presentation and resource handouts to instructor prior to the presentation.
— Presenting within timeframe provided.
— Presenting as a group with individuals contributing equally to the work of the presentation
— Student feedback will also be considered in grading.

5. Insight Interview  
16 points (2 points deduction for each day late)
Choose from one of the following options to complete an interview of another person. Please obtain permission for the interview explaining the purpose of the interview and its use for this class. Take appropriate steps to provide safety and protect confidentiality and anonymity. Write up a 5 page double spaced paper addressing:

1. Your **understanding and application of course concepts** related to information from the interview. Questions are provided below to help you begin to think about application and integration of course concepts; however, these questions should not be considered all inclusive or be interpreted as the only areas of integration you should consider. You are not limited to these questions. 2. Your **experience** of doing the interview. What did it feel like to do this interview? What feelings did you notice before, during and after the interview? What feelings sparked feelings of discomfort, meaning, sadness, insight…?

Grading will also be based on the degree to which you are able to provide an analysis beyond description. Description often involves listing of facts, providing description and reporting information such as “Worden describes four task of grieving that include…….” She stated that… and then this happened. Analysis goes beyond description and applies the concepts through observation, linking, comparing and contrasting concepts, and integration of learned facts and theory into application such as “In this interview, signs of complicated grief including….. could be seen as he works through Worden’s third task of …… His complicated grief had the predictive factors of…… which we see in his history of…… and also relates to his cultural beliefs regarding…….”

Option 1
Interview a person of your choosing regarding a loss he/she has experienced in the past. Ask about the what, when, how, where of their loss. Explore their reactions to the loss, how they coped and their timeframe as they moved through their grief, what was helpful and not helpful, how others/society responded, what they now feel about the experience looking back, etc. Keep in mind Worden’s tasks, stage, phase and other conceptual models of grief. Listen for other grief concepts from the readings and class discussion as you listen to their experience. Listen to the thoughts and feelings inside of yourself as you do this interview. Reflect and comment about these in your written assignment. What course concepts can you apply?

Option 2
Interview a person about a loss not related to death, perhaps one that may have been disenfranchised or deemed as a “low impact loss.” What was it like for them to grieve this type of loss? In what ways was their grief “seen” or “not seen.” What responses did they get from society/friends/co-workers? Did you hear any stigmatization or discrimination related to their loss? Was there any impact of being vulnerable economically, socially, religiously “different” that impacted their grief? Were community resources available to assist with their grief (support groups, counseling, etc.). What thoughts do you have about awareness of your own potential disenfranchisement or diminishing of another’s grief? What course concepts and readings can you apply?
6. **Final In-Class Exam**  
   Please make plans in your schedule now for the In-class final exam.

   This is your opportunity to demonstrate course concepts learned and your ability to apply them.

   The exam will cover concepts from the entire semester. Weekly lecture outlines provide a helpful way to review for the exam. The exam will have a variety of questions such as multiple choice, matching, true-false, short answer and essay questions. If you desire your answer sheet from the final exam to be returned to you, you must provide a UM interdepartmental envelope with your name and mailbox number on it or a self-addressed, stamped envelope for mailing. Exam answer sheets from students not providing specified return envelopes will be confidentially destroyed once the final grades are submitted.

7. **Class Attendance**  
   
   - **Class Participation**  
     10 points  
   - **Professional Use Self**  

   Class attendance, participation and professional use of self are core behaviors that are highly valued in this class and are a part of the learning experience which has relevant application to future professional practice. Expectations regarding these are detailed in a separate handout.

8. **Final Grades will be based on the total accumulation of points earned.**  
   **Letter grades defined by the School of Social Work as follows:**  

   - **A grades**  
     Given for *exceptional individual performance* and *mastery* of the material. The use of A+ (100), A (95-99), and A-(91-94) should distinguish the degree of *superiority*. The *grade of A should be given only on rare occasions.*

   - **B grades**  
     Given to students who *demonstrate mastery* of the material. B+ (89-90) indicates performance just above the mastery level but not in an exceptional manner. B (87-88) and B- (85-86) indicates just below the mastery level.

   - **C grades**  
     *Mastery of the material is limited.* C- is the lowest grade which carries credit. C+ (83-84), C (81-82) and C- (79-80).

   - **D grades**  
     Indicate *deficiency* and carry no credit. (79 and below)

   - **E grades**  
     Indicate failure and carry no credit.

   - **DR**  
     Unofficial drop.

   - **I**  
     Incomplete grades can be given in rare situations when illness or other compelling reason prevents completion of work **AND** there is a **definite plan** and **date** for completion pre-approved by the instructor prior to the last day of class. Students are responsible for initiating contact to request an incomplete and establish a plan for completion prior to the last day of class. If no contact has been initiated by the student with the instructor regarding incomplete work and/or no plan has been established to complete work by the last day of class, a grade will be given based on the work completed thus far. An E grade may be given based on points earned.

9. **I have provided written assignment grading rubrics to clearly explain assignment expectations and point values.** Please review these prior to completing your assignments.
### Course Outline and Assigned Readings

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Readings</th>
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| Jan. 7 | Our Attitudes Toward Death and Dying                                  | Historical Perspective and Present Views                                    | **Readings:** Despelder and Strickland: Chapter 1; Chapter 3 (92-101); Chapter 2 (50-60)  
Irish: Chapter 1 |
|        | #1                                                                  | Factors Impacting Attitudes                                                |                                                                         |
| Jan. 14| The Dying Process                                                    | Living with Dying: Life Threatening Illness                               | **Readings:** Despelder & Strickland: Chapter 7                         
Irish: Chapter 3     |
|        | #2                                                                  | Care of the Dying                                                         |                                                                         |
|        |                                                                     | Health Care Systems                                                      |                                                                         |
|        |                                                                     | **RTAN 1 DUE**                                                            |                                                                         |
|        |                                                                     | **Diversity Group Presentation Preference Sheet Due**                     |                                                                         |
| Jan. 21| The Experience of Grief and Mourning                                  | Process and Tasks of Mourning                                             | **Readings:** Despelder and Strickland: Chapter 9                      
Irish: Chapter 2  
Worden: Chapters 1, 2 & 3 |
|        | #3                                                                  | Variables Influencing Grief                                               |                                                                         |
| Jan. 28| Complicated Grief Reactions                                           | Theories of Complicated Mourning                                          | **Readings:** Worden: Chapters 5 & 6                                   
Irish: Chapter 4   |
|        | #4                                                                  | Definitions, Symptoms, and Syndromes                                     |                                                                         |
|        |                                                                     | **RTAN 2 DUE**                                                            |                                                                         |
| Feb. 4 | Clinical Intervention with Grievers                                   | Issues in Assessment and Treatment                                        |                                                                         |
|        | #5                                                                  | Counseling Principles in Facilitating Grief                               | **INSIGHT INTERVIEW DUE**                                               |
|        |                                                                     | **Readings:** Despelder & Strickland: Chapter 5 (173-192)                |                                                                         |
|        |                                                                     | Worden: Chapters 4 & 8                                                    |                                                                         |
|        |                                                                     | Irish: Chapter 8                                                          |                                                                         |
Feb. 11  Ethics and Legal Issues  
#6 Medical Ethics and Technology  
Rights and the Dying  
**RTAN 3 DUE**

*Readings:*
DeSpelder and Strickland: Chapter 4 (138-164); Chapter 5 (167-172) & Chapter 6

Feb. 18  Death and Grief in Adulthood  
#7 Models of Adult Bereavement  
Life Stage Issues  
**RTAN 4 DUE**

*Readings:*
DeSpelder and Strickland: Chapter 11  
Irish: Chapter 5

Feb. 25  **Death and Grief in Childhood and Adolescence**  
#8 Developmental Issues  

*Readings:*
DeSpelder and Strickland: Chapter 10  
Irish: Chapter 6

March 4  **No Class- Spring Break**

March 11  Risks of Death in Today’s World  
#11 Violence, Disasters, War and Genocide  
Special Types of Loss and Grief  

*Readings:*
DeSpelder and Strickland: Chapters 4 (127-137); chapters 12 & 13  
Worden: Chapter 7

March 18  **Diversity Class Presentations**  
#10 Cultural and Diversity Perspectives on Death  
Variation in the Experience, Expression, and Understanding of Grief  
Applying a Sociocultural Perspective  

*Readings:*
DeSpelder and Strickland: Chapter 2 (77-83)  
Irish: Chapters 7, 10
March 25
#11  Diversity Class Presentations Continued
Cultural and Diversity Perspectives on Death
Variation in the Experience, Expression, and Understanding of Grief
Applying a Sociocultural Perspective

Readings:
DeSpelder and Strickland: Chapter 3
Irish: Chapters 11 & 13

April 1
#12  Coping Mechanisms for Survivors/Rituals and Funerals
Honoring the Dead; Spirituality and Finding Meaning
RTAN 5 DUE

Readings:
DeSpelder and Strickland: Chapters 8 and 14
Worden: Chapter 10
Irish: Chapter 9

April 8
#13  Personal and Professional Issues Related to Death, Loss, and Grief
Caring for Self
Concluding Thoughts
RTAN 6 DUE

Readings:
DeSpelder and Strickland: Chapter 5 (193-195); Chapter 15
Worden: Chapter 9
Irish: Chapter 12

April 15
#14  Final In Class Exam