

**HB 617, 001**  
**Spring/Summer Term, 2012**  
**Death, Loss, and Grief**  
**Tuesday, 1PM-5PM**  
**3752 SSWB**

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Please feel free to make appointments or ask questions via e-mail and allow 24 hours for email responses. In the subject line please put "SW617". I am always available before class, or if necessary we can set up another time to meet if you have questions.

If you have a disability or condition that may interfere with your participation in this course, please schedule a private appointment with me prior to the first quiz to discuss reasonable accommodations for your specific needs. This information will be kept strictly confidential. For more information and resources, please contact the Services for Students with Disabilities office at G664 Haven Hall, (734) 763-3000.

This course utilizes CTools as a resource for all course readings outside of the required text as well as for the submission of all assignments. Assignment descriptions/postings, readings for each class and grading can be found on the CT site. **Please be proactive and review the CTools site carefully the first week of class.**

### Course Description

This course will address the theoretical framework of human loss and grief from a culturally and philosophically diverse perspective. Students will be provided with 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 will be focused on life span development and the meaning of death and loss at different ages. Various types of loss will be discussed from an individual, family, and socio/cultural perspective. The importance of understanding trauma and its relationship to grief and loss will also be addressed. Coping and resiliency in loss will be 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.

### Course Content

This course will begin with an overview of the historical treatment of death and bereavement in dominant United States culture. Contemporary attitudes about death and grief will be examined in this context and will include the examination of current themes in understanding dying and

bereaved persons. Significant attention will be placed on understanding the diversity of reactions to death, loss, and grief within diverse dimensions (including 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). The impact of poverty on dying and bereavement will be discussed, as well as the policy decisions that direct funding as it impacts dying individuals and their families. The ethical debates in the right-to-die movement and social issues about quality of life will also be explored.

Explanatory models for bereavement and grief will be discussed including: psychoanalytic models, attachment models, stress and crisis models, cognitive and behavioral models, illness and disease models, sociobiological models, and holistic models. Developmental approaches to understanding chronic illness and individual and family functioning while dying will be addressed, as well as current standards of care in social work involvement with the dying person and family. The function of health care systems for the dying and funeral care for the dead will be discussed. Social organizations for the dying and bereaved will be explored. Gender differences in grieving immigration and cultural losses, responses to war and natural disasters will also be discussed. The theory of complicated mourning will be introduced and will be related both to developmental theory and trauma theory. Examples of complicated mourning will be discussed and will include the phenomena of disenfranchised and stigmatized loss. The identification and assessment of symptoms of complicated mourning will be introduced. Death resulting from violence, like homicide or suicide, and violence in communities and its impact on a person's capacity to grieve will be explored. Counseling the dying and grieving and its impact on the social worker will be discussed, as well as ways that professionals can care for themselves. The special concerns of children and loss will be examined. Aging, grief, and loss will be discussed and current research about losses in aging will be addressed. This course will also examine broader cultural implications for living with loss, including responses to cultural genocide (both historically and currently). Finally, an exploration into the development of grief responses on an individual and communal level will be made.

### **Course Objectives**

On completion of this course, the student 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.
9. Identify post traumatic stress disorder.
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.

### **Course Design**

Class format will include lecture, interactive discussion co- led by students, systems and case analysis, and films. Written assignments will integrate theory, research, and clinical material. Current and practical applications in the social work setting will be noted when possible. If the class you will be missing happens to fall on a day when you are assigned a discussion co- lead it ***is your responsibility*** to identify a classmate who can/will switch with you and to inform us via email of whom that person is.

### **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 *active* participation are expected and incorporated into the grade.
2. 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 participation is encouraged and expected.
3. **When guest speakers are present or films are being shown lap tops should be closed.**
4. Please post assignments on the CTools web site. The subject line should have your last name, followed by first name and the assignment title. Late assignments are not accepted.
5. A proactive approach to learning is encouraged.

## **Course Texts**

### **Required:**

Reith, M. & Payne, Malcolm (2009) *Social Work in End of Life and Palliative Care*. Lyceum Books, Inc ., <http://www.lyceumbooks.com>

Yalom, Irvin *Staring at the Sun* (2008) Jossey-Bass [www.josseybass.com](http://www.josseybass.com)

In an effort to minimize your costs I have selected a variety of readings for each class topic and have posted them on CTools under the "Resource Tab". A folder for each class session has been developed. In order to fully participate in class discussions as well as pass the quizzes it is important to read all of the posted items for each class.

### **Recommended Reading:**

Irish, D. P., Lundquist, K.F., & Nelsen, V. J. (Eds.). (1993). *Ethnic variations in dying, death and grief*. Washington, DC: Taylor and Francis.

### 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 YOUR ASSIGNMENTS IN A THOROUGH MANNER.** Information and suggestions on references will be provided in class as well as posted on the CTools site.

### Assignments and Grading

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. Other course content will be disseminated through lecture, discussion, and experiential activities.

Regardless of what direction in the field your career takes you, it is imperative that you have strong communication skills and the ability to engage others in thoughtful dialogue. Therefore, we have assigned each of you an opportunity to practice this skill. We will begin each class with a 10 minute “debrief” of readings whereby you will ask 3- 4 prompting questions and a video clip/poem/art work, etc. illustrating the author’s point.

Written assignments (Instructions will be outlined in separate handouts posted on CTools). Check the CTools site under the “Resources tab” for assignments and additional readings for the upcoming class. Many of our assignments are “narrative” and take the form of a personal essay. While there is no “specific length” thoughtful, in depth responses are necessary for credit.

Based on a 100 point scale:

2 points	Discussion board posting Yalom ch 1
2 points	Discussion board posting; Medicalization of Death
2 points	Small group discussion Yalom Ch 7
5 points	Blocking behaviors essay response
12 points	Power of Attorney assignment
15 points	Family medical genogram assignment
12 points	Quiz – Medical Ethics / Case Study
15 points	Quiz – Diagnosis and Treatment of PTSD
10 points	Quiz – Understanding Childhood Grief
25 points	Ethics Debate

Out of fairness and respect for all class members, late assignments will not be accepted for the assignments. A specific plan for completion of missing work must be agreed to by the instructor and the student in advance for credit to be awarded.

Grades are determined based on the following point scale:

99-100: A+ 95-98: A 90-94: A- 86-89: B+ 82-85: B 78-81: B- 74-77: C+ 70-73: C 66-69: C-

The master's program at the U-M School of Social Work uses a 9.0 grading scale, which translates as follows:

A+	9.0
A	8.0
A-	7.0
B+	6.0
B	5.0
B-	4.0
C+	3.0
C	2.0
C-	1.0
D	-0-
E	-0-

### Course Outline and Assigned Readings

**May 8th**

*Curricular theme; Promotion, Prevention, Treatment, and Rehabilitation*  
Course Overview and Expectations

Topic: Social Work, End of Life & Palliative Care

Readings:

Chapter 1 Social Work In End of Life Palliative Care (Text) posted under resource tab "Palliative Care"

Chapter 1 and 2 of Staring into the Sun

CTools Site folder "Hospice and Palliative Care"

<http://cbhd.org/content/dont-wait-make-your-end-life-wishes-known>

*post essay response on CTools Discussion Board Tab before May 15th*

**May 15<sup>th</sup>**

*Curricular theme; Social Justice and Social Change*

Topic(s): Societal Responses to Death and Dying and Dying Poor in America

Small group discussion: Facing Your Own Death

Readings:

CTools Resource Folder: Societal Responses to Dying & Death  
Chapter 2 Social Work In End of Life Palliative Care (Text  
Chapter 3 of Staring into the Sun – be prepared for class discussion

**Assignment Due: CTools Discussion Board Question #1**

**May 22<sup>nd</sup>**

*Curricular theme; Social Justice and Social Change*

Topic: Organ Transplant & Donation; Psychosocial Evaluations of Potential Living Donors *Guest speaker Cindy Brown, ACSW*

Readings:

Review Stories of Hope  
[http://www.giftoflifemichigan.org/stories\\_of\\_hope](http://www.giftoflifemichigan.org/stories_of_hope)

CTools CTools Resource Folder: Transplant

Chapter 4 of Staring into the Sun

**Assignment Due: Post response on CTools Discussion Board Tab regarding “The Medicalization of Death”**

**May 29<sup>th</sup>**

*Curricular theme; Social Justice and Social Change*

Topic: Medical Ethics - Determining End of Life Care. Whose Choice is it?

Readings:

CTools Resource Folder “Medical Ethics”

Chapter 3 and Ch 8 Social Work In End of Life Palliative Care (Text)

Chapter 5 of Staring into the Sun

**Ethical Debate: Should people with a history of alcoholism receive liver transplants?**

**Assignment Due: Health Care Power of Attorney Form Completed and brought to class for small group discussion**

**June 5<sup>th</sup>**

*Curricular theme; Promotion, Prevention, Treatment, and Rehabilitation*

Topic: Helping Families Prepare for Death  
Genograms as a tool for engagement

CTools Folder: Helping Families Prepare for Death  
Chapter 6 of Staring into the Sun  
Chapter 4 Social Work In End of Life Palliative Care (Text)

**Blocking Behaviors Essay Response Due (post on CTools & Bring a copy to class for small group discussion).**

**Ethical Debate: Should parents be present during resuscitations efforts in the ER with their children or should physicians/nurses have the right to work on saving their lives without the parents in the room?**

**June 12<sup>th</sup>**

*Curricular theme; Promotion, Prevention, Treatment, and Rehabilitation*

Topic: Chronic Illness & Aging  
The Role of the Social Worker in Managing Chronic Illness Care

Readings:

Chapter 7 of Staring into the Sun  
Chapter 5 Social Work In End of Life Palliative Care (Text)  
CTools Folder: Chronic Illness and Geriatrics and Loss

**Assignment Due: Essay Reflection on Yalom Ch7 (post on assignment tab and bring a copy for small group discussion)**

**Ethical Debate: Should older adults, who are deemed competent, be able to live independently if their healthcare team no longer feels it is safe for them to do so because they might fall etc?**

**Medical Ethics Quiz Due on CTools**

**June 19<sup>th</sup>**

*Curricular theme; Behavioral and Social Science Research*

Topic: Death, Grief and Loss: Childhood and Adolescent Developmental Issues *and* Dealing with Crisis at School

Readings:



Chapter 6 Social Work In End of Life Palliative Care (Text)  
CTools Resource Folder: Childhood Grief

**Assignment Due: Essay Reflections based on Yalom book**

**Ethical Debate: The Need to Know: Disclosure of Information to Pediatric Patients. Should a nine-year old patient be told about her terminal medical condition?**

(See case example in Ctools)

**June 26<sup>th</sup>**

*Curricular theme; Promotion, Prevention, Treatment, and Rehabilitation*

Topic: PTSD – signs, symptoms and interventions

Readings:

CTools Resource Folder: PTSD

**Ethical Debate: Should parents be allowed to use the bone marrow of one child for the purpose of curing another sick child?**

**Quiz on CTools Due: Understand developmental time lines and childhood grief responses**

**July 3<sup>rd</sup>**

*Curricular theme; Promotion, Prevention, Treatment, and Rehabilitation*

Helping Families Cope With Perinatal Death

Readings: CTools Folder Miscarriage & Perinatal Loss

**Ethical Debate: Should it be ethically permissible to participate in genetic selection (abortion or embryo discard) or prenatal genetic manipulation to prevent or cure genetic disease in newborns?**

**July 10<sup>th</sup>**

Culturally Competent & Holistic Care

Readings:

Chapter 7 and 9 Social Work In End of Life Palliative Care (Text)

**July 17<sup>th</sup>**

*Curricular theme; Promotion, Prevention, Treatment, and Rehabilitation*

Topic: Clinical Burnout & Replenishment for the Social Worker

**Ethical Debate: If an individual can live a healthy life with one kidney, and is a competent adult, should they have the right to be reimbursed for the kidney if give it up for transplantation to lengthen or improve the quality of life for someone else?**