Course title: Grief Counseling Principles and Practice
Course #/term: SW790 (012) Winter, 2020
Time and place: Thursday 5:30-8:30 p.m. 2752 SSWB
January 16, 23, 30 and Feb. 6 and 13
Credit hours: 1
Prerequisites: SW617 or permission with pre-class reading
Instructor: Debra Mattison, Clinical Assistant Faculty
Pronouns: She, her, hers
Contact info: Email: debmatt@umich.edu Phone: 734-763-1624
You may expect a response within 24-48 hours Monday-Friday; Email not monitored as frequently on weekends
Office: 3838 SSWB
Office hours: Tuesdays 2:00-4:00 p.m. and by appointments are also welcomed

1. Course Statement

a. Course description

This course is designed to deepen knowledge and skills in grief counseling to work effectively with a diverse range of bereaved individuals. Theoretical underpinnings of grief and loss counseling and contexts in which counseling may occur will be explored. Developing specific grief assessment and intervention skills applicable to a range of clients across the lifespan and different types of loss will be the focus of the course. This course builds on SW617 and focuses on clinical assessment and therapeutic interventions.

CSWE Course Competencies
Educational Policy and Accreditation Standards (EPAS) 2015

This course will address and support competency development in the following CSWE identified core competency areas:

Competency 1: Demonstrate Ethical and Professional Behavior
Competency 2: Engage Diversity and Difference in Practice
Competency 4: Engage In Research-informed Practice
Competency 6: Engage with Individuals, Families, Groups, Organizations & Communities
Competency 7: Assess Individuals, Families, Groups, Organizations & Communities
b. Course content
Course content will focus on deepening and broadening our concept of grief including various types of grief and human grief responses. The content will support increasing clinical skills regarding grief assessment and clinical intervention with a variety of clients. The course will also deepen our awareness of our own grief-related beliefs and experiences that impact our work with clients.

c. Course objectives and competencies
Students will be able to:
- Describe a strengths-based framework for grief and loss
- Identify social context and societal responses which impact grief
- Describe the variety of grief expression related to various cultural and diversity mediators of grief
- Demonstrate effective grief assessment processes and techniques including grief contextual factors such as culture, mental health, DSM and bio psychosocial spiritual assessments
- Demonstrate appropriate grief interventions across the life span and with diverse individuals, populations and losses (e.g., LGBTQIA+, pregnancy loss, immigration, suicide survivors, etc).
- Understand grief counseling implications for the clinician and strategies to use support resilience.
- Describe ethical considerations involved in grief counseling.

d. Course design
This course uses a relationship-based engaged approach to learning in which we learn from and with each other. A variety of collaborative learning methods will be used to promote skill development including interactive lectures with active student participation, readings, in-class application exercises, role plays, practice clinical scenarios, videos and written assignments. Understanding core class concepts and the ability to apply these concepts will be emphasized.

e. Curricular themes
Multiculturalism and Diversity will be addressed throughout this course and will be highlighted in the content of commonalities and differences in the lived experiences of grief and loss.
Social Justice and Social Change will be addressed by examining the potential impact of diverse losses and related social justice issues. Key dimensions of loss will be examined with consideration to potential marginalization, exclusion and oppression for disenfranchised populations. This course promotes the identification of theories, practice and/or policies that promote social justice, illuminate injustices and are consistent with scientific and professional knowledge.
Promotion, Prevention, Treatment, and Rehabilitation will be addressed through review of the literature regarding connections between health (physical, mental,
Behavioral and Social Science Research will be presented throughout the course and will include findings from sociology, psychology, medical anthropology, social work, public health, medicine, nursing, and health services research related to loss and grief.

f. Relationship to social work ethics and values
Social work ethics and values will be addressed in the context of the NASW Code of Ethics. This course will increase awareness and will evaluate ethical issues involved in integration of spirituality into social work practice. We will also discuss the need for personal reflection, awareness and the impact of the social worker's values and reactions to these issues.

The social work program is one of professional preparation. In addition to acquiring theoretical knowledge, students are expected to acquire professional values, to integrate knowledge from a range of courses, to develop professional skills and valued congruent with the profession.

The NASW Code of Ethics outlines a set of core values that form the basis of the Social Work profession's purpose and perspective. The Code encourages behaviors which promote professionalism and respect for clients, colleagues and employers. It is expected that all students conduct themselves in a manner consistent with the Code of Ethics and demonstrate professional use-of-self behaviors in class including respect, courtesy and ACTIVE listening with fellow students and the instructor.

As professionals, you are expected to maintain confidentiality and respect differences. You are expected to take personal responsibility and be committed to your own learning experience by being an active and responsible and response-able member of each class.

For further elaboration of the values and ethical standards inherent in social work, students are encouraged to access the Code of Ethics at https://www.socialworkers.org/About/Ethics/Code-of-Ethics/Code-of-Ethics-English and the Student Guide.

g. Intensive focus on PODS
This course integrates PODS content and skills with an emphasis on the identification of theories, practice and/or policies related to diverse experiences, expressions and beliefs and practices regarding grief. The course seeks to identify, address and confronting social structures, beliefs and practices that disenfranchise griencers.
Students are invited and expected to be partners in actively contribute from their experiences, field placement practice and knowledge of readings, etc. in service to our goal to continually develop a vision of social justice. We strive to learn together 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 in the context of loss and grief counseling in social work practice.

2. MY TEACHING PHILOSOPHY

Relationship Focused Partnership: Mutual Learning Commitment
My commitment is to provide organized, meaningful course material and opportunities for learning in a respectful, safe and encouraging learning environment. Many times we approach learning experiences with expectations of what we will get from them. This model focuses on the professor giving information and the student getting information. Relationship-based learning focuses on “giving, getting and growing” together as we learn about, from and with each other. Students are invited and expected to be active and engaged partners in the learning process by coming to every class prepared, ready, willing and able to contribute to meaningful discussion and learning. Please feel free to contact and meet with me early and throughout the semester as needed with questions, concerns and suggestions. I look forward to what we will experience and learn together.

Intentionality
Intentional learning is not passive, but rather is focused on actively pursuing your own individual learning goals. You are encouraged to be intentional about: what you want to achieve in this class, why these goals are important to you and how you choose to engage and invest to reach these goals.

3. Class Requirements

Personal accountability in learning

| Personal accountability shifts the focus from being solely about what one is taught, to self-determination and what one consciously chooses to learn. |

Your learning is not just about academic learning but also involves learning and improving life skills and professional use-of-self. Students are expected to take personal responsibility and be committed to their own learning experience by being active and response-able members of each class session.
Students are invited and expected to be active and engaged partners in the learning process by coming to class prepared, ready, willing and able to contribute to meaningful discussion and learning.

**Class Presence**

**Showing up for class is not enough.** Presence is about how you show up, who you demonstrate you are in the class and what attitude and intention you bring.

**Presence is a professional skill.** Being present is more than just “showing up.” It involves attention and intention. Presence is perhaps one of the most important interventions we offer to our clients and thus we will practice the art of presence throughout this semester in this class.

**Presence is crucial** to our ultimate goal of service to our clients. Predictability, reliability and consistency (“being there”) are core to any strong relationship as well as being incredibly important to our clients and our employers. Thus, “being here” with predictability, reliability and consistency is an important core competency for this class. Our class colleagues who share their thoughts, feelings, and experiences with us have a right to anticipate and receive our presence and demonstration of professional use-of-self.

As a graduate student, class presence, attendance, completion of assigned readings for each class, participation and engagement are highly valued as these behaviors contribute to the quality of learning for both oneself and the class as a whole.

**Class Participation**

Beyond physical presence through attendance, class participation is vital to the learning experience of this course and focuses on being emotionally and intellectually present and engaged in class each week. Active engagement and sharing of your diverse ideas, perspectives and experiences are highly valued and expected.

**Students are expected to verbally contribute in class** and should be prepared each week to initiate and to be invited to contribute knowledgeable sharing of their understanding, ideas, reactions and applications from readings and integration across progressive weeks of class.

**Participation is not simply about frequency, but also about the level and quality of preparedness** and thoughtful and integrative analysis and application of concepts. Some may feel uncomfortable speaking in class. In service to our clients, we must learn to use our voices on their behalf. Class participation provides the opportunity to develop speaking, advocacy and discussion/facilitation/persuasion skills, as well as
the ability to listen effectively. Thus, verbal participation will be an opportunity to practice and develop skills even when it can be sometimes challenging and/or uncomfortable.

**Ways to contribute** to our class learning include your valuable suggestions, appropriate amplifications, alternative interpretations and perspectives, constructive criticism and relevant observations. **Students are expected to actively and meaningfully participate in pair/share, small group activities and role plays as each student’s learning is dependent upon each other’s engagement.**

**We will utilize a variety of strategies to encourage safe spaces, engagement and mutual accountability for all voices to be heard in this class.**

**Professional Use of Self**

**Respect for Others**
- ✓ Students are encouraged and expected to demonstrate openness to ideas and perspectives different from one’s own interests, views, belief and preferences.
- ✓ Listening and learning require a safe place and we commit to provide this safe space in this class.
- ✓ Sharing differing ways of thinking and how one sees the world is not always focused on changing others’ minds, but about cultivating a way of being with others that fosters curiosity and a desire to see and hear another’s point of view.
- ✓ We will be mindful that in our desire to advocate for our own beliefs and values, that we do not commit the very acts of aggression, devaluation, marginalization, disenfranchisement and dismissal of others we are trying to prevent and advocate not happen to others or ourselves.

**Digital Citizenship: Use of Phones, Computers and Electronic Devices**

The concept of “digital citizenship” is a **complex topic** that has become increasing important and will continue to evolve as we explore the impact of technology on individuals and communities. In this class, **we will be intentional about digital etiquette and respectful and ethical use of electronic devices for professional use**. Research regarding portable technology (laptop computers, phones, etc.) confirms that these devices can be a supportive classroom tool when used with a clear goal (i.e. note taking, interactive exercises) while also having negative consequences such as time spent on non-course tasks (i.e. emails, texting) and disruption to others (**CRLT Occasional Papers, No. 30 Use of Laptops in the Classroom: Research and Best Practices**).

To foster an environment of safety, openness and presence, the focus of class time will center on understanding and discussion of the content presented, asking questions,
sharing integrative ideas, giving examples, taking notes, practicing active listening and presence, or otherwise deepening yours and other’s knowledge of the material in some way.

- Using electronic devices to assist in note taking and specifically directed class activities is encouraged for those who find this beneficial.
- If you feel you must monitor email and text messages, you are respectfully asked to do so during breaks and/or to leave the classroom to do so.
- Audio and/or video recording in class of lecture and/or class discussion is prohibited without written permission of professor and students.

**Presence is a professional use-of-self skill.** Therefore, use of non-class related computer/phone/electronic devices/reading materials will be considered as the equivalent of being absent from class and will impact attendance and class participation grades with automatic associated deductions.

**Required readings**

Required readings have been designed to provide you with a basic foundation while giving you some freedom to individualize supplemental readings. Readings serve as the foundation for class discussions, activities and assignments. To fully engage in the course and become a more competent and skilled practitioner, it is expected that students will complete all weekly required readings prior to each class session. The quality and preparedness of responses illustrating completion of the readings will be used as a part earned grades for class participation and will differentiate grades of exceptional mastery (A) from grades of mastery (B). Superior ratings in Professional Use-of-Self will require completion of all assigned readings. **Grades of A will require completion of all assigned readings.**

**There is no required textbook for this course.** Assigned readings will be posted in Canvas. **You are expected and encouraged to do literature searches and additional reading to meet some assignments and to pursue areas of interest.**

**Additional relevant handouts** may be in Canvas and/or distributed in class for reading. Additional reference materials specific to class topics will be discussed throughout the term.

**Assignments**

Written work should incorporate critical thinking, analysis and graduate level writing. Strong writing and communication skills are essential to effective professional practice.
As professionals we will be continually assessed and judged on our ability to express ideas 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. Please use and synthesize scholarly literature to support your presentation of material. Do not heavily rely on direct quotations from your sources; instead summarize them in your own words.

APA format is the definitive source for standardized writing in the behavioral and social sciences and is required for assignments requiring referencing. Please refer to the MLibrary APA Citation Guide as needed. The Purdue Owl website is another helpful resource for assistance with APA formatting.

Submission of Written Assignments

Students are responsible for reading the assignment instructions/grading rubrics and self-monitoring due dates.

Due to vision accommodation needs of the instructor, in addition to submission on Canvas, a paper copy of written assignments are to be submitted at the beginning of the class on the due date with all pages stapled together including relevant additional materials as assigned. If you are unable to submit written assignments in class, please make other arrangements to get a paper copy of your assignment to class or to my office by the assignment due date and time.

Late Completion of Assignments

Meeting deadlines, planning ahead and timeliness in completing tasks are all important parts of our professional lives. Fairness goals guide consistent application of expectations for all students. Therefore, late assignments will not be accepted without deduction unless the circumstances are both rare and compelling.

Commonly occurring life experiences (i.e. multiple demands/busy schedule, traveling, computer problems) are NOT considered grounds for exceptions for late assignments without deductions. Late deductions will be one point for the first day past the due date and one point for each day thereafter.

Attendance and Absentee Policy class participation

You and Your Learning are Important to the Class
A significant part of learning in this course is interactive and experiential with discussion, in-class activities which cannot be fully replicated or replaced by make-up work. Therefore, both your learning and the learning of your colleagues are enhanced by your attendance. The School of Social Work Class Attendance Policy states: “It is expected that students attend classes and instructors are encouraged to monitor attendance.” Attendance, participation and engagement are expectations and requirements related to Policy on Class Attendance can be found in the MSW Student Guide. Class grades include evaluation of attendance, participation and engagement. This class focuses on learning and demonstrating competencies in service to our clients. Therefore, grades are based on points earned through demonstration of competency and class participation.

Students have requested that their educational experience provide preparation for professional practice environments. Thus, our attendance policy seeks to prepare one for practice by addressing impact and professional behavior when absent. Life happens and each individual may have absences from personal choices made regarding prioritization of competing demands, as well those due to uncontrollable events and circumstances. Professional behavior in academic and professional practice environments involves taking initiative and responsibility for what is missed when absent in service to our clients.

In this class, absences ARE NOT determined as “excused” or “unexcused” but rather as a reality that may occur. Students are asked to demonstrate professional behavior by providing the instructor with advanced notification for known planned absences and notification when reasonably able after an unanticipated absence.

As relevant preparation for professional practice, students are responsible for class readings, assignments and in-class competence learning that occurred in their absence. Therefore, an opportunity is given for students to take initiative for class content missed when absent for any reason by completing a competency make-up assignment.

**Competency Demonstration Make-Up Assignments**

Completion of Competency Make-Up Assignments is a choice provided to students after any absence. It is up to the student to initiate a Competency Make-Up Assignments by contacting the instructor and completing the make-up assignment by the next week of class.
Competency Deduction for Absences without Student Initiated Make-Up

NOT submitting Competency Make-up Assignments for any absence within the required make-up timeframe will result in a 4 point competency deduction per each class missed.

Partial Absences

Promptness in attendance is also valued as it conveys professionalism, respect and courtesy and creates a safe environment for sharing among one another. We will begin and resume class promptly after designated break(s).

Partial absences also negatively impact learning and will result in class participation deduction. A partial absence include any of the following: Lack of engaged presence due to use of electronic devices for non-class related activities during class, late arrival after class start time, late return from break after class has resumed and/or early departure before class ends.

More Than 1 Absences for Any Reason

Due to the length of a mini course, more than one absence represents a significant percentage of the course and cannot be sufficiently addressed with competency make-up assignments. This level of absence will require further discussion with the instructor to explore options for demonstration of course learning knowledge and objectives. Students are responsible for initiating discussion to address absences. If no plan has been agreed upon by the end of the term, grades will be given based on current completed work and absentee policy. Absences may result in a course grade deduction and/or non-passing grade for the course.

4. Grading

Academic standards matter to our clients and the responsibilities with which we are entrusted in our work with and on their behalf.

Grades are the outcome of student efforts and demonstration of competency. They are “earned” not “given.” While this course has been designed to provide information and learning experiences, what you ultimately gain will largely depend on your use-of-self, your engagement in the class and your commitment to take responsibility for your individual learning.
All assignments will be graded with these criteria:

- Address specific assignment criteria defined in instructions and rubric
- Professional and academically sound writing skills (clarity of thought, organization, and flow, APA referencing as appropriate)
- Ability to think critically and integrate concepts/content across the term
- Demonstrate professional use-of-self and social work values and ethics (PODS, strengths-based perspective)
- Integration and demonstration of completion and understanding assigned readings and additional literature when appropriate
- On time completion by assigned due date

I provide written feedback and often pose questions and comments to encourage reflection, different perspectives, etc. Please let me know if you have questions and reactions to my comments and wish to discuss them. I am always happy to meet.

Graduate school standards anticipate that for every credit hour spent in the classroom, students will spend additional time outside of the classroom to complete readings and assignments at a level of mastery. Time constraints are validated as a part of life. We acknowledge that while every assignment may not be completed at the exceptional mastery level of an A grade depending on one’s individual situation, goals and/or choices, meaningful learning can still occur.

Final Grades will be based on individual demonstration of course competencies and expectations including the quality of the work, demonstration of reading and ability to apply concepts and professional use-of-self and class participation as defined in course documents using a 100 point system.

The total accumulation of points earned reflect competencies demonstrated in the context of one’s normal life challenges regarding time, obligations, multiple demands and choices each individual makes. When considering an individual assignment grade (i.e. 9 out of 10 points earned), think of the score as points earned rather than a percentage. For example, a 9 out of 10 on an individual assignment is not a 90% overall course grade but a loss of one available point out of 100 points.

Final letter grades are defined by the School of Social Work as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>A</strong></td>
<td>Exceptional, superior mastery</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A+</td>
<td>(100)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>(95-99)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A-</td>
<td>(90-94)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>B</strong></td>
<td>Adequate mastery</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B+</td>
<td>(87-89)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>(84-86)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B-</td>
<td>(80-83)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>C</strong></td>
<td>Limited mastery</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C+</td>
<td>(77-79)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>(74-76)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C-</td>
<td>(70-73)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grades</td>
<td>Description</td>
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<td>--------</td>
<td>------------------------------</td>
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<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>Below 70 Carries no credit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Deficient mastery</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E</td>
<td>No credit</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Grades of Incomplete

Incomplete grades may be given in **rare situations** in which significant unforeseen, extraordinary and compelling reasons prevent completion of work AND there is a **definite plan and date for completion pre-approved by the instructor by the last scheduled day of the course**. In fairness to all students, incomplete grades will **NOT** be given based on requests for time extensions to complete assignments without a compelling reason and sufficient justification provided beyond common life experiences of having limited time or multiple class deadlines.

**Students are responsible for initiating advanced contact** well before the last day of class with the instructor to request an incomplete grade and to establish a specific plan for completion. If no contact has been initiated by the student with the instructor regarding incomplete work and/or no specific plan has been established to complete work by the last day of class, a grade will be given based on the completed work submitted thus far and in accordance with attendance policy. This may potentially result in a grade which carries no credit.

5. Additional policies, information and resources

Additional School and University policies, information and resources are available here: [https://ssw.umich.edu/standard-policies-information-resources](https://ssw.umich.edu/standard-policies-information-resources). They include:

- Safety and Emergency Preparedness
- Mental Health and Well-being
- Teaching Evaluations
- Proper Use of Names and Pronouns
- Accommodations for Students with Disabilities
- Religious/Spiritual Observances
- Military Deployment
- Writing Skills and Expectations
- Academic Integrity and Plagiarism

Additional Resource Websites:

- DACA Students or Students without Undocumented Status [https://undocumented.umich.edu](https://undocumented.umich.edu)
- Dependent Care Resources ([http://www.studentswithchildren.umich.edu](http://www.studentswithchildren.umich.edu)) and
- UM Child Care gateway [https://hr.umich.edu/benefits-wellness/family/childrens-centers](https://hr.umich.edu/benefits-wellness/family/childrens-centers)
- Work/Life Resource Center site: [http://hr.umich.edu/worklife/](http://hr.umich.edu/worklife/)

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- Religious/spiritual observances
- Military deployment
- Writing skills and expectations
- Academic integrity and plagiarism

Assignments Schedule is on the next page.
## Assignments and Engagement

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignment</th>
<th>Due date</th>
<th>Points</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Class Participation and Professional Use of Self</td>
<td>Weekly</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grief Role Play Case Scenario</td>
<td>January 23</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Article of Choice</td>
<td>February 6</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Final Application Reflection</td>
<td>February 20</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Grades will be based on a 100 point scale.
Detailed assignment descriptions and grading rubrics are provided in Canvas.

**Learning is in service to our clients**

Please see weekly course schedule and readings on the following page.
Weekly Class Schedule, Assignments and Due Dates
Changes may be made in the syllabus as appropriate at any time at the instructor’s discretion and students will be notified of changes.

Jan. 16
#1 Conceptualizing Grief
Social Context; Mediators
Strengths Based Framework
Ethical Considerations

Required Readings

Additional Readings and Resources

Jan. 23
#2 Grief Scenario Due
Grief Assessment
Primary versus Secondary Loss
Grief versus Depression
Narrative Approaches
Assessment Tools and Techniques
Required Readings (Files in Canvas)

Schneider Grief Depression Assessment Inventory

Additional Readings/Resources
Grief Intensity Scale: https://endoflife.weill.cornell.edu/research/grief-intensity-scale


Jan. 30  Grief Interventions
#3 Life Span Approaches
Addressing Specific Grief Reactions

Required Readings (Reading groups will be determined)


**Additional Readings and Resources**


Feb. 6  
**Grief Diversity Articles of Choice Paper Due**  
#4  
Assessment and Intervention Principles with Specific Grievers  
Diversity Considerations  
Complicated Grief  
**Required Readings: Article of Choice**

Feb. 13  
**Grief Counseling Implications for the Practitioner**  
#5  
Ethical Considerations  
Closing Ritual
**Additional Readings and Resources**


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**Feb. 20**

**Post-Class Assignment due by 11:59 p.m.**

**Final Application Reflection**