Spring/Summer 2010
HB 617, Section 001
Death, Loss, and Grief
Tuesdays, 1-5 PM
SSW Room 3752
Instructors: Sally Schmall, MSW sschmall@umich.edu
Kathy Wade, PhD, LMSW kmwade@umich.edu

Please feel free to make appointments or ask questions via e-mail Mon - Fri. Please allow 24 hours for email responses. We are happy to meet with students outside of class time. Any student who feels that he/she may need an accommodation for any sort of disability, please make an appointment to talk with us so we can assist you accordingly.

This course utilizes CTools as a resource for all course readings outside of the required text. Assignment descriptions/postings, discussion boards and grading can be found on the site. Please review the site carefully and post all assignments except for the term paper on the CTools assignment tab. Hard copies will not be accepted. Webinars will also be made available by Sally for some of the quiz preparations. See dates posted on CTools calendar site.

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.
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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 stigmatized loss, cultural genocide, and historical transmission of loss.
11. Discuss typical ethical concerns related to death, loss, and grief.

**Course Design**

The instructor will select required and recommended readings. Class format will include lecture, discussion, systems and case analysis, and viewing of videotapes. Written assignments will integrate theory, research, and clinical material. Current and practical applications in the social work setting will be noted when possible.

**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.
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 participation is encouraged and expected.
4. **Papers and all assignments are due at the beginning of class on the assigned due date. 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 without permission of instructor.**
5. A proactive approach to learning is encouraged. Students may elect to email the instructor(s) with a draft of their paper 2 weeks before the due date for review and feedback. Once papers have been graded students will not be given the opportunity to rewrite the paper for an improved grade.

### Course Texts

**Required:**


In an effort to minimize your costs we 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:**

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 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.

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:

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<th>Points</th>
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<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Personal loss awareness assignment (Pass/Fail)</td>
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<td>10</td>
<td>Living Will (Pass/Fail)</td>
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<td>5</td>
<td>Essay Responses to Last Lecture (Pass/Fail)</td>
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<td>10</td>
<td>Quiz – Understanding Childhood Grief</td>
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<td>10</td>
<td>Quiz – Medical Ethics</td>
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<td>Quiz - Complicated Grief</td>
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<td>Discussion board answer /participation</td>
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<td>5</td>
<td>Medical Ethics Case Study</td>
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<td>20</td>
<td>Small Group Presentation and Group Evaluation</td>
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<td>20</td>
<td>Paper</td>
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Out of fairness and respect for all class members, late assignments will not be accepted for the assignments. **Out of fairness and respect for all class members, late assignments will not be accepted for the assignments.** Exceptions will be made only in RARE and COMPELLING situations for the term paper. **However, even if you are granted an exception on the paper, you will automatically lose 3 points.** A specific plan for completion of missing work must be agreed to by the instructors and the student in advance for credit to be awarded.

Final Grades will be letter grades defined by the number of points you earn as follows:

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<td>77-79</td>
<td>C+</td>
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Course Outline and Assigned Readings

May 11 (K&S)  
Course Overview and Expectations (S, K)  
Warm Up Exercise (K)  
Societal Attitudes toward Death and Dying (S)  
Small group discussion: Facing Your Own Death (K, S)  
Film

May 18 (K&S)  
Understanding Personal and Professional Issues Related to Loss and Grief  
Worden Ch 9  
Managing Caregiver Stress (S)  
Readings:  
See CTools Folder: Coping with the stress of care giving  
Assignment Due: Personal Loss Awareness Essay  
Discussion Board: Recognizing Death Anxiety (based on chapter 2 of Staring into the Sun) post response before class

May 25 (K, S)  
Complicated Grief Reactions, Theories & Symptoms (K)  
Worden: Ch. 4 and 5  
CTools Site folder “Complicated Grief”  
Discussion Board: Overcoming Death Anxiety through Connection (based on chapter 5 of Staring into the Sun)  
Quiz: Factors Influencing Complicated Grief  
Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder: Signs and Symptoms  
Assignment Due: Essay responses for Last Lecture

June 1 (K)  
Palliative Care: Providing holistic care for the person with a life threatening illness.  
Readings: CTools Site folder “Hospice and Palliative Care”  
Film: “The Hospice Movement”.  
For an international perspective we recommend “The Hospice” DVD (2004) which explores the work of a hospice in Zambia, a country on the front line in the world against HIV/AIDS. Available at Shapiro Media Room.  
Assignment Due: Living Will

June 8 (S)  
Medical Ethics: Determining End of Life Care. Whose Choice is it?  
CTools folder “Medical Ethics”  
Come to class prepared to debate the merits of each article on the CTools site and be able to participate in discussion about medical ethics.  
Film: Mayday’s Good Death
Quiz: Be able to identify the differences between autonomy (the various types of) assent, consent and dissent in healthcare.

Assignment Due: Medical Ethics Case Study

June 15 (S)  
Death, Grief and Loss: Childhood and Adolescent Developmental Issues
Readings:  
Worden: Ch 8 pages 230-238  
CTools folder “Coping with loss as a child” including loss secondary to divorce.
Quiz: Understand developmental time lines and childhood grief responses

June 22 (K)  
Death, Grief and Loss: Older Adult Bereavement and Therapeutic Interventions
Readings:  
Worden: Chs. 3 and 5 and pages 239-244  
Legal Issues for Special Populations  
CTools folder “Legal Issues for Special Populations”

June 29 (Speakers)  
Readings:  
Worden: Ch. 7 pages 179 - 186  
CTools folder

July 6 (S)  
Helping Clients and Families Cope with Chronic Illness and Pain.
Readings: CTools folder “Chronic Illness and Pain”
Assignment Due: Paper. Graded papers will be returned on 7/20

July 13 (K)  
Clinical Practice Exercises
Discussion Board: Addressing Death Anxiety: Advice for Therapists (based on Ch 7 of Staring into the Sun)

July 20 (K&S)  
Group presentations: Culturally Diverse Perspectives on Death: A Sociocultural Perspective  
CTools folder “Cultural Competency”
Assignment: Each small group is to turn in a written overview (2-4 pages) of the cultural group you researched and presented on. Presentations must be interactive with the class (involving case examples or questions/answer opportunities, use of media etc.) and highlight the variation in the experience, expression and understanding of grief and mourning rituals in the culture you have selected. Presentation time: 10 – 15 minutes per group. See CTools folder for presentation examples from previous years. Post your peer evaluations on the assignment tab.