SW 617, Section 002
Death, Loss, and Grief
Spring/Summer 2003

Tuesdays: 8:00 a.m.-12:00 Noon
3003 SEB

Email: mattisod@trinity-health.org

Instructor: Debra Mattison
Phone (W): 734-712-2920
(H): 734-995-3517  (please call before 10:00 p.m.)

OH: Please feel free to make appointments with questions or concerns. Confidential messages can be left at either phone.

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.

Course Objectives

On completion of this course, the student will be able to:

1. Describe the implications for practice and policy of the changing patterns of death in the U.S. regarding age, sex, and minority group status.
2. Describe the different meanings of death over time, and sudden death (including suicide, homicide, and disaster), for its impact on survivors, caretakers and society.
3. Describe responses and reactions of the various caretakers (including social workers) to death and their influence on medical treatment decisions regarding the patient.
4. Describe the medical-ethical issues in death and dying.
5. Describe the bereavement and grieving process.
6. Describe the practical issues and problems that arise for families following death of a member.
7. Describe the impact of racial, ethnic, and gender issues for the family and/or person facing death or bereavement.
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.

Class Norms

1. Attendance and participation are expected. If absent, you are responsible for what is covered and any class announcements.
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. Other norms which may be important to the class will be discussed and incorporated.

Course Texts

**Required:**


**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. In addition, handouts may be distributed in class for reading.

**Relevant Journals and Organizations:**

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Journal/Organization</th>
<th>Address</th>
<th>Phone</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>OMEGA, Journal of Death and Dying</td>
<td>Baywood Publishing</td>
<td>26 Austin Ave. P.O. Box 337 Amityville, NY 11701 (800-638-7819)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Illness, Crisis and Loss</td>
<td>Sage Publication P.O. Box 5084 Thousand Oaks, CA 91359 (805-499-9774)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Death Studies</td>
<td>Taylor &amp; Francis</td>
<td>(see address below)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Journal of Near Death Studies</td>
<td>Human Sciences Press 233 Spring Street New York, NY 10213-0196 (212-620-8000)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Thanatology Newsletter</td>
<td>Center for Loss &amp; Life Transition</td>
<td>c/o Health and Nutrition Sciences Brooklyn College Brooklyn, NY 11210-2889 (718-951-5553)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bereavement Magazine</td>
<td>Compassion Books</td>
<td>5125 N. Union Boulevard, Suite 4 Colorado Springs, CO 80918-2956 (719-266-0006)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Center for Loss &amp; Life Transition</td>
<td>3735 Broken Bow Road Fort Collins, CO 80526 (970-226-6050)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Centering Corporation</td>
<td>Journal of Trauma &amp; Loss</td>
<td>P.O. Box 4600 7230 Maple Street Omaha, NE 68104 (402-553-1200)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Taylor &amp; Francis Journals Dept.</td>
<td>325 Chestnut Street Philadelphia, PA 19106 (800-354-1420 x 216)</td>
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**Additional books and reference materials specific to class topics will be discussed throughout the term.**
Assignments and Grading

1. 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.

2. Written assignments (Instructions will be outlined in separate handouts).
   
   A. 1 page log      May 13      Pass-Fail
   B. 5-7 page paper  June 3      15%
   C. Class Presentation  June 24   30%
   D. Reading Journal  ongoing     30%

3. In class participation will account for 25% of your grade. Factors considered: attendance, completion of readings, sharing of pertinent information, participation in small group exercises. More details provided in “Assignments and Course Requirements”.

4. Out of fairness and respect for all class members, late receipt of the work will result in a 1/2 letter grade deduction. Exceptions will be made only in RARE and COMPELLING situations. A specific plan for completion of missing work must be agreed to by the instructor and the student.

5. Final Grades will be 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+, A, and A- 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+ indicates performance just above the mastery level but not in an exceptional manner. B- indicates just below the mastery level.

C grades  Mastery of the material is limited. C- is the lowest grade which carries credit.

D grades  Indicate deficiency and carry no credit.

E grades  Indicate failure and carry no credit.

DR Unofficial drop.

I  Incomplete when illness or other compelling reason prevents completion of work and there is a definite plan and date for completion approved by the instructor.
Students are responsible for initiating contact to establish this plan. If no plan has been established to complete work by the last day of class, a F grade will be given.

6. Written assignments: written skills are essential to effective social work practice. Graduate level writing skills will be expected in this course. 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.

**Course Outline and Assigned Readings**

**May 6**

**#1**

- Our Attitudes Towards Death and Dying
- Historical Perspective and Present Views
- Factors Impacting Attitudes

*Readings:*
DeSpelder and Strickland: Chapter 1; Chapter 2 (47-57); Chapter 3 (77-104)
Irish: Chapter 1

**May 13**

**#2**

- ASSIGNMENT – Experience Log DUE
- The Dying Process
- Living with Dying: Life Threatening Illness
- Care of the Dying
- Health Care Systems
- The Experience of Grief and Mourning
- Process and Tasks of Mourning
- Variables Influencing Grief

*Readings:*
DeSpelder and Strickland: Chapters 4, 5, 7 (223-257)
Irish: Chapters 2 and 3
Worden: Chapters 1 & 2

**May 20**

**#3**

- READING JOURNAL #1 DUE
- Complicated Grief Reactions
- Theories of Complicated Mourning
- Definitions, Symptoms, and Syndromes

*Readings:*
Worden: Chapter 4
Irish: Chapter 4
### May 27

#### #4
Death and Grief in Adulthood  
Models of Adult Bereavement  
Life Stage Issues  

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

### June 3

#### #5
ASSIGNMENT – 5-7 page paper DUE  
Death and Grief in Childhood and Adolescence  
Developmental Issues  

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

### June 10

#### #6
Clinical Intervention with Grievers  
Issues in Assessment and Treatment  
Counseling Principles in Facilitating Grief  

**Readings:**  
Worden: Chapters 3 and 5  
Irish: Chapter 8

### June 17

#### #7
READING JOURNAL #2 DUE  
Cultural and Diversity Perspectives on Death  
Variation in the Experience, Expression, and Understanding of Grief  
Applying a Sociocultural Perspective  

**Readings:**  
DeSpelder and Strickland: Chapters 2 (41-47; 57-76) and 3 (105-115)  
Irish: Chapter 7

### June 24

#### #8
Diversity Class Presentations

### July 1

#### #9
Special Types of Loss and Grief  
Risks and Clinical Implications  
Risks of Death in Today’s World  
Violence, Disasters and War  

**Readings:**  
DeSpelder and Strickland: Chapter 12, 13  
Worden: Chapters 6 and 7  
Irish: Chapter 10 and 11
July 8
#10
Coping Mechanisms for Survivors/Rituals and Funerals/
Honoring the Dead
Spirituality and Finding Meaning
Ethics and Legal Issues
Medical Ethics and Technology
Rights and the Dying

Readings:
DeSpelder and Strickland: Chapters 6 & 7 (257-264); Chapters 8, 9, 14
Worden: Chapter 9
Irish: Chapter 9 and 12

July 15
#11
READING JOURNAL #3 DUE
Personal and Professional Issues Related to Death, Loss, and Grief
Caring for Self
Concluding Thoughts

Readings:
DeSpelder and Strickland: Chapter 4 (127-130); Chapter 15
Worden: Chapter 8
Irish: Chapter 13