

**THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT AUSTIN  
STEVE HICKS SCHOOL OF SOCIAL WORK**

Course Number:	S W 393R18	Instructor:	Meagan Butler, M.Ed, LPC
Unique Number:	61140	Office Phone:	512-348-7991
Meeting Time/Place:	Wed, 2:30pm – 5:30pm	Office Hours:	Wednesdays 1:00pm – 2:30pm
	MEZ 1.102		Other times by appointment

**Grief Counseling**

**I. STANDARDIZED COURSE DESCRIPTION**

The framework for this course involves theories of grief and loss and assessment and intervention with children, adolescents, adults, and families. The interplay between normal grief and bereavement and clinical syndromes are analyzed for the purpose of developing empirically based interventions grounded in social work values and the ethical decision-making process. Childhood, adolescence, adulthood and aging, as distinct life stages, require different knowledge and skills to assess and treat varied grief reactions. Students will develop an advanced understanding of the grief process for people from diverse backgrounds, affirming, and respecting their strengths and differences. This course is designed for students to engage clients in appropriate working relationships and identify needs, resources, and assets for coping with grief reactions. Students will examine, in depth, their own responses and reactions to grief work.

**II. STANDARDIZED COURSE OBJECTIVES**

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

1. Demonstrate an in-depth understanding of the concept of loss and its implications for individuals during the life span;
2. Demonstrate the ability to assess, through empirical means, the physical and psychological responses to loss (both typical and atypical), coping mechanisms, and available support systems as they pertain to individuals and intergenerational families;
3. Demonstrate an advanced clinical knowledge of the relationship between adaptive mechanisms and counseling strategies of the grief processes of children, adolescents, adults and elders as they relate to the strengths, capacities and resources of those individuals and families;
4. Demonstrate the ability to adapt assessment models of normal and traumatic grief to reflect an understanding of persons from diverse backgrounds, including (but not limited to) race, ethnicity, culture, class, gender, sexual orientation, religion, physical or mental ability, age, and national origin;
5. Demonstrate an ability to evaluate outcomes and effectiveness of grief interventions;
6. Demonstrate advanced knowledge of social work values and the ethical decision making processes as they relate to ethical dilemmas in grief work and practice;
7. Identify and evaluate counselor loss and grief, burnout, and healthy adaptation.

### III. TEACHING METHODS

In this course you will find a number of approaches to teaching that may be new to you, and I welcome conversation around these approaches. These are designed to support a community of connected, compassionate, lifelong learners.

This class will be taught using a variety of methods to foster a creative, collaborative and interactive learning community. These methods intentionally draw on diverse pedagogical approaches to be inclusive of a variety of learning styles. Experiential learning and exercises to promote self awareness in relation to class content will be emphasized. Other teaching methods include readings, writings, small group discussions, role-play, lectures, videos, in-class group activities, movement and regulation activities, mindfulness practices, learning activities in the community and self-reflection. For a meaningful experience in this class, students must actively participate, take risks, stretch their creativity and critical thinking skills and attend class regularly. All students are encouraged to provide the instructor with feedback and meet with the instructor individually as needed to enhance their learning.

For a meaningful experience in this class, you are encouraged to actively participate, take risks, stretch your creativity, apply your critical thinking skills and attend class regularly. This course will highlight diverse perspectives of thought and will encourage you to engage in new ways of thinking that may be represented by speakers, the professor, and classmates from diverse backgrounds. You are encouraged to ask questions, raise issues, provide the instructor with feedback and meet with me individually as needed to enhance your learning.

### IV. REQUIRED TEXT AND MATERIALS

Students are expected to review:

- NASW Code of Ethics <http://www.socialworkers.org/pubs/code/code.asp>
- Texas State Board of Social Work Examiners Code of Conduct [http://www.dshs.state.tx.us/socialwork/sw\\_conduct.shtm](http://www.dshs.state.tx.us/socialwork/sw_conduct.shtm)
- NASW Standards and Indicators for Cultural Competence <http://www.socialworkers.org/practice/standards/PRA-BRO-253150-CC-Standards.pdf>
- NASW Policy Statement on Professional Self Care <http://www.compassionstrengths.com/uploads/NASW.ProfesionalSelf-Care.pdf>
- AASWG Standards for Social Work Practice with Groups [http://www.aaswg.org/files/AASWG\\_Standards\\_for\\_Social\\_Work\\_Practice\\_with\\_Groups.pdf](http://www.aaswg.org/files/AASWG_Standards_for_Social_Work_Practice_with_Groups.pdf)

**See Canvas for full list of materials and texts**

Kosminsky, P. S., & Jordan, J. R. (2016). Attachment-informed grief therapy: The clinicians guide to foundations and applications (1st ed.). New York, NY:

Routledge/Taylor & Francis Group. Neimeyer, R. A. (2016). Techniques of Grief Therapy (1st ed.). New York, NY: Taylor and Francis

## V. COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Detailed instructions for each assignment will be given to students during class well in advance of the due date. The due dates for each assignment are listed both on Canvas and the course schedule (below).

- Class Participation and Engagement: 40 points
- Small Group Facilitation: 20 points
- Personal Reflection Journal (with reference to literature): 40 points
  - Total 100 points

This class will be “co-created” by the instructor and classroom members and assignments may vary due to class members feedback and learning goals. Please follow the most updated version of class assignments in the syllabus on Canvas. Typically, the following activities are utilized in this course:

### Class Participation and Engagement

The majority of work for this course will take place during class time, so your active presence and engagement is the priority. There will be opportunities for in-class writing, reading, role play scenarios, circle facilitation, video recording of self counseling, observation, playful engagement, art making, mindfulness, and experiential learning, and other “hands on” activities created by your classmates. Please do your best to take care of yourself (sleeping, eating, exercise, drinking water, practicing self and community care) so you can be prepared to participate, collaborate, and connect during our time together.

### Small Group Facilitation

During the Learning Lab time, two students will facilitate a small group experience. This assignment allows space for you to practice the skills from the readings and the classes. Details for this assignment can be found in canvas.

### Personal Reflection on Learning

Time in class will be provided for you to add to your reflection journal. You are invited to write, creatively express yourself, record important ideas/takeaways and quotes, and reflect on personal and academic growth areas. You are encouraged to add to this journal outside of class time as well.

VI	GRADES	
	94.0 and Above	A
	90.0 to 93.999	A-
	87.0 to 89.999	B+
	84.0 to 86.999	B
	80.0 to 83.999	B-
	77.0 to 79.999	C+

74.0 to 76.999	C
70.0 to 73.999	C-
67.0 to 69.999	D+
64.0 to 66.999	D
60.0 to 63.999	D-
Below 60.0	F

## VII. CLASS POLICIES

### Communication in Case of Absence

Your presence in class makes a difference and is important to us! If you are going to be late to class or need to miss all or part of class, please communicate with the professor via email or phone. Life happens, and you may need to miss class time to take care of your health or various responsibilities. If you miss several classes, you may be overextended and we may need to check in. Because the majority of work for this course takes place during class, please try and be there as much as you can. If you must miss a class, please contact a peer to review what you missed and schedule time with me for additional questions.

### Use of computers/cell phones in the classroom

This is a practice course, and class participation is essential to successful learning. In today's world learning occurs both in the virtual space as well as in the real physical space. Please be respectful with your use of cell phones and personal messages during class time. Be sure to bring a device with you to class so you can access activities on Canvas.

### Use of canvas in class

In this class I use Canvas Web based course management system with password protected access at <http://canvas.utexas.edu> to distribute course materials, to communicate and collaborate online, to post evaluations, to submit assignments, and to give you online surveys. You can find support in using Canvas at the ITS Help Desk. For more information go to <http://www.utexas.edu/its/helpdesk/>

### Feedback

You will be asked to provide feedback on your learning and my teaching strategies in informal as well as formal ways. It is very important for me to know your reactions to what is taking place in class, ensuring that together we can create a dynamic and effective learning community. You are also encouraged to provide ongoing feedback to me during class and office visits.

## VIII. UNIVERSITY POLICIES

**Attendance and Academic Behavior.** At the University of Texas at Austin, regular attendance at all class meetings is expected. Instructors are responsible for implementing an attendance policy and must notify students of any special attendance requirements. See more information

at <https://catalog.utexas.edu/general-information/academic-policies-and-procedures/attendance/>. Furthermore, students are expected to abide by the Standards for Social Work Education (available at <https://socialwork.utexas.edu/student-resources/bsw/policies-and-procedures/>). The student shows potential for responsible and accountable behavior by being punctual and dependable, prioritizing responsibilities, attending class regularly, observing deadlines, completing assignments on time, and keeping appointments or making appropriate arrangements.

**Religious Holy Days.** A student who misses classes or other required activities, including examinations, for the observance of a religious holy day should inform the instructor as far in advance of the absence as possible so that arrangements can be made to complete an assignment within a reasonable period after the absence. A reasonable accommodation does not include substantial modification to academic standards, or adjustments of requirements essential to any program of instruction. Students and instructors who have questions or concerns about academic accommodations for religious observance or religious beliefs may contact the Center for Access and Restorative Engagement at <https://community.utexas.edu/care/>. The University does not maintain a list of religious holy days.

**The University of Texas Honor Code.** The core values of The University of Texas at Austin are learning, discovery, freedom, leadership, individual opportunity, and responsibility. Each member of the university is expected to uphold these values through integrity, honesty, trust, fairness, and respect toward peers and community.

**Policy on Academic Integrity.** Students who violate University rules on academic dishonesty are subject to disciplinary penalties, including the possibility of failure in the course and / or dismissal from the University. Since such dishonesty harms the individual, all students, and the integrity of the University, policies on academic dishonesty will be strictly enforced. For further information, please visit the Student Conduct and Academic Integrity website at: <http://deanofstudents.utexas.edu/conduct>.

**Use of Course Materials.** The materials used in this course, including, but not limited to exams, quizzes, and homework assignments, are copyright protected works. Any unauthorized duplication of the course materials is a violation of federal law and may result in disciplinary action being taken against the student. Additionally, the sharing of course materials without the specific, express approval of the professor may be a violation of the University's Student Honor Code and an act of academic dishonesty, which could result in further disciplinary action. This sharing includes, among other things, uploading class materials to websites for the purpose of distributing those materials to other current or future students.

**University Electronic Mail Student Notification.** Electronic mail (email), like postal mail, is a mechanism for official University communication to students. The University will exercise the right to send email communications to all students, and the University will expect that email communications will be received and read in a timely manner. Students can find UT Austin's policies and instructions for updating their e-mail address

at <https://it.utexas.edu/policies/university-electronic-mail-student-notification-policy>.

## Steve Hicks School of Social Work Policies

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**Professional Conduct and Civility in the Classroom.** The professor expects students to act as professionals in class. This means students should arrive on time for class, be prepared to participate in the class discussion, and show respect for one another's opinions. A course brings together a group of diverse individuals with various backgrounds. Students are influenced and shaped by such factors as race, ethnicity, gender, sex, physical abilities, religious and political beliefs, national origins, and sexual orientations, among others. We expect to learn from each other in an atmosphere of positive engagement and mutual respect. This atmosphere includes working intentionally to recognize and dismantle racism, sexism, heterosexism, and ableism in the classroom. Social Work also deals with complex and controversial issues. These issues may be challenging and uncomfortable, and it would be impossible to offer a substantive classroom experience that did not include potentially difficult conversations relating to challenging issues. In this environment, we will be exposed to diverse ideas and opinions, and sometimes we will not agree with the ideas expressed by others. Nevertheless, the professor requires that students engage one another with civility, respect, and professionalism.

**Classroom Confidentiality.** Information shared in class about agencies, clients, and personal matters is considered confidential per the NASW Code of Ethics on educational supervision and is protected by regulations of the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) as well. As such, sharing this information with individuals outside of the educational context is not permitted. Violations of confidentiality could result in actions taken according to the policies and procedure for review of academic performance located in sections 3.0, 3.1, and 3.2 of the Standards for Social Work Education.

**Unanticipated Distress.** Students may experience unexpected and/or distressing reactions to course readings, videos, conversations, and assignments. If so, students are encouraged to inform the professor. The professor can be responsive and supportive regarding students' participation in course assignments and activities, but students are responsible for communicating clearly what kind of support is desired. If counseling is needed, students may contact a service provider of their choosing, including the UT Counseling and Mental Health Center at 512-471-3515 or online at <https://cmhc.utexas.edu/>.

**Policy on Social Media and Professional Communication.** Public social networks are not private. Even when open only to approved or invited members, users cannot be certain that privacy will exist among the general membership of sites. If social work students choose to participate in such forums, please assume that anything posted can be seen, read, and critiqued. What is said, posted, linked to, commented on, uploaded, subscribed to, etc., can be accessed and archived, posing potential harm to professional reputations and prospective careers.

Social work students who use social media (e.g. Facebook, Twitter, Instagram) and other forms of electronic communication (e.g. blogs) must be mindful of how their communication may be

perceived by clients, colleagues, faculty, and others. Social work students are expected to make every effort to minimize material which could be considered inappropriate for a professional social worker in training. Because of this, social work students are advised to manage security settings at their most private levels and avoid posting information/photos or using any language that could jeopardize their professional image.

Students are asked to consider the amount of personal information posted on these sites and are obliged to block any client access to involvement in the students' social networks. Client material should not be referred to in any form of electronic media, including *any* information that might lead to the identification of a client or compromise client confidentiality in *any* way. Additionally, students must critically evaluate any material that is posted regarding community agencies and professional relationships, as certain material could violate the standards set by the School of Social Work, the Texas Code of Conduct for Social Workers, and/or the NASW Code of Ethics.

Social work students should consider that they will be representing professional social work practice as well as The University of Texas at Austin School of Social Work program while in the classroom, the university community, and the broader area communities.

#### Resources, Prevention of Discrimination, and Safety

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Disability Accommodation Statement. If you are a student with a disability, or think you may have a disability, and need accommodations please contact Disability and Access (D&A). You may refer to D&A's website for contact and more information: <https://community.utexas.edu/disability/>. If you are already registered with D&A, please deliver your Accommodation Letter to me as early as possible in the semester so we can discuss your approved accommodations and how they apply in my class.

Behavior Concerns and Covid-19 Advice Line (BCCAL). If students have concerns about their behavioral health, or if they are concerned about the behavioral health of someone else, students may use the Behavior Concerns and COVID-19 Advice Line to discuss by phone their concerns. This service is provided through a partnership between the Office of the Dean of Students, the Counseling and Mental Health Center (CMHC), the Employee Assistance Program (EAP), and The University of Texas Police Department (UTPD). Call 512-232-5050 or visit <https://safety.utexas.edu/behavior-concerns-advice-line>. The Behavior Concerns and COVID-19 Advice Line has been expanded to support The University of Texas at Austin community during the COVID-19 pandemic. By calling 512-232-5050 - Option 2 for COVID-19, students, faculty and staff can be assisted in English and Spanish with COVID-19 support.

Covid-19 Related Information. The University's policies and practices related to the pandemic may be accessed at: <https://protect.utexas.edu/>

Title IX Reporting. In accordance with Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972, the University of Texas at Austin is committed to maintaining a learning environment that is free from discriminatory conduct on the basis of sex <https://titleix.utexas.edu/>. Faculty, field

instructors, staff, and/or teaching assistants in their supervisory roles are mandated reporters of incidents of sex discrimination, sexual harassment, sexual violence, stalking, dating violence, or any other forms of sexual misconduct. Students who report such incidents will be informed of University resources. Incidents will be reported to the University's Title IX Coordinator. Further information, including student resources related to Title IX, may also be found at <https://titleix.utexas.edu/>.

Title IX Accommodations for Those Pregnant, Nursing and Parenting. Pregnant, nursing and parenting students, faculty, and staff are eligible for accommodations through the Title IX Office that support equal access to education and work and prevent discrimination. Students may reach out to the Title IX Office for help with accommodations to make up missed classes, complete missed coursework, keep them safe in the classroom, apply for leaves of absence, receive priority registration and other related support. Faculty and staff, including undergraduate students who work on campus and graduate student employees, may reach out for assistance with job or schedule restructuring and obtaining modified or additional work equipment. Visit the [Title IX pregnancy and parenting resource page](#) for more information or contact the [Title IX Support and Resources team](#) connect with a Case Manager.

Campus Carry Policy. The University's policy on campus carry may be found here: <https://campuscarry.utexas.edu>.

Safety. As part of professional social work education, students may have assignments that involve working in agency settings and/or the community. As such, these assignments may present some risks. Sound choices and caution may lower risks inherent to the profession. It is the student's responsibility to be aware of and adhere to policies and practices related to agency and/or community safety. Students should notify the professor regarding any safety concerns.

Emergency Evacuation Policy. Occupants of buildings on the UT Austin campus are required to evacuate and assemble outside when a fire alarm is activated or an announcement is made. Please be aware of the following policies regarding evacuation:

- Familiarize yourself with all exit doors in the classroom and the building. Remember that the nearest exit door may not be the one you used when entering the building.
- If you require assistance to evacuate, inform the professor in writing during the first week of class.
- In the event of an evacuation, follow the professor's instructions.
- Do not re-enter a building unless you are given instructions by the Austin Fire Department, the UT Austin Police Department, or the Fire Prevention Services office.



## IX. COURSE SCHEDULE

This course is co-created by the students and professor. The plan below is subject to change—  
See Canvas for the most accurate details.

Date	Topic		Assignment Due
August 28	What is Grief? Student Survey, Agreements and Goals for Course		
Sept 4	Overview: Grief Models, Grief Interventions, and Personal Reflection		<i>Personal Reflections Journal 1</i>
Sept 11	Grief Models, Grief Interventions, and Personal Reflection		<i>Personal Reflections Journal 2</i>
Sept 18	Attachment and Grief		<i>Personal Reflections Journal 3</i>
Sept 25	Leading Circles + Counselor/Therapist Identity and Ethics		<i>In class Learning Lab: Grief Interventions Group 1</i>
Oct 2	Leading Circles + Types of Grief “Role Plays”		<i>In class Learning Lab: Grief Interventions Group 2</i>
Oct 9	Developmental Stages and Grief		<i>In class Learning Lab: Grief Interventions Group 3</i>
Oct 16	Skill Building “Role Plays” +		<i>In class Learning Lab: Grief Interventions Group 4 Personal Reflections 4</i>

	Personal Reflection		
Oct 23	The Diversity of Grief		<i>In class Learning Lab: Cultural responses to Grief</i>  <i>Personal Reflections 5</i>
Oct 30	Grief Models, Grief Interventions, and Personal Reflection  (Focus on Creative Approaches)		<i>In class Learning Lab: Grief Interventions</i> Group 5  <i>Personal Reflections 6</i>
Nov 6	Grief Models, Grief Interventions, and Personal Reflection  (Focus on Embodied Approaches)		<i>In class Learning Lab: Grief Interventions</i>  <i>Personal Reflections Journal 7</i>
Nov 13	Grief Models, Grief Interventions, and Personal Reflection  (Focus on Nature/ Eco Approaches)		<i>Personal Reflections Journal 8</i>
Nov 20	Resource sharing time, Student Survey		<i>Personal Reflections Journal</i> <i>DUE</i>
Nov 27 NO CLASS- Thanksgiving			
Dec 4	Closing Activities		

## X. BIBLIOGRAPHY

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