

SWK-S 696 Confronting Loss, Grief, Death, and Bereavement I (3 cr.)

Course Information

Semester Year: XXXXX
Section Number: XXXXX
Location: XXXXX
Day: XXXXX
Time: XXXXX

Instructor: XXXXX XXXXXXXXXXXX
Office: XXXX
Email: XXXX
Phone: XXXX
Office Hours: XXXX

Course Description

This course explores issues related to death, dying, grief and loss as well as their relevance and application to social work practice. The major educational goal is to evaluate and understand the many problems and key resources relevant to social work practice with persons encountering grief, loss, death and bereavement. Students will attain knowledge, values and skills to meet the demands for entry level practice with clients (and their families) encountering grief and loss at different stages of the lifespan. Emphasis will be placed on both individual and group interventions.

Course Competencies

Council on Social Work Education (CWSE) 2015 EPAS Competencies addressed by this course.

Primary

- Competency 2: Engage Diversity and Difference in Practice

Social workers understand how diversity and difference characterize and shape the human experience and are critical to the formation of identity. The dimensions of diversity are understood as the intersectionality of multiple factors including but not limited to age, class, color, culture, disability and ability, ethnicity, gender, gender identity and expression, immigration status, marital status, political ideology, race, religion/spirituality, sex, sexual orientation, and tribal sovereign status. (CSWE, 2015, EPAS, p. 7).

Course Objectives

- S696-01** Identify and understand normal grief and factors that contribute to unresolved loss and complicated bereavement.
- S696-02** Describe the impact of different types of losses at different stages of the life cycle. Facilitate understanding of the variety and complexity of grief reactions to losses people experience across the life span and evidence-informed interventions to promote coping, adaptation and adjustment.
- S696-03** Identify conflicts in values among stakeholders that create ethical dilemmas in end of life care and help them learn to recognize their own personal values to allow professional values to guide practice.

S696-04 Describe diverse therapeutic interventions, including individual grief therapy and bereavement counseling as well as support groups and the circumstances in which they may be used effectively.

Required Texts

Corr, C.A., Nabe, C.M. and Corr, D.M. (2012). *Death and Dying, Life and Living* (7th ed). Belmont, CA: Wadsworth/Thomson Learning.

Worden, W. J. (2009). *Grief Counseling and Grief Therapy: A Guide for the Mental Health Practitioner* (4th ed). New York, N.Y.: Springer Publishing Co.

Course Content

Given the prevalence of grief issues within the field of social work, this course examines issues related to death, dying, grief and loss that provide the foundation for bereavement practice in a variety of social work settings. Grief processes and models as well as current trends in grief counseling will be examined. The social worker's role in hospice and palliative care as well as end-of-life decisions will be discussed.

As part of this course, students will learn grieving patterns and intervention strategies for individuals and groups, with special emphasis on normal and complicated grieving styles for special populations. Throughout the course, emphasis will be placed on the significance of one's cultural perspective and its implication for grief counseling and treatment.

A variety of teaching and learning activities will be used during class sessions. These include but are not limited to the following: lectures, class discussions and exercises, homework, and small group assignments. Students will be expected to reflect on their personal, familial, and professional experiences and share their thoughts, attitudes and beliefs in class discussions. Throughout the course, students will be expected to take responsibility for their learning and actively and meaningfully participate in the classroom discussions.

Students' progress in learning the objectives of this course will be evaluated through written assignments, an oral presentation of the student's research project and one cumulative exam.

Be mindful that academic and experiential content in social work courses may trigger an emotional response, especially in individuals who have prior trauma history. As social workers, it is our responsibility to be present for clients who have experienced trauma; therefore, it is necessary to cultivate compassionate self-awareness and address our personal histories in a timely manner for competent social work practice. If you are triggered in the classroom, your priority is self-care as well as continuing to gain knowledge for practice. You may need to seek consultation from faculty as to your readiness for practice and/or how to better prepare for social work practice.

Resources

- Canvas email will be used a way to communicate between instructor and students. You are expected to check the course announcements on Canvas before each class.
- Any additional readings will be posted on Canvas (Resource tab).

Course Outline

Module 1:

August 22

1. Introduction & Overview of Syllabus
2. Loss Experience Timeline
3. Defining Loss

Module 2:

August 29

1. Theoretical Perspectives of Grief
2. Assignment: Loss Experience Reaction Paper Due
3. Readings: Worden, W. J. (2009)—Chapters 1-2

Module 3:

Sept 5

1. Mourning Process
2. Activity: Mock Interview
3. Readings: Worden, W. J. (2009)—Chapters 3

Module 4:

Sept 12

1. Grief Counseling: Uncomplicated Grief
2. Assignment: Interview Paper Due
3. Readings: Worden, W. J. (2009)—Chapter 4

Module 5:

Sept 19

1. Abnormal Grief Reactions: Complicated Mourning
2. Role Play Grief Situations
3. Readings: Worden, W. J. (2009)—Chapter 5

Module 6:

Sept 26

1. Grief Therapy: Resolving Complicated Mourning
2. Cognitive Behavioral Interventions
3. Role Play Grief Situations
4. Readings: Worden, W. J. (2009)—Chapter 6

Module 7:

October 3

1. Jacqueline Bell, Social Worker's Work with Grieving Children
2. Grief and Family Systems
3. Reading: Worden, W. J. (2009)--Chapter 8

Module 8:**October 10**

1. Midterm
2. Grieving Special Losses
3. Readings: Worden, W. J. (2009)—Chapter 7

(Fall Break—No Class)**Module 9:****October 24**

1. Kizilo Kalima, Social Worker's Role with Refugees
2. Assignment: Philosophy Statement Due

Module 10:**October 31**

1. Film: Collateral Beauty

Module 11:**Nov 7**

1. The Counselor's Own Grief
2. Activity: Loss Experience Timeline Presentation
3. Readings: Worden, W. J. (2009)—Chapter 9

Module 12:**Nov 14**

1. Open Discussion

Module 13:**Nov 21**

1. Presentations:

Module 14:**Nov 28**

1. Presentations:

Module 15:**Dec 5**

1. Presentations:
2. Course Evaluation

Assignments and Grading

More specific instructions for each assignment will be posted on Canvas. Instructor also will discuss details or answer any questions related to assignment during the class and office hours.

All assignments should be typed, double spaced, with one-inch margins on all sides, carefully edited and proofed, using no smaller than a 12 point font, and conforming to APA style (6th ed.)

Assignments

Assignment 1: Reaction Paper (Due 8/29, Points: 15)

Prepare Loss Experience Timeline listing your experiences with loss grief, death and dying and reflect on these encounters. Then **write a reaction paper** (3-5 pages) that describes your personal reaction to your formative/critical events and experiences with loss, grief, chronic or terminal illness or death. Describe critical events, key memories, emotions, perceptions, situations/incidents and your age at time of the event. Include your analysis of your reactions, the WHY, in your reaction paper.

Assignment 2: Interview (Due 9/12, Points: 10)

Interview someone outside of the class about their experiences with loss, grief, bereavement, chronic/terminal illness or death. **Note:** Please assure and maintain client confidentiality. Interviewees may include a client (current or former) or a professional who is dealing with the issues of loss, grief, bereavement, death and dying on a regular basis.

Assignment 3: Philosophy Statement (Due: 10/24 Points: 25)

Using Chapters 16, 17 and 18 in Corr, write a 5-7 page paper presenting your philosophical statement (values and beliefs) on the key issues surrounding euthanasia and assisted suicide. Using APA format, first, **D**escribe the different types of euthanasia and assisted suicide (Section 1). **E**xamine the major arguments presented by the author (Section 2). Lastly, **A**rticulate **L**earning by presenting your philosophical statement on the key issues. Use additional sources as needed. Cite appropriately.

Assignment 4: Grief and Loss Presentation (As Scheduled: Points: 100)

Each student (or group of up to 3 students) will give a 30-minute presentation related to a grief, loss, or bereavement issues for a special population of his/her choice. The presentation will: (1) identify and define the special population as well as specific grief, loss, or bereavement issue(s) addressed in the presentation, (2) identify a theoretical perspective that provides the best fit as a framework for the issue, and (3) suggest cultural, ethical, and policy implications for social work practice as it relates to loss adaptation for the population. Students may use role playing, video clips to illustrate an issue, YouTube videos, PowerPoint. Students are encouraged to identify topics by searching databases with empirical and scholarly articles from social work. **Students will provide a handout to the class listing key points, references, and/or resources.**

Assignment 5: Midterm (10/10, Points 50)

Grading Standards

Papers are graded on the quality of the final product not on the effort you extended completing them. The grade of A is reserved for truly outstanding work that goes beyond basic requirements.

In the Indiana University School of Social Work MSW program, grades of B are the expected norm. Reflecting competency and proficiency, grades of B reflect good or high quality work typical of graduate students in professional schools. Indeed, professors typically evaluate students' work in such a way that B is the average grade. Grades in both the A and the C range are relatively uncommon and reflect work that is significantly superior to or significantly inferior, respectively, to the average, high quality, professional work conducted by most IU MSW students. Because of this approach to grading, students who routinely earned A grades in their undergraduate studies may conclude that a B grade reflects a decrease in their academic performance. Such is not the case. Grades of B in the IU MSW program reflect the average, highly competent, proficient quality of our students. In a sense, a B grade in graduate school is analogous to an A grade in undergraduate studies. MSW students must work extremely hard to achieve a B grade. If you are fortunate enough receive a B, prize it as evidence of the professional quality of your work.

Grades of A reflect Excellence. Excellent scholarly products and academic or professional performances are substantially superior to the "good," "the high quality," "the competent," or the "satisfactory." They are unusual, exceptional, and extraordinary. Criteria for assignments are not only met, they are exceeded by a significant margin. Excellence is a rare phenomenon. As a result, relatively few MSW students earn A grades.

Grades of B signify good or high quality scholarly products and academic or professional performance. Grades in the B range reflect work expected of a conscientious graduate student in a professional program. Criteria for assignments are met in a competent, thoughtful, and professional manner. However, the criteria are not exceeded and the quality is not substantially superior to other good quality products or performances. There is a clear distinction between the good and the excellent. We expect that most MSW students will earn grades in the B range—reflecting the good or high quality work expected of competent future helping professionals.

Grades of C and C+ signify work that is marginal in nature. The scholarly products or professional performances meet many but not all of the expected criteria. The work approaches but does not quite meet the standards of quality expected of a graduate student in a professional school. Satisfactory in many respects, its quality is not consistently so and cannot be considered of good or high quality. We anticipate that a minority of MSW students will earn C and C+ grades.

Grades of C- and lower reflect work that is unsatisfactory. The products or performances do not meet several, many, or most of the criteria. The work fails to approach the standards of quality expected of a graduate student and a future MSW-level professional. We anticipate that a small percentage of MSW students will earn unsatisfactory grades of C-, D, and F.

Grading scale – 200 points total

Grade minimums are as follows [Note: grades below C are Unsatisfactory in the MSW Program]:

A	93%	Excellent, Exceptional Quality
A-	90%	Superior Quality
B+	87%	Very Good, Slightly Higher Quality
B	83%	Good, High Quality (expected of most MSW students)
B-	80%	Satisfactory Quality
C+	77%	Marginal, Modestly Acceptable Quality
C	73%	Marginal, Minimally Acceptable Quality
C-	70%	Unsatisfactory Quality

Course Policies

Assignments

All assignments will be submitted via Canvas. Students are expected to submit all assignments on time, even in cases of absence from class. If you need to extend a deadline you MUST speak to me in advance of the due date to get an approval and an agreement will be reached. Late submission (except by prior agreement) will be marked down 5% per day late. IU has a subscription with the Turnitin plagiarism detection service, and faculty members have the right to submit student papers to the service to check for originality. Turnitin.com service will be used for all student papers in this course.

Attendance and participation

Students should attend and participate in all class sessions. Students should complete readings and homework as assigned and come to class prepared for discussion and questions. Because of the nature of this course and group assignments, regular attendance is required and extremely important. Class attendance and active participation in class activities are essential for the satisfactory completion of the course objectives. If you are absent, for any reason, it is your responsibility to get notes from other students regarding materials covered during your absence. If you are absent on the day when an assignment is due, your assignment must be submitted via Canvas according to the due date and time. Missing more than 2 of the scheduled classes, for any reason, will result in a loss of 10 points. Late arrivals and early departures will also lead to course point deductions. It's up to instructor's discretion to decide the deduction points. If you miss four or more classes, for any reason, you will fail the course.