COPING WITH LOSS  
SWK 6702  
FALL 2017

COURSE DESCRIPTION

Coping with Loss is an elective for students in either their foundation or advanced year. Loss is a pervasive phenomenon throughout the life cycle. The course is designed to explore aspects of social work practice with clients experiencing loss and grief in a variety of situations. The course builds on psychosocial theories of human development as well as the work of internationally recognized experts in grief and bereavement.

Since society generally associates grief with death, grief that accompanies life events such as separation from home (child welfare), divorce, immigration, retirement, homelessness or chronic illness, are frequently not addressed by clients or professionals. As with all human processes, the grieving processes are intertwined with each individual's place in their life span, their strengths, vulnerabilities, cultural orientations, values and resources.

Knowledge and skills concerning loss, grief and bereavement have been evolving in the helping professions rapidly in the last 30 years. Social work has contributed considerably to this evolution.

The focus of this course is to provide a theoretical base for understanding and addressing the psychosocial aspects of loss, death and bereavement. The use of contemporary knowledge for strengthening the coping skills of grieving individuals, families or groups is emphasized. Areas of study include skills of assessment and treatment which are explored using films and personal and case materials. Strategies and interventions in working with a culturally diverse array of vulnerable populations confronting loss, for whom services and programs need to be planned, are highlighted. The ethical dilemmas of disenfranchised grief associated with abortion, AIDS, suicide and physician-assisted suicide, and some stigmatized sexual relationships are also explored. How social policies contribute to disenfranchised grief will be highlighted. The losses of soldiers, veterans, their families and communities involved in the war in Iraq and Afghanistan will be reviewed using evolving literature and guest speakers.

I. Course Competency Outcomes

This course will help students achieve the following competencies:

Competency 1-Demonstrate Ethical and Professional Behavior
Social workers understand the value base of the profession and its ethical standards, as well as relevant laws and regulations that may impact practice at the micro, mezzo and macro levels. Social workers understand frameworks of ethical decision-making and how to apply principles of critical thinking to those frameworks in practice, research, and policy arenas. Social workers recognize personal values and the distinction between personal and professional values. They also understand how their personal experiences and affective reactions influence their professional judgment and behavior. Social workers understand the professional history, its mission, and the roles and responsibilities of the profession. Social workers also understand the role of other professions when engaged in inter-professional teams. Social workers recognize the importance of life-long learning and are committed to continually updating their skills to ensure they are relevant and effective. Social workers also understand emerging forms of technology and the ethical use of technology in social work practice. Social workers make ethical decisions by applying standards of the NASW Code of Ethics, relevant laws and regulations, models for ethical decision-making, ethical conduct of research, and additional codes as appropriate in context.

Social workers use reflection and self-regulation to manage personal values and maintain professionalism in practice situations. Social workers demonstrate professional demeanor in behavior; appearance; and oral, written and electronic communication. Social workers use technology ethically and appropriately to facilitate practice outcomes, and social workers use supervision and consultation to guide professional judgment and behavior.

**MEASURE 1A** - Recognize and manage personal values in a way that allows professional values to guide practice.

**MEASURE 1B** - Make ethical decisions by applying standards of the NASW Code of Ethics.

**MEASURE 1C** - Tolerate ambiguity in resolving ethical conflicts.

**Competency 2 - Engage Diversity and Difference in Practice**

Social workers understand how diversity and difference characterize and shape 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. Social workers understand that as a consequence of difference, a person’s life experiences may include oppression, poverty, marginalization, and alienation as well as privilege, power and acclaim. Social workers also understand the forms and mechanisms of oppression and discrimination and recognize the extent to which a culture’s structures and values, including social, economic, political, and cultural exclusions, may oppress, marginalize, alienate, or create privilege and power.

Social workers apply and communicate understanding of the importance of diversity and difference in shaping life experiences in practice at the micro, mezzo and macro levels. Social workers present themselves as leaners and engage clients and constituencies as experts of their
experiences, and social workers apply self-awareness and self-regulation to manage the influence of personal biases and values in working with diverse clients and constituents.

II. INSTRUCTIONAL METHODS

Coping with Loss is designed as a lecture/discussion course. Students are expected to actively participate in critical discussions and present relevant material. Films, and professional literature will be used to provide case examples and relevant didactic content.

III. COURSE EXPECTATIONS AND GRADING

Students are expected to attend all classes and to be on time. Class participation is important and there is an expectation that all students will complete the required readings and be prepared for class discussion. Class discussions are meant to enhance the student understanding of content; reading assignments will not be summarized or reviewed in class.

Grades will be weighted as follows:

10% Completion of assigned readings in preparation for class discussion.
15% Class attendance and active participation in class discussion.
75% Written assignments.

REQUIRED TEXTS:


RECOMMENDED TEXTS:


**IV. COURSE REQUIREMENTS**

Assignment I (due by 5th class session.)

This assignment requires that the student will write a personal reflection paper in which (s)he is asked to consider a situation involving a personal loss. This may include but is not limited to termination, immigration, relationship termination, miscarriage, out of home placement, loss of employment, incarceration, etc.

Identify and discuss the major emotional components of this loss. What factors influenced the reactions of the grieving individual/family?

Identify the influences of diversity and culture on the experience.

Explain and explore the grief process as it unfolded. What religious, cultural, social understandings of loss helped you to explain/and/or negotiate the experience and the emotional components of the loss?

This paper is to be written in APA style of writing. You are not expected to use any professional literature in the writing of this paper; it experiential and requires critical reflective thinking.

The following criteria will be used for grading: completeness of the assignment; clarity of thought and communication; correctness of the language; ability to apply course content; timely submission and use of APA style writing.

Assignment II (due date 9th session)

In this midterm paper you are asked to view a film chosen by the professor; this film is the basis of the paper.

A. Discuss in detail your subjective reaction to the film.
B. Choose a theme/topic in the film as discussed in class and explore the psychosocial issues involved. What are the psychological, social and spiritual aspects of the loss and grief process? How do your personal and professional values inform the development of your understanding of this theme.
C. If you are the social worker engaged in work with a client in the film, how would you
work with this client? Who is the client? How and why did you choose this person/family/couple as the client? What was the evidence of the client’s need for help in negotiating the grief or mourning process?

Assignment III (due date 13th session)

In this final paper, students are asked to develop a programmatic social work intervention, which will help clients cope with loss. Using case material from the previous assignment, students' personal experiences, as appropriate, or another particular category of loss, (i.e. bereavement of widows, parents who have lost children, survivors of violence or natural disasters, loss through a specific illness or disability, retirement or divorce) briefly define and explore the category of loss. Research the category of loss that is defined.

How normally is this loss experienced? Are there cultural, gender, societal or diversity influences? What is the professional caregiver role in this situation? What knowledge is needed to design appropriate, culturally sensitive interventions?

What theories influence the intervention strategies? What modality of support would you choose for this intervention? Individual, family, group or community work? Give reasons for your choice. What supports would you look for in the life space of the grieving individual?

This is a research/practice paper focused on the development of a program that might help many individuals deal with the particular category of loss. This is to be written using APA format. At least five sources are to be cited for this paper.

Late papers are not accepted; tardiness is considered unprofessional behavior. If there is a need to have additional time to submit the work, discuss this with the professor with sufficient time for the professor to make accommodations. Do not wait until the last minute.

V. STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

Students with disabilities who are enrolled in this course and who will be requesting documented disability-related accommodations are asked to make an appointment with the Office of Disability Services, Abby Kelsen, Wilf Campus, 646-685-0118, akelsen@yu.edu, during the first week of class. After approval for accommodations is granted, please submit your accommodations letter from the Disability Services Office to your professor, immediately.

VI. E-RES (Electronic Reserve)

Most of the articles mentioned in the curriculum are available on electronic reserve [E-RES]. You can access the full text articles from your home or from a university computer at no charge.

How do I Use E-RES?

1. Go to the library’s online resources page:
   http://www.yu.edu/libraries/online_resources.asp
2. Click on E-RES. If you are off-campus, at this point you will be prompted for your Off Campus Access Service login and password.

3. Click on “Search E-RES” or on “Course Index,” and search by instructor's name, department, course name, course number, document title, or document author. [all Foundations courses will be listed under Beder, the sequence chair]

4. Click on the link to your course.

5. Enter the password given to you by your instructor.

6. Locate and click on the item you wish to view. Titles beginning with "A", "An", or "The" are alphabetized under "A" and "T" respectively.

7. When the article text or book record appears on the screen, you can print, email, or save it to disk.

To view documents that are in pdf format, the computer you are using must have Adobe Acrobat Reader software. You can download it FREE at www.adobe.com/products/acrobat/readstep2.html

VII. PLAGIARISM
Students should remember that the School will not condone plagiarism in any form and will sanction acts of plagiarism. A student who presents someone else's work as his or her own work is stealing from the authors or persons who did the original thinking and writing. Plagiarism occurs when a student directly copies another's work without citation; when a student paraphrases major aspects of another's work without citation; and when a student combines the work of different authors into a new statement without reference to those authors. It is also plagiarism to use the ideas and/or work of another student and present them as your own. It is not plagiarism to formulate your own presentation of an idea or concept as a reaction to someone else's work; however, the work to which you are reacting should be discussed and appropriately cited. Any student who can be shown to have plagiarized any part of any assignment in this course will automatically FAIL the course and will be referred to the Associate Dean for disciplinary action that may include expulsion.

VIII. HIPAA ALERT
In line with the new HIPAA regulations concerning protected health information, it is important that you understand that any case information you present from your work, will need to be de-identified. What this means is that any information that would allow another to identify the person needs to be changed or eliminated. This includes obvious things like names and birth dates but may also contain other information that is so unique to the person that it will allow for identification, including diagnosis, race/ethnicity, or gender. If diagnosis, race/ethnicity, or gender is directly related to the case presentation it can be included if it will not allow for identification.
IX. CONFIDENTIALITY
Given the nature of classroom discussion and the presentation of case materials and at times personal revelation in class, students are reminded that the same commitment to confidentiality with clients extends to classmates. What is shared in class stays in class.

COURSE OUTLINE

SESSION 1: INTRODUCTION TO THE COURSE: PERSONAL AWARENESS, DEFINING LOSS AND COPING

Required Readings


Suggested Readings:


SESSION 2: LOSSES THROUGHOUT THE LIFE CYCLE: AN OVERVIEW -- INFLUENCES OF CULTURE AND DIVERSITY

Required Readings:


Suggested Readings:


SESSION 3: THE GRIEF PROCESS

Required Readings:


Chapter 4: Unresolved grief, pp. 59-73.

Suggested Readings


SESSION 4: THEORIES OF GRIEF AND LOSS: FRAMEWORKS AND MODELS
FACTORS INFLUENCING REACTIONS TO LOSS (Objectives 1, 2, 3)

Required Readings:


Suggested Readings:


SESSION 5: AFTER DEATH RITUALS; FUNERALS AND AFTERCARE
(Objectives 3, 4, 5, 6)

Required Reading


SESSION 6: CHRONIC AND TERMINAL ILLNESS AND DISABILITY: ASSESSMENT AND TREATMENT OF GRIEF. (Objectives 2-9)

Required Readings:


Rando. (1984). Chapters 9 and 10 ADeath and the Dying Patient@and AThe Dying Patient=s Coping Mechanisms@ pp. 227-266.


Suggested Reading:


SESSION 7: END OF LIFE ISSUES: THE HOSPICE MOVEMENT -- ADVANCE DIRECTIVES & PALLIATIVE CARE. (Objectives 1,2,3,9)

Required Readings


**Suggested Readings**


**SESSION 8: AMBIGUOUS LOSSES: INTERVENTION STRATEGIES, THERAPY, ADVOCACY AND SUPPORT GROUPS.** (Objectives 1-8)

Betz, G., & Thorngreen, J. Ambiguous loss and the family grieving process. Family Journal; Counseling and Therapy for Couples and Families

Twerski, A. (2009) Without a job who am I? Rebuilding yourself when you have lost your job, home or life savings. Center City Minnesota, Hazelden Publishing

Required Readings


Doka, K.J. (1996) Intervening in Sudden and Traumatic Loss in Living with Grief after Sudden Loss: Suicide, Homicide, Accident, Heart Attack and Stroke p.89-90

Suggested Readings


**SESSION 9: WORKING WITH CHILDREN AND ADOLESCENTS**

Required Reading


SESSION 10: WORKING WITH CHILDREN AND ADOLESCENTS: COPING WITH CHANGES IN THE FAMILY.

Required readings:


Suggested Reading:


SESSION 11: COPING WITH LOSS ASSOCIATED WITH AIDS (Objectives 2-9)


**SESSION 12: DISENFRANCHISED GRIEF: ETHICAL DILEMMAS IN COPING WITH LOSS: ABORTION, SUICIDE, PHYSICIAN-ASSISTED SUICIDE, EUTHANASIA, ALZHEIMER'S DISEASE.**

Required Readings:


Suggested readings:

Emanuel, E.J. (1994). Euthanasia: Historical, Ethical and Empiric Perspectives Archives of Internal Medicine, 154, 1890-1901.


SESSION 13: CARE-GIVER CONCERNS (Objectives, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9)

Required Reading:


Suggested Reading:


Heath, K. (1990) Relationship of hope, coping styles, con and current losses and setting to grief resolution in the elderly widow (er), *Research on Nursing and Health.*, 13, 109-117


*****ADDITIONAL REFERENCES WILL BE HANDED OUT IN CLASS.*****