"Only the person who is incapable of loving another is entirely free of the possibility of grief." (Sister Monica Ann Lucas)

I. CATALOGUE DESCRIPTION

This course introduces social work students to the nature and centrality of the experience of loss and subsequent grief in their personal lives, in the lives of their clients, and in their role as professional helpers.

II. COURSE OVERVIEW

Grief, death, loss, and bereavement are pervasive and fundamental aspects of the human experience. An understanding of the grief process and the ways in which social workers may compassionately respond to the bereaved is essential to effective social work practice in all settings and with all age groups. The purpose of this course is to introduce students to the nature and centrality of the experience of loss and subsequent grief in their personal lives, in the lives of their clients, and in their role as professional helpers. Emphasis is placed on the variety and types of loss experienced throughout the life cycle and ways in which social workers may address grief related needs with persons across the life span. Throughout the course attention is given to cultural diversity and norms, the wide variation in the grief experience, the importance of social justice and human rights, the influence of the developmental phase of the life span, identification of interventions that are evidence based, and recognition of the capacities, resilience, and growth of individuals and families confronted with loss. Through explorations of the material, the course is designed to stimulate a deeper self-awareness, a greater ability to be more fully present, and an increased skill in assisting others and ourselves through the grief process. This course serves as a problems and issues course elective for the health, aging and disabilities focus, and as an elective for all other focuses. A key objective of the course is to allow students to determine their own learning needs. Thus, a variety of assignments are provided from which students may choose their area of foci. Students will be required to review the course assignments and turn in a learning contract indicating the choice of assignments and dates for completion by week three of class.

III. COURSE COMPETENCIES AND PRACTICE BEHAVIORS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Competency</th>
<th>Practice Behaviors</th>
<th>Course Requirements</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2.1.1: Identify as a professional social worker and conduct oneself accordingly</td>
<td>*Develop a plan for continuing professional education and development related to understanding the effect of one’s own losses on professional behavior.</td>
<td>A, C2 and C4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| 2.1.2: Apply social work ethical principles to guide professional practice. | *Recognize and manage personal values in a way that allows professional values to guide practice.  
* Evaluate ethical dilemmas related to grief and loss across the life span. | A, A               |
| 2.1.3: Apply critical thinking to inform and communicate professional judgments. | *Identify and evaluate models of assessment, prevention, intervention, and evaluation that are appropriate to address grief and loss across the life span. | A, B, C1, C3, and C4 |
| 2.1.4: Engage diversity and difference in practice. | *Demonstrate knowledge and skills to practice without discrimination and with respect, towards people of diverse backgrounds.. | A, B, C1, and C3    |
| 2.1.6: Engage in research informed practice. | *Critically evaluate and utilize theoretical and empirical research relevant to the grief and loss experienced by various populations served in one’s focus. | A, B, C1, C3 and C4 |
| 2.1.7: Apply knowledge of human behavior and the social environment. | *Evaluate and apply knowledge of human behavior and the social environment to choose methods of assessment, intervention, and evaluation most appropriate to addressing loss and grief across the life span and with the various populations served in one’s focus area. | A, B, C1, C3, and C4 |
REQUIRED TEXT

The following required text may be purchased at the University Bookstore, 711 State Street, (800.993.2665)


COURSE REQUIREMENTS AND GRADING

A. Attendance, Promptness, and Participation in Class Discussion and Activities

Although class sessions will include a variety of learning methods, there will be an emphasis on critical discussion and class activities. Students are expected to assume responsibility for their own learning and show their progress by demonstrating mastery of the weekly readings, by raising issues and by active class participation. Therefore, it is important that students complete the readings each week in preparation for class discussions. We have a lot of material to cover and will need to begin promptly. Students are expected to arrive on time for class assume responsibility for their learning by raising issues and by active class participation. Part of your attendance grade will include small group work on in class assignments related to course competencies and practice behaviors and an “At the Movies” Assignment to be completed during Week 11 and turned in on Thursday, December 1st.

B. In-Class Training Workshop (see attached)

C. Selection of One of the following assignments (see attached)

1. Major Paper
2. Personal Loss Life Line and Reflection
3. Develop Age Appropriate Therapeutic Tool
4. Self-Directed Proposal (i.e., Design your own; must be related to a minimum of one course competency)

Grades Points

Grades will be assigned using the following conversion table.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>100 point scale</th>
<th>Final Grade</th>
<th>Criteria of Work Quality</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>94-100</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>Outstanding; surpasses expectations in all areas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>90-93</td>
<td>AB</td>
<td>Very good; surpasses expectations in many areas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>84-89</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>Good; meets expectations in all areas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>80-83</td>
<td>BC</td>
<td>Fair; meets expectations in some areas; below in others</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>74-79</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>Poor; below expectations in most areas; not acceptable graduate work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>68-73</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>Below expectations in all areas</td>
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<tr>
<td>&lt; 68</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Fails to meet minimal expectations in all areas; not acceptable work</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
COURSE OUTLINE: TOPICS AND READINGS

** Required Readings
* Recommended Readings

Week 1: Thursday, September 8

INTRODUCTION: GRIEF AS A RESPONSE TO LOSS AND RELEVANCE TO THE PROFESSION

Orientation to the course.
Themes to be addressed
Identifying topics for student workshops


Week 2: Thursday, September 15

DEATH IN SOCIETY: VALUE OF DEATH AWARENESS & SELF AWARENESS OF PERSONAL LOSSES

Death and dying in America
Quality of end of life care: Inadequacies in Care
Societal attitudes towards death
The social worker's self-examination; Personal reflections and ethical issues.
The impact of professional grief & importance of self awareness.


Week 3: Thursday, September 22

THE GRIEF PROCESS

Task and phases of grief
Integrative and dual process models of grief
Assessment and measurement of grief.
What is complicated mourning?
Cultural competence & Resiliency framework
Human rights and social justice issues that influence grief process


Week 4: Thursday, September 29

**LOSSES EXPERIENCED IN CHILDHOOD**

- Developmental considerations
- Resiliency model
- Children and traumatic grief
- Death of a parent, sibling, or other family member.
- Loss and adoption
- Loss and foster care

Week 5: Thursday, October 5

**INTERVENTIONS FOR GRIEVING CHILDREN**

- Issues salient to grief interventions with children
- General techniques and interventions
  - Communication issues with grieving children, Guidelines for breaking “bad news”,
  - The importance of rituals, Mastery through play (cultural considerations in play therapy),
- Group-, family-, and school-based interventions
- Interventions for children exposed to specific losses
- Pet death, Responding to traumatic events (traumatic bereavement, parental homicide, community and school based interventions), Children in foster care, Abused children

Week 6: Thursday, October 13

**LOSSSES EXPERIENCED IN ADOLESCENCE**

Developmental consideration
Nature of adolescent grief
Death of family members.
Divorce/separation
Death of peers (violence, homicide, suicide)
Adolescents as bereaved parents (abortion, miscarriage, relinquish child to adoption)
Teen pregnancy-abortion.


Week 7: Thursday, October 20

**INTERVENTIONS FOR GRIEVING ADOLESCENCE**

Issues salient to grief interventions with teens
General techniques and interventions for grieving teens
  Death education and grief supports in schools, Group based interventions, Expressing grief through music, Counseling male adolescents
Interventions for adolescents exposed to specific losses
  Death in the family, Teen pregnancy, Suicide (prevention, intervention, and postvention)
  Trauma, Community and gang violence


** Week 8 Thursday, October 27 **

** LOSSES EXPERIENCED IN YOUNG ADULTHOOD **

Developmental considerations, Resiliency
Death of a child (miscarriage, still birth, sudden infant death)
Abortion or relinquishing a child to adoption
Birth of a child with disabilities
Death of a partner
HIV/AIDS
Physical and sexual abuse

** Week 9: Thursday, November 3 **

** INTERVENTIONS FOR GRIEVING YOUNG ADULTS **

Issues salient to grief interventions with young adults
General techniques and intervention
   Social support and group based interventions (support, web based support and therapeutic bereavement groups), Family based interventions, Creating healing rituals
Interventions for young adults exposed to specific losses
   Perinatal death and other losses (abortion, miscarriage, still birth and neonatal death, SIDS, Adoption), Developmental disabilities, Sexual or physical abuse, HIV/AIDS

Young widows and widowers
Week 10: Thursday, November 10

** LOSSES EXPERIENCED IN MIDLIFE **

Developmental consideration
Death of an adolescent/adult child
Divorce
Caring: Caring for an adult child with chronic mental illness; Caring for older relatives
Death of a parent


Week 11: Thursday, November 17

** NO CLASS **

Complete readings for Week 12
Complete “At the Movies” Assignment
Continue progress on other assignments
Week 12: Thursday November 24

************THANKSGIVING HOLIDAY************

Week 13: Thursday, December 1

**INTERVENTIONS FOR GRIEVING MIDLIFE ADULTS**

Developmental considerations
Assessment, “telling the story” of a loss
General techniques and interventions
  Grief counseling and therapy, Counseling techniques and cultural considerations
Interventions for midlife adults exposed to specific losses
  Parents of children with life threatening illness, Parents of a child who dies suddenly,
  Death of a parent, Divorce, Interventions for family caregivers.

NOTE: Turn in “At the Movies” Assignment Today


Week 14: Thursday, December 8

**LOSSES IN LATER LIFE AND INTERVENTIONS FOR GRIEVING OLDER ADULTS**

Developmental considerations and nature of loss in later life
Common losses: Death of a partner, friend, or sibling, caregiving in old age, elder abuse and neglect, chronic illness
Issues salient to grief interventions with older adults
  Communication and responding to grief of elders, Grief resurgence in later life
General techniques and interventions
  Reminiscence and life review, Counseling and psychotherapy, Group work, Grief in older men,
  Spiritually attentive interventions
Interventions for elders exposed to specific losses
  Spousal bereavement, Suicide, Dementia, Family caregiving, Life transitions, Grief and approaching death


Week 15: Thursday, December 15

PROFESSIONAL SELF CARE, SUMMARY, INTEGRATION, AND EVALUATION

Burnout and Causes of Stress in Practice
Summary
Class Evaluation


“At the Movies”

Class Assignment

Students will work on this assignment during Week 11; we will not meet as a class. It will be due Week 13: Thursday December 1st.

This assignment will provide an opportunity to use film to reflect upon the course content regarding the nature of loss, theoretical perspectives on grief, grief process and manifestations, and developmental issues.

Movies are forms of entertainment that often take real life experiences, to move, inspire, teach, or thrill us. For this assignment you will select and observe any film that highlights content related to loss, grief or bereavement. You will then make observations about how the film enhanced your understanding of grief and related the topics we have covered semester.

The task:

1. Select any movie that touches upon a form of grief or loss. You may review a film you have already seen, find one at the movie theater, or rent a video. There are many films to choose from. If you have difficulty thinking of a title, you could go to the following web site for a listing of films by topic areas:
   Visit:  http://www.cinematherapy.com/filmindex.html

2. After observing the film write up a brief (1-2 page double-spaced) report with concise responses to the following questions:
   a. What were the themes or types of loss portrayed in this film?
   b. How does the film illustrate any of the concepts covered in the readings? For example, here are some questions that might be relevant. You do not need to answer all of these. They are provided as suggestions for ways in which film may be connected to course readings. In what ways does the film speak to the pervasiveness or nature of grief, or cultural norms or variations in the grief process? To what extent and how is “bereavement,” “mourning” or “disenfranchised grief” illustrated in this film? To what extent is grief process portrayed in the film, consistent with the theoretical perspectives presented in chapter one? What developmental issues did you observe as portrayed by the actors/actresses in the film?
   c. What impact did this film have on you?

Student Favorites:

All About My Mother, A Mighty Heart, Avalon, Away from Her, Corina Corina, Garden State, Hotel Rwanda, Mean Creek, My Life, Mystic River, One True Thing, Pan’s Labyrinth, Patch Adams, Reign Over Me, Signs, The Namesake, The Royal Tenebaums, The Virgin Suicides, Boys on the Side, Rain Man, Against the Current, My Sister’s Keeper, Precious, the Diving Bell and the Butterfly, the Secret Garden, The Boys are Back, Ordinary People, Harold and Maude, Steel Magnolias, Two Weeks, Up, Rabbit Hole A Single Man, Rachel Getting Married, Love Happens, My girl, P.S. I Love You, Love Comes Softly, The Fountain, The Forgetting, 50/50, Hope Floats, Life as a House, StepMom
GRIEF, DEATH, LOSS, AND LIFE  
(Fall, 2011)

Name: ____________________________________________

Address: ____________________________________________

____________________________________________________

Phone: ____________________________________________

Email: ____________________________________________

Primary professional areas of interest: ____________________________________________

____________________________________________________

TO HELP ME KNOW YOU

The following information is requested in order to help me be more sensitive to you and your needs. Your responses (and non-responses) will not affect your grade in any way, are entirely voluntary, and will be kept strictly confidential.

1a. Are you now grieving the recent death of a loved one or are you experiencing a major loss?

   YES……………………. 1
   NO …………………….. 0

1b. IF YES, please briefly describe the nature of your loss.

   __________________________________________________________
   __________________________________________________________
   __________________________________________________________
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   __________________________________________________________

2. Briefly describe your reasons for taking this class:

   __________________________________________________________
   __________________________________________________________
   __________________________________________________________
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3. Describe any grief related topics that you believe may be too difficult for you to explore in this class and how you would like to handle your discomfort.

   __________________________________________________________
   __________________________________________________________
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LEARNING CONTRACT

(Due Week 3: Thursday, September 22)

Checklist:

- Please read through the description of the assignment options attached.
- Select which assignments you will complete. This will include the In-Class Training Workshop and one major assignment. Note: The topics and due dates for the In-Class Training Workshop will be discussed in class during week 1.
- In the “DUE DATE” column, indicate the date that you will turn in the assignment, not to exceed the last day of class.
- Be sure to select a due date that is after the class date with which we cover the content.
- You may turn in your assignment before your due date, but NOT after (i.e., to be safe, I recommend that you put the last day of class for all your assignments and then turn them in earlier if you would like).
- Print your name below and then sign and date at the bottom of the contract.
- Make a copy of the contract for your own records

I _______________________________ (print your name), agree to complete the following assignments by the dates indicated below.

DATE TO BE COMPLETED
(not to exceed last class day)

A. REQUIRED: (35 Points)

In-Class Training Workshop

The Topic Is: ____________________________________________________________

B. CHOOSE ONE: (50 Points)

1. Major Paper (e.g., cultural variation in beliefs or mourning, or bereavement; analysis of evidence for or against the "grief work hypothesis")

2. Personal Loss Life Line and Reflection

3. Develop Age Appropriate Therapeutic Tool

4. Self Directed Proposal (i.e., Design Your Own)

____________________________________

Student Signature

____________________________________

Date
The task: This assignment allows you to work with other students to investigate one of the following: 1) a type of loss experienced by a particular client population (e.g., AIDS, chronic illness, abuse, separation, death, miscarriage); 2) a type of intervention, skill, or method that may be used to assist grieving clients (e.g., metaphor, play, drawing, school based strategies, counseling, rituals, support groups); or 3) a related topic that you believe social workers should be well informed about (e.g., ethical issues, legal issues).

Your team should thoroughly investigate the research and practice literature (this must include research journal articles and not just books and/or internet sites), and prepare a presentation that will inform other students about what you have learned. The presentation should help students understand:

a) what we know and don’t know about the topic (e.g., consider the gaps in knowledge or limitations of research and extent to which diverse populations have been included in prior research)
b) what primary theoretical framework(s) inform what we know about the topic and how adequate are they; and
c) the implications for practice

You should develop exercises that will allow students to actively engage in learning (e.g., practice a skill; discuss a related case example, respond to questions). You are encouraged to be creative (e.g., write a play, sing a song, dramatize an event), to utilize teaching strategies that will enhance learning and make your topic interesting (e.g., handouts, use of overhead, films), and to think critically about the material you are examining. You may want to talk with practitioners in the community who know something about the topic to learn from their experiences. You must provide a typed APA style reference list that provides full citations for any resources utilized. Your presentation should be no longer than 45 minutes.

### Grading Criteria

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<tr>
<th>Grading Criteria</th>
<th>Possible Score</th>
<th>Your Score</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I. Description of what we know and don't know and theoretical framework</td>
<td>12</td>
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<tr>
<td>II. Clarity of the implications for practice</td>
<td>10</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>III. Creativity, teaching strategies and time management Use of visuals, exercises, and handouts.</td>
<td>8</td>
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<tr>
<td>IV. APA style reference list. Does it appear current and comprehensive? Are references drawn from research &amp; practice literatures (i.e., professional and research journals and not just books and internet sites)?</td>
<td>5</td>
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<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>35</td>
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MAJOR CRITICAL REVIEW PAPER

The purpose of this assignment is to allow you the opportunity to critically review the current literature regarding a topic that is central to the objectives of this course. For example, you may want to compare and contrast cultural variation in beliefs or practices related to grief. Or you could investigate evidence for and against the "Grief Work Hypothesis" (i.e., that says it is beneficial to verbalize and work through one's grief). Or you could critically review the current theories of grief, mourning, or bereavement and discuss your theoretical preference and rationale for your choice.

The task:

1) Select a topic central to the objectives of the course.

2) In written format, thoroughly and critically review the literature relevant to the chosen topic. You should discuss what we know and do not know about the topic, providing evidence for or against your conclusions.

3) You should conclude your paper with a discussion of: a) gaps in the literature; b) limitations of prior research on the topic; c) suggestions for future research; and d) implications for social work practice.

4) Submit an APA style paper of no more than 15 pages.

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<tr>
<th>Grading Criteria</th>
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<th>Your Score</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I. Organization of paper</td>
<td>20</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Clarity and support of main points</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>II. Evidence of critical thinking and reasoning</td>
<td>15</td>
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<tr>
<td>evidence for and against conclusions</td>
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<tr>
<td>identification of gaps/limitations of research</td>
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<td>suggestions for future research</td>
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<tr>
<td>relevant implications for practice</td>
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<td>III. References to literature</td>
<td>10</td>
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<tr>
<td>Appropriateness</td>
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<tr>
<td>Integration and application</td>
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<td>IV. Technical detail</td>
<td>5</td>
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<tr>
<td>Spelling, grammar, syntax</td>
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<td>TOTAL Score</td>
<td>50</td>
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PERSONAL LOSS LIFE LINE AND REFLECTION

Objective: The purposes of this assignment are to heighten your awareness of your personal losses and grieving style, to provide you with the opportunity to personally relate to the course readings, and to help you to identify the ways in which these personal experiences may impact your practice.

The task:

1. **On poster board or paper, construct the loss life line** that identifies calendar years from birth coinciding with any significant losses that you can recall on poster board or paper. This should include both death related and non-death related losses. You should identify your date of birth and also your age at the time of each loss on your loss life line.

2. **Reflect on the loss life line.** Once you have identified each loss, take some time to explore each loss by thinking about what was happening at the time (i.e., where you were, what you were doing, your predominant emotional tone, how others responded to you, how you grieved and how that changed over time) and how you responded to each loss. You might consider the following questions. What do you remember about the loss experience? What did you feel and how did that change over time? How did you cope? How did you grieve? How did others in your environment respond to your grief and how did that affect your experience? To what extent are you still experiencing grief and where are you at in the process?

3. **Make connections to course readings and content.** Reflect upon the ways in which your experience with loss and your grief response relates to the course reading in terms of your age and development, the way that you coped with your loss, and how you grieved over time (i.e., relate it to theories of grief and theories of coping with grief). Determine your grieving style or any patterns you notice in your way of responding to loss.

4. **In a 15 page report address the following (use the same subject headings):**
   a) **Brief Summary of Losses:** briefly (1-3 pages) highlight/summarize your losses, noting the types and scope of loss you have experienced.
   b) **Relevance and Connection to Course Readings/Content:** (10-12 pages) the major portion of your paper should describe ways that you made connections to the course reading and content as suggested in point 3 described above (cite relevant readings/content that relate to your experience, your age, level of development, coping response, how you grieved and theories of grief and coping with grief); and identification of which theoretical framework most closely resembles your experience, providing evidence for and against your conclusions; How did the readings illuminate your understanding of your loss/grief experiences?
   c) **Professional Implications:** (1-2 pages) reflect on the extent to which your own losses may impact how you relate to grieving clients and the extent to which they may influence your ability to be present and non-biased (i.e., address the following questions as well: Are there particular client situations that may be more challenging for you to work with given your history of loss? Have you identified any complicated or enduring grief that may need to be addressed prior to working with clients who are grieving?)

5. **Turn in your loss life line (#1 above), written report (#4 above), and your citations (to accompany #4).**

CRITERIA FOR GRADING PERSONAL LOSS LIFE LINE

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<tr>
<th>Grades for Assignment</th>
<th>Possible Score</th>
<th>Your Score</th>
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<td>I. Clarity of loss life line</td>
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<tr>
<td>II. Identification of grieving style and theoretical framework</td>
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<tr>
<td>III. Conclusion for practice implications</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>_____</td>
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<tr>
<td>IV. Detail of report</td>
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<td>Spelling, grammar, syntax; References</td>
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DEVELOP AGE APPROPRIATE THERAPEUTIC TOOL

Objective: Over the course of the semester you will have the opportunity to learn about many different types of losses that occur across the life span and you will be exposed to interventions that are developmentally appropriate and commonly employed. The purpose of this assignment is to allow you the opportunity to creatively develop a therapeutic tool or intervention that may be used with a particular client group you are interested in working with that may build upon or complement other interventions.

The Task:

1. Select a particular age group, client population, or type of loss.

2. Carefully review the literature on the special needs and developmental issues of the client group and the therapeutic interventions that are most appropriate for use with the specified client group. Consider what has been found to work or not work with the population. [NOTE: in reviewing the literature, you must review empirical and knowledge based journal articles. It is not acceptable to review the topic in a general way (e.g., using the WEB to get suggestions for responding to a particular type of loss)].

3. Create and design some unique type of age and client appropriate therapeutic tool or intervention taking special needs and developmental issues into consideration. For example, you may develop a community presentation, an educational group, an age or loss specific ritual, an activity book or manual.

5. Summarize the process that you went through to develop the tool. Include a brief review of the literature on the special needs and developmental issues that you build your project upon. Provide your reasons for developing the tool or intervention. Explain how, when, where, and why it might be utilized most effectively.

6. Submit a paper of no more than 15 pages, along with a reference list and the actual therapeutic tool you have developed.

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TOTAL Score 50
Social work courses are typically composed of individuals with a wide variety of interests and skill levels. Taking this into consideration, you are offered the opportunity to design your own major assignment for this course. For example, some of you may have a particular interest in developing group work skills by perhaps facilitating an informational, supportive, or educational group related to grief. Others may have an expressed interest in really studying some type of intervention method or population to be used with clients. Yet others may be interested in conducting a research project related to the topic of grief.

If a particular project is of great interest to you, you will need to draft a detailed proposal and present this to your instructor. Please keep in mind, that the proposal should somehow be related to the course competencies. All design your own assignments must be approved by your instructor.