I. **Catalogue Course Description**

This course will address many types of loss that occur across the lifespan and will incorporate a developmental approach to loss and grief.

II. **Course Overview**

Loss is a universal human experience, asserts Bertha Simos, yet we have a tendency to only acknowledge losses due to death as worthy of therapeutic attention. This course starts with a unique premise: all of life is about loss and therefore it is imperative for social workers to be skilled at identifying less recognizable losses as well as more common ones. Social workers must be adept at helping people process the meaning of that loss in their life.

The course will start with an overview of loss as a normal and necessary part of life and growth. The evolution of grief theory from Freud, Lindemann and Kubler-Ross, through Rando, Klass, Silverman, Nickman and Neimeyer will be an additional focus. It will provide the foundations of classical grief theory as well as its evolution through more recent understandings about continuing bonds, meaning making and the hazards of phase theories of grief. While death and dying at different stages in the lifespan will be addressed, each life stage will also be explored for the normative losses that occur at that stage- for instance, toddlers often lose their primary status as care object and college students often lose the physical care of parents who no longer provide meals, laundry and rides. Although these are positive developmental steps, they are still losses requiring transitions.

This is a participatory and experiential class. All are expected to approach the class ready to consider implications of loss and what it requires of the social worker to be able to effectively assist those going through various transitions. Theory and practice guidelines will be integral to the coursework and the main assignment will be an interview of someone who has experienced some loss. Additionally, each student will be expected to present some section of the main course material, either individually or in dyads.

III. **Place of the Course in the Program**

This is an advanced elective requiring that HBSE I and Foundation Practice have been taken.

IV. **Course Goals and Objectives**
Upon completion of this course the student will;

**Goal 1** - Demonstrate the ability to use varied conceptual frameworks for assessment and intervention with individuals experiencing loss (CC 2.1.3, 2.1.7 ; 2.1.9)

Specific Objectives:

1- have the ability to differentiate task centered from phase centered models of grief and describe some of the benefits and hazards of each.

2- understand the newer conceptualizations of loss, from disenfranchised grief to ambiguous losses to traditional losses due to death, at various points in the lifecycle.

3- trace the development of grief theory from early theoretical models through current understandings about the unfolding of “normal” and complicated grief.

4- understand how development at each stage of life affects the experience of loss and know which interventions are developmentally appropriate at each lifestage.

**Goal 2** - Demonstrate a professional stance in work with individuals experiencing loss, including an ability to reflect critically upon one’s practice, utilize research in assessing and intervening with the bereaved, and reflect upon the impact such work has upon the social worker personally. (CC2.1.1; 2.1.3; 2.1.4, 2.1.5; 2.1.6)

Specific Objectives:

1- demonstrate an ability to apply developmental and grief theories and practice guidelines to a specific case in a professional manner.

2- demonstrate the ability to utilize information about cultural context, spiritual beliefs and other demographically –based information and discussion to inform the assessment and intervention planned with any specific individual.

3- exhibit competence to assess normative developmental losses as well as losses due to death and to tie this assessment to an appropriate form of intervention, particularly focusing on meaning making as it applies to that specific individual.

4- understand the interplay of societal recognition of loss and individuals’ ability to mobilize support and consider how the professional social worker may use policy and advocacy to promote equitable support for individuals experiencing disenfranchised losses, as well as more commonly recognized losses.

**V. Required Texts:**


**Recommended:**


*Readings on E-Reserves*  
Citations- All of these articles are available through the Rutgers Library as electronic journal articles.

**VI. Course Requirements**

**Instructor and Student Roles**

*The instructor plays an active part in the learning process.* Students can expect that the professor will convey clear, specific information about theory, advanced social work practice, and social work values and ethics. Assignments have been developed in a format that encourages learning, as well as provides the instructor with a means with which to evaluate the student.

*The student plays an active part in the learning process.* As with all social work classes, participating in the process of the educational experience is vital. It is expected that students will **read all required readings, attend all classes, come to class prepared to discuss the topic and complete assignments on time.**

*Note: All electronic devices (e.g., cell phone, ipod, laptop) must be silenced and stored out-of-sight before class begins (See instructor to discuss exceptions). Use of electronic devices is prohibited in the classroom at all times. Failure to comply will result in point deductions at the instructor’s discretion. Behavior in this course must also comply with the university’s code of conduct (http://www.rci.rutgers.edu/~judaff/code.htm).**

**Final Assignment**
The student will interview someone about a loss they have experienced. The student will follow the guidelines for interviewing found in the appendix. This will become the basis of the final assignment in which the student will apply developmental and grief theories to the understanding of the material gathered through the interview. The interviewees will be informed of the educational purposes of the interview and given the right to stop participation at any time. All interviews will be audio- or video-taped and large important sections will be transcribed. Together, the interview and final paper will count for 50% of the grade. (Competencies assessed- 2.1.1; 2.1.3; 2.1.4; 2.1.7; 2.1.10 (a-c))

**Presentation**
Students will be responsible for presenting some aspect of the class material during the course of the term. For example, a student may elect to present for Class 4 and present on information about death in another culture or religious tradition. This is different from the interview and primary assignment and should not focus solely on a case, but on the theoretical and practice information. Students can work individually or with a partner to: provide a written outline of the material (at least one new article must be chosen) for distribution to the class (at least 2 days in advance); present the material in class incorporating at least one case example; and must provide at least one discussion question to start class discussion. This accounts for 40% of the student’s grade. (Competencies assessed- 2.1.1; 2.1.2; 2.1.3; 2.1.4; 2.1.6; 2.1.7; 2.1.9; 2.1.10 (b-d))

**Class Participation:**

Students are expected to attend all classes and arrive on time. Absences may occur due to unforeseen circumstances, however, excessive absences (more than two unexcused absences) and/or consistent lateness will result in the lowering of the final grade by one full grade. The student must notify the instructor in advance or as soon as possible after the missed class. Missed classes will be excused by the instructor only for compelling reasons (e.g., illness, emergency, and other--to be determined by the instructor); notification does not automatically indicate an excused absence. Even in the event of illness/compelling reasons, 3 or more absences may result in course failure. Students are responsible for obtaining class notes and handouts of the missed session from a fellow student.

Examples of class participation include, but are not limited to, asking relevant questions/making relevant comments, active participation in small/large group exercises, presentation of case material, and bringing to class relevant articles/newspaper clippings/current events information. (Competencies assessed- all potentially assessed via class discussions, though not necessarily each for each individual student).

**Grades:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Component</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>50%</td>
<td>Interview and final paper</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40%</td>
<td>Presentation and written notes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10%</td>
<td>Class participation</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

READINGS ARE IMPERATIVE- a * indicates that they are available on the e-reserves.
Class 1  Overview of Course and Assignments
Perspective of Loss in Social Work
Arrange assignments for presentations

   *Simos- A Time to Grieve

Class 2  Overview of Grief Theory
Phase Theories vs. Task-centered theories
Review of Development

Doka -Chapter 1-Introduction

*Kubler- Ross- On Death and Dying


Class 3  Evolution of Grief Theory
Evolution of Grief Theory

Walter & McCoyd- Chapter 1- Introduction

Rando- Chapter 7
   Formal therapeutic responses to complicated grief


Continuing Bonds
   2- Broken hearts or broken bonds

Class 4  Cultural and religious aspects of loss
Cultural and Religious Differences in Grieving and Mourning
   *Thompson- 2- Spirituality: A Personal View

*Parkes- Chapters on e reserves on various religious responses to death

Class 5  **Infancy and Toddler-hood**

**Death of a neonate**
Walter & McCoyd (2009)- Chapter 2 & 3


**Death of a caregiver of an infant**

**Infancy/ toddler-hood losses**
Adoption- Chapter 17- Doka- Unrecognized losses in child adoption

Depression in caregivers-

Loss of Caregiver’s Prime attention-  
*Viorst- Necessary Losses- Chapters. 1-3

Class 6  **Elementary Age Children**

**Death of a Child**
Walter & McCoyd (2009)- Chapter 4

*Continuing Bonds- Chapter 12- 
The deceased child in the psychic and social worlds of bereaved parents

**Death of a Family Member of an elementary aged child**

*How Do we Tell the Children?- e-reserves

Doka- Chapter 19-The disenfranchised grief of children

**Childhood Losses**  
Parental Divorce  
Loss & Grief- Chapter 7-Children and Divorce  
Death of a pet  
Doka- Chapter 16-Disenfranchised Grief and the loss of an animal companion  
Realization of disability/ difference  
Loss & Grief- Chapter 9- Disability

**Class 7**  
**Tweeners and Teens**  
Walter & McCoyd (2009)- Chapter 5

**Death of a teen**


**Teens’ response to family death**


**Teen losses**

**Identity**


**Relationship Losses**

Doka- Chapter 15-Disenfranchising the Broken-hearted
Class 8       **Young Adulthood**

Walter & McCoyd (2009)- Chapter 6

**Death of a young adult**

**Death of a loved one**

**Young adult losses**
Racism & Sexism
Loss & Grief- Chapter 4- Race & Culture

Developmental disabilities- young adult and/or as parent

Brett, J. (2004). The journey to accepting support: how the parents of profoundly disabled children experience support in their lives. *Paediatric Nursing*, 16 (8), 14-18.

**Health and employment difficulties**


**Loss of love relationships**

**SPRING BREAK**

Class 9       **Middle Age**

Death at Middle Age
Walter & McCoyd (2009)- Chapter 7
Continuing Bonds- Chapter 9- Widowhood and husband sanctification
Death of the prior generation

Mid-life losses
Work & Health


Divorce

Doka- Chapter 10: A Later Loss: The Grief of Ex-spouses

Class 10 Older Adults
Walter & McCoyd (2009)- Chapter 8 &9

Death of an older person
Loss & Grief- Chapter11- Older people


Experience of older people’s deaths
Doka- Chapter 12- Disenfranchised Grief in Caregivers


Other losses for older people
Ill-health - Loss & Grief- Katz-Chapter 10
Class 11  **The Process of Dying**


Moneymaker, Kathleen A.; White, Jocelyn (2005). Understanding the dying process: Transitions during final days to hours. *Journal of Palliative Medicine, 8*(5),1079-1079


Doka- Chapters 21 & 22
   How We Die
   How We Grieve

Class 12  **General Treatment Issues in Grief**

Walter & McCoyd (2009)- Chapter 10


*Neimeyer (2002) Chapter 14- The Language of Loss

*Wofelt- Understanding Grief- Chapters 7 & 8
   How am I doing?
   Taking Care of Myself.

*Silverman & Nickman- Concluding Thoughts (Continuing Bonds- Ch. 20)

*Ambiguous Loss- Chapters 1, 4, 8

Class 13  **Caring for Oneself (Avoiding Compassion Fatigue)**

*Dick in Doka- Living with Grief- Chapter 13- Impact on Law enforcement
Class 14  Loss in Disasters
Impact on Caregivers and Communities

*Doka- Living with Grief- Conclusions

* Cummock in Doka- Journey of a young Widow


Class 15  Hidden issues in Loss Care
Communal Costs of Loss Care

Doka- Chapter 25- Balancing the costs of enfranchising the disenfranchised griever


VII. Academic Integrity Policy

*All work submitted in a graduate course must be your own. Plagiarism is a separable offense. Cutting and pasting is a violation and is unacceptable. All work must be your own.*

It is unethical and a violation of the University’s Academic Integrity Policy to present the ideas or words of another without clearly and fully identifying the source. Inadequate citations will be constructed as an attempt to misrepresent the cited materials as your own.

Use the citation style preferred by the discipline. In the case of Social Work, we use APA (6th Ed.) style.

Effective September 2, 2008, a revised Policy on Academic Integrity will go into effect. The new policy is posted at http://academicintegrity.rutgers.edu/integrity.shtml<file://localhost/owa/redir.aspx>
Please Note: Violations of academic integrity by graduate and professional students will normally be penalized more severely than violations by first-year undergraduate students. Since all violations of academic integrity by a graduate or professional student are potentially separable under the Academic Integrity Policy, faculty members should not adjudicate alleged academic integrity violations by graduate and professional students, but should refer such allegations to the appropriate Academic Integrity Facilitator (AIF) or to the Office of Student Conduct. The AIF that you should contact is Antoinette Y. Farmer, 732.932.2621. The student shall be notified in writing, by email or hand delivery, of the alleged violation and of the fact that the matter has been referred to the AIF for adjudication. This notification shall be done within 10 days of identifying the alleged violation. Once the student has been notified of the allegation, the student may not drop the course or withdraw from the school until the adjudication process is complete. A TZ or incomplete grade, shall be assigned until the case is resolved.

**Definition of Plagiarism**

Plagiarism is the representation of the words or ideas of another as one’s own in any academic exercise. To avoid plagiarism, every direct quotation must be identified by quotation marks or by appropriate indentation and must be properly cited in the text or in a footnote. Acknowledgment is required when material from another source is stored in print, electronic, or other medium and is paraphrased or summarized in whole or part in one’s own words. To acknowledge a paraphrase properly, one might state: to paraphrase Plato’s comment...and conclude with a footnote identifying the exact reference. A footnote acknowledging only a directly quoted statement does not suffice to notify the reader of any preceding or succeeding paraphrased material. Information which is common knowledge, such as names of leaders of prominent nations, basic scientific laws, etc., need not to be footnoted; however, all facts or information obtained in reading or research that are not common knowledge among students in the course must be acknowledged. In addition to materials specifically cited in the text, only materials that contribute to one’s general understanding of the subject may be acknowledged in the bibliography. Plagiarism can, in some case, be a subtle issue. Any question about what constitutes plagiarism should be discussed with the faculty member.

**IX. Disability Accommodation**

Please Note: Any student who believes that s/he may need an accommodation in this class due to a disability should contact the Office of Disability Services, Kreeger Learning Center, 151 College Avenue; dfoffice@rci.rutgers.edu; 732-932-2847. Students must have a letter of accommodation from the Office of Disability Services in order to receive accommodations.

**Resources for Writing**

*Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association.* Washington, DC. APA.

FYI- McCoyd’s Pet Peeves:

- Use of “that” when referring to a person
- Saying “you would feel thus and so”- the you incorrectly applied
- Incorrect citation:
  - Correct=“XXX” (author, year, page if a quote). Note that the period comes after everything. All quotes must include a page number.
- Dropping articles- say the mother or her father where grammatically appropriate- not just mother/ father. (Minimize or eliminate contractions- don’t etc.)
- Acronyms without saying what they are initially- DD could be dually diagnosed or developmentally delayed- define what you are saying.
- Empathic and empathetic can be used interchangeably, but emphatic is a different word.
- Social workers “elicit” disclosures; illicit means illegal.

Grade Statement:

Grades are increasingly contentious. They have also been broadly inflated and standards not held equally across classes. This is provided to have an understanding of the way this professor assesses student work.

It should be understood that students are not graded “on a curve,” which would require that the majority get a C (average under the normal bell curve) and the other 20% +-are above that and 20%+- below that. That said, there is some degree of comparison in that those who clearly go above and beyond the bare requirements and who write well and clearly, and who integrate excellent analysis and/or creativity are going to earn A’s.

Those who just meet the requirements of the assignment, with no indication of strong engagement with the material and adequate writing and analysis will receive B’s. Those who fail to meet some aspect of the assignment requirements, or who have poor syntax or other writing errors and minimal analysis should not expect to get any higher than a C.
Appendix for Assignments:

Final Assignment

Interview:

The goal of this assignment is two-fold:
(a) to have you experience what it is like to explore what is often a taboo topic with an individual and
(b) to learn more experientially about a particular form of loss.

In many ways, you must approach this assignment as a true practitioner/researcher. Your practice skills will be useful to maintain rapport. Use open ended questions to explore and help contain the emotional expression if necessary. Your goal is NOT to practice by doing therapeutic work, however. Your goal is to explore the experience with your interviewee until you believe you have fully understood the various aspects of their loss.

The following interview guide provides possible questions- it is NOT to be used as a survey (ie do NOT just read the questions to the interviewee), but only to guide ideas about how to explore the topic with your interviewee.

I. What loss experience are you ready to discuss with me today?
    What was the precise loss?
    When did it occur?
    How old were you at the time?
    Who else did the loss affect?

II. What was the most difficult part of the loss for you?
    What part-losses/sub-losses did you realize you had experienced?
    What surprised you in terms of the loss itself?

III. What was your emotional response to the loss?
    How did you express your emotion?
    How did it unfold over time?
    At what point did you consider your loss “resolved” or “worked through”?- How did you know?
    How did others respond to the loss?
    How did their response affect your response?

IV. What was hardest to keep doing after the loss?
    Were there any “silver linings” to the loss?

V. Is there any way that who/what you lost remains part of your life today?

VI. How has it been for you to participate in this interview?

Remember to have the person sign the form on the next page allowing either audio or video taping of the interview.
Authorization/ Permission for Taping of Interview

I ___________________ give permission for ____________________ to audiotape / videotape an interview in which I talk with her/him about a loss I experienced. I understand that I may request that we end the interview at any time. I also understand that I may request that the taping cease and it will be turned off immediately.

Most importantly, I understand that this interview is being done for educational purposes and is not intended to be therapeutic, nor will it be available to any one other than the person who is interviewing me and the instructor. The tape will be destroyed after the assignment is completed. Confidentiality will be strictly observed.

I am aware of the above, have had the opportunity to ask questions, and consent to the interview and taping of the interview.

__________________________________
Outline for Final Loss Across the Lifespan Paper

The purpose of this paper is to integrate the theory and practice principles we have learned and to apply them to a living person’s experience of loss. The outline below is provided as a guide, not a rigid format. Each subsection should be labeled, but not all questions are appropriate to your respondent’s loss. The order is not prescribed- flow of the paper’s narrative is more important than answering questions in order. Although this is a formal paper and proper grammar, syntax, spelling and citation are expected, you may use “I” judiciously (especially in the summary).

I. **The Respondent:** Describe the person’s demographics, their developmental age and functioning and your relationship to the respondent.

II. **The Loss:** Describe the person’s loss, both referring to the words they used (in the transcript, but also your classification of the loss (ie a disenfranchised loss of a loved pet during the adolescent years).

III. **Application of Grief Theory:** Think about the information you elicited about how the person experienced their loss and particularly how they believed their grief process evolved. Try to use several sections of the transcript to show the evolution of the grief process over time while possibly applying the questions below to a section or two (remember, each question is not appropriate for all losses).
   A. Does the person’s trajectory of grief fit better within classical grief theories like Freud or Kubler-Ross, or task or process oriented models of grief- classical or newer? (Disenfranchised grief; Continuing Bonds; Meaning-making)
   B. How does spirituality play a role in the person’s grief process and/or meaning-making?
   C. What area/s did the person struggle with as their grief evolved and what factors do you assess as critical to why they had more difficulty in those areas?

IV **Application of Practice:**
   A. If you were providing grief work services to this person, what models/theories would inform your assessment and treatment plan?
   B. What do you believe the person’s needs continue to be as they regard this loss and what would you recommend professionally to help?

V. **Summary:**
   How do you perceive this person’s loss overall?
   What did you learn from this experience interviewing them?
Include bits of the transcribed interview throughout the paper as they are illustrative.

Rubric:
15 points- evidence of competent interview and transcription
15 points- shows analysis of the loss within the theoretical frameworks of loss
10 points- shows evidence of skilled application to practice planning
10 points- accurate grammar, syntax, citation and writing.
Assignment 2: Presentations

You may do your presentation alone or with one other person. Your first task is to select the age group and topic area that you want to present. This must be coordinated with the professor to ensure that most topic areas are covered, but not duplicated. If you have another topic area that fits within the course focus, please feel free to ask the professor about focusing in that area.

The presentation entails writing notes (expanded outline form) of a reading you find and select related to your topic area and forwarding them to the professor at least a day before your presentation. You will then present the information in a creative way and lead discussion about the topic area while incorporating the material.

For the presentation itself, you must include at least 1 reading in addition to the assigned readings from the course. The presentation itself benefits from videos or other media, current event tie-ins, case studies, or even case presentation for peer supervision.

The goal is to engage the class with the material. There is much latitude and your work to engage the class in a learning experience is a crucial part of the grade.

Rubric:
10 points- selected reading and its notes
20 points- creatively presented material that engages the class
10 points promotion of dialogue with the class about the material.

Rubric for Attendance and Participation (10 points)
Participation points will be based on attendance and class participation. Students are expected to attend all classes and arrive on time. Excessive absences (more than two unexcused absences) and/or consistent lateness will result in the lowering of the final grade by one full grade point. Partial attendance of a session is considered an absence. The student must notify the instructor in advance or as soon as possible after the missed class. Missed classes will be excused by the instructor only for compelling reasons (e.g., illness, emergency, and other--to be determined by the instructor); notification does not automatically indicate an excused absence. Even in the event of illness/compelling reasons, 3 or more absences may result in course failure. Students are responsible for obtaining class notes and handouts of the missed session from a fellow student. Examples of class participation include, but are not limited to, asking relevant questions/making relevant comments, active participation in small/large group exercises, presentation of case material, and bringing to class relevant articles/newspaper clippings/current events information.

Rubric:
3 points- Timeliness/ attendance
3 points- Attentiveness in class
4 points- Engagement with class discussions, framing questions, or bringing in outside relevant information.