Houston Graduate School of Theology  
Spring, 2015  
Tuesday: 1:30 PM to 4:00 PM  
COU/PC 640: Grief Counseling  
Michael G. Ditsky, PhD  
Adjunct Assistant Professor of Counseling  
mditsky@hgst.edu or drmditsky@gmail.com

The mission of Houston Graduate School of Theology is empowering spiritual leadership through the intellectual, spiritual, and vocational development of men and women in order to advance the gospel of Jesus Christ throughout the world.

I. Course Description

An introduction to the history and study of death and dying, grief and bereavement. It will include the development of major clinical, theoretical and spiritual positions with attention to the individual, family, community, institutions, and church. Special attention will be given to the process of living, dying, death, grief and bereavement. This will include individual, group, family, institutional, community, pastoral, and spiritual aspects of the counseling process.

II. Course objectives

At the end of this course, student will be able to

1. Apply critical thinking skills in understanding the dynamics and dimensions of grief and mourning following a loss. (Critical Thinking)

2. Explore their own experiences with loss and the impact of those experiences on their ability to work with bereaved persons. (Professional Use of Self)

3. Identify losses across the lifespan including illness, divorce, family disruption and losses at particular risk for complicated mourning including suicide, murder, and trauma. (Human behavior)

4. Assess grief responses, including assessment of complicated mourning and risk factors for pathological responses (Practice skills)

5. Understand the strengths and limitations of relevant grief and loss theoretical frameworks Identify and utilize treatment interventions for complicated mourning. (Strengths, Theory)

6. Identify macro interventions to better utilize community and congregational resources to meet the needs of the bereaved including those with complex losses. (Community building, faith and practice)

7. Be sensitive to cultural and religious traditions and their impact on grief and mourning.
III. Text:


IV: Course Requirements:
- Six short examinations: 35 points.

- A Journey of Hope: Chapters 6, 7, 8, 9: Waiting, Wailing, Weaving an Worshiping: Students will write an ten page paper using suggested questions from each chapter; the instructor of record will assist students in writing their journeys: 15 points

- A personal grief history: 10 points

- An oral presentation of a recent personal death, dying, or bereavement experience: 10 points.

- Final examination: 30 points.

- Total: 100 points.

Student Workload Expectations:

Approximate Assignment/Effort Equivalencies:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Class attendance</th>
<th>15 sessions</th>
<th>45 hours</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Reading</td>
<td>Worden</td>
<td>30 hours</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reading</td>
<td>Kellemen</td>
<td>10 hours</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quiz Preparation</td>
<td></td>
<td>12 hours</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A Journey of Hope</td>
<td>Paper</td>
<td>30 hours</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A Personal Grief History</td>
<td>Paper</td>
<td>10 hours</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oral Presentation</td>
<td>Students</td>
<td>15 hours</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Final Examination</td>
<td></td>
<td>10 hours</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
<td>162 hours</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
V. Grading Scale

A  98-100
A-  94-97
B+ 92-93
B  89-91
B- 86-88
C+ 84-85
C  80-83
C-  75-78
D  74-70
F  0-69

VI. Policies

A. Regular attendance and submission of assignments on due dates in syllabus is expected. Each student must talk to the instructor about circumstances affecting his or her ability to attend class and complete assignments. Attendance is required at scheduled classes and at the scheduled start time. The student could lose as much as a letter grade for excessive tardiness.

B. Work is expected on the due date. Students should expect a grade reduction of up to 5 points in cases of extenuating circumstances, and at the discretion of the instructor, a student may request and apply for an extension on all required assignments, which are not completed by the end of the semester or term, subject to a 5-point grade reduction on the final grade of each assignment. If an extension is granted, the instructor will record a grade of “I” (Incomplete) and set an extension of time, not to exceed thirty calendar days from the end of the class, within which to complete the work. Additional extensions may be granted only by the Academic Dean or Associate Dean and only after a student has petitioned the Dean in writing. If the course work is not completed within the extended time allotment, the grade of “I” will be converted to the grade earned by the student up to that point. The student is responsible to ensure that all necessary paperwork is submitted to the registrar’s office by the deadline published in the school calendar.

C. Cell phones provide distractions to class. The student should turn cell phones to silence or vibrate and should only respond to calls during breaks.

D. Incompletes
In cases of extenuating circumstances, and at the discretion of the instructor, a student may request and apply for an extension on all required assignments, which are not completed by the end of the semester or term, subject to a 5-point grade reduction on the final grade of each assignment. If an extension is granted, the instructor will record a grade of “I” (Incomplete) and set an extension of time, not to exceed thirty calendar days from the end of the class, within which to complete the work. Additional extensions may be granted only by
the Academic Dean or Associate Dean and only after a student has petitioned the Dean in writing. If the course work is not completed within the extended time allotment, the grade of “I” will be converted to the grade earned by the student up to that point. The student is responsible to ensure that all necessary paperwork is submitted to the registrar’s office by the deadline published in the school calendar.

E. Plagiarism
Plagiarism is presenting the work of another person as one’s own without giving proper credit for the use of the information. Students must not quote books, articles, essays, or Internet sites without giving proper credit to the author(s). Students should guard against plagiarism by crediting the original author through use of proper citations. Internet plagiarism is a particularly easy and tempting form of intellectual theft. Cutting and pasting sentences and paragraphs from the Internet without citations is plagiarism. Failure to cite Internet sources is plagiarism. Any student who is found guilty of plagiarism is subject to a range of

1. If suspicions are confirmed, the faculty member will present the evidence to the appropriate Associate Dean as a record of the offense. If the Associate Dean concurs with the allegations, the following procedures should be implemented as applicable:

The faculty member may discuss the offense with the student following consultation with the Associate Dean, but the student will meet with the Associate Dean. For a first offense, the faculty member, in consultation with the Associate Dean, may give opportunity for a rewrite of the assignment or may assign a grade of zero or the plagiarized assignment. For a particularly egregious case of plagiarism on a major assignment, the consequences could result in automatic failure of the course.

2. The student may appeal the above-mentioned decisions of the faculty member in writing to the Academic Dean.

3. The second confirmed offense will result in expulsion from school. The student will be notified by a letter from the Academic Dean. His or her only opportunity for appeal will be to the President in writing. The President’s decision will be final.

F. Library Usage
A student’s ability to get the most out of library resources will enhance the possibility of earning a high grade in this class. Therefore, students should consider using, in addition to the HGST library, one or more of the following libraries.

Houston Public Library—any resident of Texas can obtain a free Houston Public Library card. Library cardholders have access to all of the books in the library system as well as the use of free interlibrary loans, meaning that HPL cardholders can borrow almost any book available. Cardholders can use the library’s website, www.houstonlibrary.org, to search the
catalog and manage interlibrary loans. The website also contains links to WorldCat and other online databases that will enhance your research. The HPL location that is closest to HGST, the Collier Regional Branch (832-393-1740), is located at 6200 Pinemont, which is less than three miles from campus. A better option would be the you can print the application form from their website.

2. Fondren Library at Rice University—The Fondren Library (713-348-5113) is located at 6100 Main. Please visit www.rice.edu/fondren for more information. Procedure for borrowing books at the Fondren Library is, first, go to the online catalog [www.rice.edu/fondren] to search for available books; second, go to the HGST library and fill out a form, signed by HGST library personnel, to take with you to the Fondren Library for each book; third, retrieve the book(s) yourself; fourth, take the book(s) and the signed form to the circulation desk to complete checkout (return the yellow copy to the HGST library; when the book(s) are returned to the Fondren Library, they will indicate so on the pink and gold copies; return the pink copy to the HGST Library and keep the gold copy for your records).

3. Lanier Theological Library is a new resource for scholarly theological research in the Houston area. The library is open to the public, Monday-Friday, 9:00 AM – 5:00 PM. The library is a research library with no circulation privileges. Nonetheless, students should consider Lanier Library to be a valuable research option. The catalog of Lanier Library is available online.

4. Cardinal Beran Library at St Mary’s Seminary—the home of an extensive theological library, St Mary’s Seminary (713-686-4345) is located at 9845 Memorial Drive, only 4.6 miles from HGST. For more information, please visit http://beran.stthom.edu. The Doherty Library on the main campus of University of St Thomas is also an option.

5. Library of the Presbytery of the New Covenant—as an HGST student you have borrowing privileges at this library located at 1110 Lovett Blvd, Houston.

6. Other options include Harris County Public Library (s) and the libraries at the University of Houston and Houston Baptist University.

VII. Notes for Writing Assignments

A. Writing assignments should conform to The American Psychological Association’s Publication Manual, 6th edition. This includes matters of style and format. Counseling students should pay particular attention to the Manual guidelines on submission of academic papers.
B. The student should number pages. According to APA guidelines, page numbers should be in the upper right hand corner, including the first page of the paper. Margins should be one inch on all four sides, except where major headings require a two-inch top margin.
C. The student should utilize 12-point Times New Roman font throughout. The instructor prefers that the student not use presentation or report binders or folders. He prefers submission of papers with staples or binder clips.
D. Critical or formal writing differs from colloquial writing or spoken English at several points. The student should note the following guidelines for critical writing. The instructor expects students to follow these guidelines strictly. Failure to do so will be penalized.

1. Avoid 1st or 2nd person references ("I," “we,” or “you”). Keep the written projects objective and professional. The student must remember that imperative forms are second person.
2. Never use contractions.
3. Avoid passive voice construction (i.e. The student should write “God chose Joshua” rather than “Joshua was chosen by God.”). Some exceptions are necessary, but limiting the use of passive voice is a good policy.
4. Be sure that number and tense always agree (i.e., Do not write in one place that “Brueggemann argues . . .” and at another place “Brueggemann argued . . .”). Subject-verb agreement is imperative.
5. Spellcheck! Spellcheck! Spellcheck! Dr. Ditsky does not tolerate misspelled words. Failure to spellcheck will result in a substantive reduction on the grade for written assignments.
6. Grammar check works as well!
7. All pronouns should have clear antecedents. Avoiding “it is” and “there is” in the paper removes much of the ambiguity of pronoun usage.
8. Sentence fragments are unacceptable. Every sentence must have a subject and a predicate.

VIII. Class and Reading Schedule

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Class</th>
<th>Reading and Assignments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>January 20, 2015</td>
<td>Review of Syllabus and Assignments</td>
<td>Worden, chapter 9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Students should pay special attention to course assignments. Chapter 9 in Worden is a personal exploration of grief in the student’s life. Students should complete a Loss History, pages 254-255. The Loss History is due on February 17, 2014.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>January 27, 2015</th>
<th>Learning about Death, Dying &amp; Bereavement Power Point Presentation</th>
<th>The Grief Counselor’s own grief (pg. 251-261)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>February 3, 2015</td>
<td>Attachment, Loss, and The Experience of Grief</td>
<td>Worden,  Chapter 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>February 10, 2015</td>
<td>The Mourning Process Power Point Presentation</td>
<td>Worden, Chapters 2 &amp; 3 Quiz # 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>February 17, 2015</td>
<td>Grief Counseling; Uncomplicated and Abnormal</td>
<td>Worden, Chapters 4 &amp; 5 Quiz # 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>February 24, 2015</td>
<td>God’s Healing for Life’s Losses</td>
<td>Kellemen, Introduction and Chapters 1-5 Quiz # 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Grieving Special Types of</td>
<td>Worden, Chapter 7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Date</td>
<td>Topic</td>
<td>Reading Material</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------------</td>
<td>--------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-----------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>March 3, 2015</td>
<td>Losses</td>
<td>Quiz # 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>March 16-20, 2015</td>
<td>Spring Break</td>
<td>Worden, Chapter 8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>March 24, 2015</td>
<td>Grief and Family Systems</td>
<td>Worden, Chapter 8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>April 7, 2015</td>
<td>Children &amp; Adolescent Grief</td>
<td>Power Point Presentation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>April 14, 2015</td>
<td>God’s Healing for Life’s Losses</td>
<td>Kellemen, Chapters 6 to 9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>April 21, 2015</td>
<td>Oral Presentations</td>
<td>Oral Presentations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>A Recent Personal Death, Dying, or</td>
<td>A Recent Personal Death, Dying,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Bereavement Experience</td>
<td>Bereavement Experience</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>April 28, 2015</td>
<td>Grief Therapy</td>
<td>Worden, Chapter 6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May 5, 2015</td>
<td>Final Examination</td>
<td>All material covered in the</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>course</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**IX. Bibliography:**

The required textbooks constitutes the bibliography for this course. The instructor will provide articles and handouts at certain times in the course.