

**STATE UNIVERSITY OF NEW YORK
COLLEGE OF TECHNOLOGY
CANTON, NEW YORK**



MASTER SYLLABUS

SSCI 310: Helping the Grieving Child

Created by: Eileen A. Clinton, MS

**SCHOOL OF BUSINESS AND LIBERAL ARTS
SOCIAL SCIENCES DEPARTMENT
October 10, 2019**

A. **TITLE:** Helping the Grieving Child

B. **COURSE NUMBER:** SSCI 310

C. **CREDIT HOURS:** 3 lecture hours per week for 15 weeks

D. **WRITING INTENSIVE COURSE:** No

E. **GER CATEGORY:** N/A

F. **SEMESTER(S) OFFERED:** Spring

G. **COURSE DESCRIPTION:**

Children are often the forgotten mourners. How does our society support grieving children and communicate with children about the sensitive topics of dying and death? This course will examine how adults, including parents, funeral directors, teachers, and health care professionals can talk to children about death and loss in general. This study of children's grief will include an examination of the developmental stages and children's reactions to death. Specific techniques, activities, and rituals designed to facilitate a child's grief will be explored and discussed.

H. **PRE-REQUISITES/CO-REQUISITES:**

a. Pre-requisite(s): ENGL 101 Composition and the Spoken Word
PSYC 101 Intro. to Psychology

I. **STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES:**

Course Objectives	PLO	GER	Institution SLO
a. Identify and give examples of common manifestations of childhood grief.	3 - Demonstrate an understanding of the different skills, methods, goals, and evaluative tools used in the Social Sciences and Humanities.	n/a	5- Industry, Professional, Discipline-Specific Knowledge and Skills
b. Discuss and analyze ten strategies adults can utilize to help children cope with death and loss.	1 - Demonstrate the ability to communicate effectively both through written and oral means.		2- Critical Thinking [IA] 5 - Industry, Professional, Discipline-Specific
c. Explain how a child's cognitive development impacts their understanding of death.	3 - Demonstrate an understanding of the different skills, methods, goals, and evaluative tools used in the Social Sciences and Humanities.		1 - Communication Skills [W] 5 - Industry, Professional, Discipline-Specific
d. Design activities to assist children in the mourning process.	3 - Demonstrate an understanding of the different skills, methods, goals, and evaluative tools used in the Social Sciences and Humanities.		2 - Critical Thinking [PS] 5 - Industry, Professional, Discipline-Specific
e. Identify the warning signs of complicated grief in children that signal the need for professional help.	3 - Demonstrate an understanding of the different skills, methods, goals, and evaluative tools used in the Social Sciences and Humanities.		5 - Industry, Professional, Discipline-Specific Knowledge
f. Identify factors influencing a child's response to death.	5 - Demonstrate an understanding of the history, cultural practices, politics, beliefs, and institutions of other cultures and the interplay of diverse worldviews in the global context.		4 - Social Responsibility [IK] 5 - Industry, Professional, Discipline-Specific

KEY	Institutional Student Learning Outcomes [ISLO 1 – 5]
ISLO #	ISLO & Subsets
1	Communication Skills Oral [O], Written [W]
2	Critical Thinking Critical Analysis [CA], Inquiry & Analysis [IA], Problem Solving [PS]
3	Foundational Skills Information Management [IM], Quantitative Lit. /Reasoning [QTR]
4	Social Responsibility Ethical Reasoning [ER], Global Learning [GL], Intercultural Knowledge [IK], Teamwork [T]
5	Industry, Professional, Discipline Specific Knowledge and Skills

J. **APPLIED LEARNING COMPONENT:** Yes _____ No X

K. **TEXTS:**

Schaefer, Daniel & Lyons, Christine. (2010). *How do we tell the children?* New York: Newmarket Press.

Wolfelt, Alan. (1992). *Sarah's journey.* Colorado: Companion Press

L. **REFERENCES:**

Balk, D., & Meagher, D. K. (Ed.). (2013). *Handbook of Thanatology: The Essential Body of Knowledge for the Study of Death, Dying, and Bereavement.* 2nd edition. New York: Routledge.

Burns, Donna. (2010). *When Kids Are Grieving.* California: Corwin.

Webb, Nancy. (2010). *Helping bereaved children, A handbook for practitioners.* New York: Guilford Press.

Wolfelt, Alan. (1998). *Helping children cope with grief.* PA: Accelerated Development.

Worden, William. (1996). *Children and grief: When a parent dies.* New York: Guilford Press.

M. **EQUIPMENT:** Blackboard

N. **GRADING METHOD:** A - F

O. **SUGGESTED MEASUREMENT CRITERIA/METHODS:**

Midterm exam	20%
Homework assignments	20%
Discussion Forum	10%
Course project	25%
Final exam	25%

P. **DETAILED COURSE OUTLINE:**

I. Topic: Children and death: An Introduction

- A. Adult's reactions to children's grief
- B. Myths of children's grief
- C. Worden's Task of grief
- D. Similarities of adult grief and children's grief

II. Topic: A Child's reaction to loss

- A. Grief, mourning, & bereavement defined
- B. Normal feelings associated with children and grief
- C. Secondary losses associated with children's grief

III. Topic: A Child's developmental understanding of death

- A. Maria Nagy's study of grieving children
- B. Developmental Stages of Erik Erikson
- C. Piaget's Stages of Cognitive Development

- IV. **Topic: Factors influencing a Child's response to death**
 - A. Coping with the death of a parent
 - B. Factors influencing a child's response to death
 - C. Factors inhibiting the child's mourning process
 - D. Common behavioral changes in a grieving child

- V. **Topic: The Attachment Theory**
 - A. Wolfelt's Model of Action
 - B. John Bowlby's Attachment Theory
 - C. Cultural factors that influence a child's grief

- VI. **Topic: Talking to children about death**
 - A. Strategies for talking to children about death
 - B. Explanations of death to children that are not helpful
 - C. Basic components for listening to grieving children

- VII. **Topic: Specific types of childhood losses**
 - A. 13 features that differentiate sibling loss from parental loss
 - B. Death of a grandparent
 - C. Loss of friends and teachers
 - E. Helping children cope with pet loss

- VIII. **Topic: How a family responds to death**
 - A. Death and grief in the family unit
 - B. Disenfranchised grief in children- specific losses and divorce

- IX. **Topic: Interventions and activities to support the grieving child**
 - A. Creative techniques that help children grieve
 - B. Benefits of bereavement support groups for children
 - C. Benefits of grief camps for children

- X. **Topic: Complicated vs. normal grief in children**
 - A. Children at risk
 - B. Grief or depression in children
 - C. Signs when professional help is needed for a grieving child

- XI. **Topic: Supporting children after suicide and violent death**
 - A. Grief reactions of a child after a violent death
 - B. PTSD reactions in children

- XII. **Topic: Coping with grief and loss in the classroom**
 - A. Grief related issues in the classroom
 - B. Suggestions for teachers to support a grieving child
 - C. Creative ideas for supporting grieving children in the school system

- XIII. **Topic: Children, funerals and cremation**
 - A. Common questions and response surrounding children and funerals
 - B. Language used surrounding funerals, burials, & cremation

XIV. Topic: The dying child

- A. Barriers for talking to children about end of life issues
- B. Key strategies for discussing dying with children

Q. LABORATORY OUTLINE: N/A