

End-of-life Doula Certificate Program: Syllabus

The University of Vermont

SAMPLE 2022

LEAD INSTRUCTOR AND COURSE DEVELOPER

Lead Instructor: [name of instructor]

[instructor bio].

Contact Email: [instructor email]

Before you reach out, please review the announcements on the Home page and the material on the Getting Started and FAQs & Tips pages to see if we have possibly addressed your question already. This may get you an answer more quickly.

If at any time you need immediate help, please click the **Help** button at the top of your Blackboard page, and you'll be taken to a page that lists numerous avenues for getting assistance.

Course Developer: Francesca Arnoldy, Community Doula and Educator

Francesca Arnoldy, Community Doula. Francesca is the course developer of the University of Vermont's End-of-Life Doula Professional Certificate Programs, a bereavement researcher with the Vermont Conversation Lab, and a hospice volunteer. Francesca wrote "Cultivating the Doula Heart - Essentials of Compassionate Care" (a guidebook) and "Map of Memory Lane" (a picture book). She runs workshops and presents about these rich topics with hopes of encouraging people to support others during times of intensity. Francesca lives in Vermont with her loved ones in a most idyllic village. She can be found contemplating birth, death, and life with the doula heart on her website [Contemplative Doula](#).

COURSE OVERVIEW

Course Description

The University of Vermont Larner College of Medicine has partnered with The Farm Families of Cabot Creamery Cooperative to launch a fully online End-of-life Doula Professional Certificate that will prepare you to meet the growing demand for end-of-life support as people live longer and the course of the average dying process continues to become increasingly gradual and anticipated.

End-of-Life Doulas complement the care provided by family members and friends, as well as palliative and hospice professionals, within the settings of hospitals, senior care facilities, hospices, and homes. EOL Doulas support clients with compassionate care in a number of ways, including emotional, spiritual, informational, and physical support to ease anxiety, aid in comfort, and promote personalized, even positive dying passages for clients and their loved ones.

Please note: This program is for educational purposes only, and is not intended to provide medical, legal, or financial advice. This program focuses on preparing learners to offer emotional support during terminal illness, the dying process, and bereavement. The professional doula role is unlicensed and unregulated. Upon fulfilling the requirements of this course, graduates will receive a digital badge and be able to download a certificate of completion.

Course Objectives

This course is designed to provide an in-depth overview of the emerging role of end-of-life (EOL) doulas, and the issues, challenges, and rewards that surround this work at life's end.

Throughout the course, we will present a wide variety of published information, interviews with industry professionals, and chances for learners to examine their own experiences, beliefs, hopes, and fears about death and dying. We intend to create a supportive learning experience with lots of opportunities to build community, as the subject is intense, challenging, and affecting.

High-level goals of the program intend that you will learn how to:

- Become prepared to work in harmony with a client's chosen care team (potentially) including community members, family, friends, and medical practitioners to provide adjunct support as needed and heighten a client's feelings of empowerment and self-efficacy.
- Respect appropriate professional/personal boundaries while keeping the client's best interest in mind at all times.
- Understand common terminal conditions and diseases (and their associated symptoms and progressive courses of decline), pain management practices, the active dying process, and helpful non-medical interventions to ease patient suffering.
- Describe the role and scope of an EOL Doula and apply the core skills of providing unconditional positive regard and nonjudgmental support while comfortably holding space, companioning, and engaging in open, accepting dialog with clients.
- Garner a wide variety of details about special populations based on religious/spiritual beliefs and cultural norms, as well as the unique challenges associated with pediatric death and end-stage dementia.
- Recognize and support the stages and facets of anticipatory grief, mourning, and bereavement.
- Effectively refer patients and families to other local professionals, organizations, support groups, and businesses that provide offerings to those at the end of life.
- Engage in meaningful conversations and life reviews with clients, as well as assist with legacy projects.
- Develop seemingly endless, practical methods of decreasing anxiety/suffering by utilizing visualizations, guided imagery, and simple healing techniques, as well as creating a comforting energetic space for clients that feels calming and relaxing.
- Support clients in developing vigil wishes and values-based advance directives.
- Nurture a protective, calm presence and environment during vigil.
- Offer acute bereavement support and appropriate referrals to a client's family and friends after death.

Course Flow

Each module will open on Wednesday at 12:00 AM and end on Tuesday at 11:59 PM.

Course Work and Expectations

We estimate that you will dedicate at least 8-10 hours per week for course work, including readings, videos, and related activities (discussions, assignments, quizzes).

For most modules, you will be expected to post to the discussion boards by Sunday and/or Tuesday, to complete a quiz by Tuesday, and to submit a draft of your Directory List by Tuesday.

In Module 5 you will begin work on your Life Story Project and you will continue to work on the project for the remainder of the course.

PROGRAM REQUIREMENTS AND GRADING

Required Reading

We have two required reading books for this course:

- *Final Gifts*, by Maggie Callanan and Patricia Kelley. Copies of this book are readily available for purchase online, including cheap used copies. Or feel free to borrow it from your local library/hospice lending library.
- *Cultivating the Doula Heart: Essentials of Compassionate Care*, by Francesca Lynn Arnoldy. Copies are available for purchase online, at your local bookshop (by order), and at the UVM Bookstore.

Grading

This is a noncredit course. At the conclusion, you will not receive a letter grade, but instead will receive a digital badge. All students who earn a 70% or greater, based on the criteria below, will receive a digital badge and be able to download a certificate of completion.

Successful completion of this course is determined by the following factors:

- **Discussions:** 50%
- **Life Story Project:** 20%
- **Assignments:** 15%
- **Quizzes:** 15%

Makeup Policy

On occasion, we encourage and allow students to revise assignments and/or discussion items. If you receive a request to do so, you have no more than **one** week from the original deadline to complete the work, if you choose to do so.

If you have extenuating circumstances that make it difficult for you to complete assigned work by its deadline, you must communicate with the lead instructor prior to that deadline. The design of this course relies upon students moving through it together, so our ability to be flexible with deadlines is limited.

If you do receive an extension, you have no more than **one** week from the original deadline to complete the work, unless otherwise notified. If you miss a deadline and have not been in touch with the lead instructor, you will receive a '0' for any missed items.

Discussion Boards

The discussion forum will be an important part of our learning experience. Most students find that participating in discussions helps with understanding of the course content and deepening their learning and ability to think critically. The following instructions and grading rubrics are applied to all course discussion boards. If you are unable to meet this obligation, please let your lead instructor know.

Please follow these guidelines when posting in the discussion area:

- Keep your post focused on the topic, relating any class readings and materials from the current module in your post (as applicable).
- Proofread and review your response before hitting the Submit button. You will not be able to edit your posts. You can ask your facilitator for assistance, if needed.
- Participate regularly. Improve your learning by being an active and engaged student. Successful students follow and participate in the assigned discussion throughout the module, logging on at least three times a week while reading and participating in forums as assigned in the module.
- Post your original thoughts early to help develop discussion before the end of the course week.

Discussion Board Grading Rubrics

Discussions that require only an initial post are graded based on the content of that post (8 points):

Reflective (No Response Posts Required) Criteria/Levels	Excellent	Proficient	Adequate	No Submissions
Content of Initial Post	8 points Responds to the prompt(s) comprehensively, provides insight and application of the week's materials	6 points Responds to the prompt(s) and provides example(s) of insight	4 points Responds to the prompt(s) with little expansion, insight, or application	0 points No post

Discussions that require an initial post plus responses to classmates are allotted more points to account for the content of the responses and the number of posts (9 to 12 points):

Collaborative 1 (1 response post required) Criteria/Levels	Excellent	Proficient	Adequate	No Submissions
Content of Initial Post	6 points Responds to the prompt(s) comprehensively, provides insight and application of the week's materials	4 points Responds to the prompt(s) and provides example(s) of insight	2 points Responds to the prompt(s) with little expansion, insight, or application	0 points No posts
Content of Responsive Post 1	3 points Includes questions and/or offers ideas, and grows the conversation	2 points Offers constructive feedback, but may not grow the conversation	1 point Post is not substantive	0 points No posts

Collaborative 2 (2 response posts required) Criteria/Levels	Excellent	Proficient	Adequate	No Submissions
Content of Initial Post	6 points Responds to the prompt(s) comprehensively, provides insight and application of the week's materials	4 points Responds to the prompt(s) and provides example(s) of insight	2 points Responds to the prompt(s) with little expansion, insight, or application	0 points No posts
Content of Responsive Post 1	3 points Includes questions and/or offers ideas, and grows the conversation	2 points Offers constructive feedback, but may not grow	1 point Post is not substantive	0 points No posts

Collaborative 2 (2 response posts required) Criteria/Levels	Excellent	Proficient	Adequate	No Submissions
		the conversation		
Content of Responsive Post 2	3 points Includes questions and/or offers ideas, and grows the conversation	2 points Offers constructive feedback, but may not grow the conversation	1 point Post is not substantive	0 points No posts

COURSE SCHEDULE

MODULE	DATES	TOPICS
Module 1: Introduction to End-of-Life Work	Week 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduction to End-of-life Work • Dying Person’s Bill of Rights • Role & Scope of an End-of-Life Doula • Introduction to Hospice and Palliative Care • Personal Death Awareness; Introduction to End-of-life Options and Wishes
Module 2: Introduction to the Grief Continuum	Week 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduction to the Grief Continuum <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Dimensions of Grief and Loss ○ Anticipatory Grief ○ Supportive Responses • Commonalities within EOL experiences
Module 3: Understanding the Patient Experience	Week 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understanding the Patient Experience • Starting the Conversation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Goals of Care ○ Common Illnesses/Diseases: Progression, Symptoms, and Care ○ Pain Assessment and Management

MODULE	DATES	TOPICS
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduction to Dementia • Music at the End of Life • Universal Safety Precautions • Introduction to Basic Hands-on Care
<p>Module 4: Ethics & Essentials</p>	<p>Week 4</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Appropriate Professional and Personal Boundaries • Companionship versus Treating; Serving versus Helping • Non-judgmental Support, Acceptance, and Unconditional Positive Regard • Entering Sacred Space • Holding Space
<p>Module 5: Turning Toward Suffering</p>	<p>Week 5</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Turning Toward” Suffering • Introduction to Dignity Therapy • Active Dying Process: Signs and Supportive Interventions • The Needs of Clients: Providing Comfort Care • Caregiving Considerations • Self-Care
<p>Module 6: Death Practices & Belief Systems</p>	<p>Week 6</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Religious/Cultural Beliefs and Practices • Spirituality • After-Death Options: Home, Green, Traditional, Alternative • Complementary Care • Roles Among Providers/Systems • Care Coordination
<p>Module 7: Dimensions of Grief</p>	<p>Week 7</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Preparing for Loss <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Life Review ○ Completion Work ○ Legacy Projects

MODULE	DATES	TOPICS
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bereavement/Grief Support • Pediatric Death, Loss, and Grief
<p>Module 8: Setting Intention</p>	<p>Week 8</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Setting Intention • Comfort Measures • Guided Imagery, Relaxation and Breathing Exercises • Environment: Setting a Personalized Atmosphere of Calm • Vigil Planning • Vigil Sitting • Self-Reflection, Re-evaluation of Personal End-of-Life Wishes • What a Doula Does
<p>Bonus Module: The Doula Profession</p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Doula Bag • Visit Ideas/Activities • The Emerging EOL Doula Career <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Meetings ○ Contract Components ○ Business Considerations • Role and Scope Revisited

UVM POLICIES

Student Learning Accommodations

In keeping with University policy, any student with a documented disability interested in utilizing accommodations should contact ACCESS, the office of Disability Services on campus. ACCESS works with students and faculty in an interactive process to explore reasonable and appropriate accommodations via an accommodation letter to faculty with approved accommodations as early as possible each semester. All students are strongly encouraged to meet with their faculty to discuss the accommodations they plan to use in each course.

Contact ACCESS: A170 Living/Learning Center; 802-656-7753; access@uvm.edu; www.uvm.edu/access

Please see UVM’s policy on [disability certification, accommodation and student support \(.pdf\)](#).

Religious Holidays

Students have the right to practice the religion of their choice. If you need to miss class to observe a religious holiday, please submit the dates of your absence to me in writing by the end of the second full week of classes. You will be permitted to make up work within a mutually agreed-upon time.

Academic Integrity

The [Code of Academic Integrity \(.pdf\)](#) addresses plagiarism, fabrication, collusion, and cheating.

Grade Appeals

If you would like to contest a grade, please follow the procedures outlined in the [Grade Appeals policy \(.pdf\)](#).

Grading

For information on grading and GPA calculation, please see the [Grading Policies page](#) for Graduate students.

Code of Student Rights and Responsibilities

The [Code of Student Conduct \(.pdf\)](#) outlines the student's responsibility for promoting the community's welfare.