

Companion Animal End-of-life Doula Certificate Program: Syllabus

The University of Vermont

February 2022

LEAD INSTRUCTOR, COURSE DEVELOPER, AND SUBJECT MATTER EXPERT

Lead Instructor: [name of instructor]

[instructor bio].

Contact Email: [\[instructor email\]](#)

Course Developer: Francesca Arnoldy

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: ContemplativeDoula.com.

Contact Information: The best way to reach me is via email. I will do my best to get back to you within 24 hours during the week. If you need to email over the weekend, I'll get back to you on Monday.

Email: eold@uvm.edu

Subject Matter Expert: [name of subject matter expert]

[subject matter expert bio]

Who Should I Contact For ...

QUESTIONS/SUGGESTIONS	CONTACT
Questions about logging in	Lead Instructor
Questions about anything technical	Lead Instructor
Questions about my grade	Lead Instructor
Questions about how to complete any required tasks in the course	Lead Instructor
Questions about the content of the course	Lead Instructor
Suggestions for resources to add to/enhance the course	Lead Instructor
Questions about the public Facebook group	Course Developer
Questions about future/additional offerings within the doula portfolio	Course Developer

Before you reach out to either of us, we request that you review the Announcements page and the Getting Started page to see if we have possibly addressed your question there already. This may get you an answer more quickly than we can respond.

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 OVERVIEW

Course Description

This course is designed to provide an in-depth overview of end-of-life care for companion animals. We will review medical options and procedures, quality of life assessments, comfort care, bereavement, memorialization, and introduce many approaches to providing compassionate emotional support to those suffering the loss of their beloved pet.

Throughout the course, learners will be exposed to a wide variety of published information, interviews with industry professionals, and chances to examine their own experiences, beliefs, fears, and conditioning about pet loss. We intend to create a supportive learning experience with lots of opportunities to build collegiality, as the subject is intense, challenging, and affecting.

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

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

- Develop and apply the core skills of providing unconditional positive regard and nonjudgmental support while calmly holding space, companioning, and engaging in open, accepting dialog with clients.
- Become prepared to work in harmony with a pet owner's chosen care team (potentially) including community members, family, friends, and medical practitioners, while supporting each 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 end-of-life trajectories in companion animals, pain management assessment and practices, the dying process, and helpful interventions to ease physical and emotional suffering.
- Recognize and support anticipatory grief, mourning, and bereavement, including the unique developmental needs of children.
- Support clients in developing end-of-life wishes and plans for disposition.
- Nurture a compassionate, calm presence and environment during euthanasia or natural pet death, if requested.
- Describe meaningful modes of memorializing the enduring bond between caretakers and pets.
- Effectively refer patients and families to other local professionals, organizations, support groups, and businesses that provide relevant, supportive offerings.

Course Flow

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

Course Work

We estimate that the student will be engaged in 8-10 hours per week of course instruction.

PROGRAM REQUIREMENTS AND GRADING

Required Reading

We have two required reading books for this course:

- *Cultivating the Doula Heart: Essentials of Compassionate Care*, by Francesca Lynn Arnoldy. Copies are available for purchase by request at your local bookstore, online, or at the UVM Bookstore.
- *Saying Good-Bye to Your Beloved Pet* by Dana Durrance. Available for download within the course.

Grading

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

Successful completion of this course will be determined by weekly participation in the online learning modules and discussions.

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 instructor and course facilitator 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 instructor and course facilitator, 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 course 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 the conversation	1 point Post is not substantive	0 points No posts
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: Doula Essentials	Week 1: 2/2 – 2/8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Role and Scope of an End of Life Doula • Engaged Listening • Companionship and Serving • Holding Space • Non-judgmental Support
Module 2: Components of Compassionate Care	Week 2: 2/9 – 2/15	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unconditional Positive Regard • Ethics and Boundaries • Responding to Suffering • Caregiving Considerations • Self-Care

MODULE	DATES	TOPICS
Module 3: Pet Hospice and Palliative Care	Week 3: 2/16 – 2/22	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cultural Trends and Paradigms • End-of-Life Pet Care • Quality of Life and Pet Pain • Euthanasia versus “Natural” Death • Components of a “Good” Death • Holistic and Integrative Support • Veterinarian Stress and Burnout
Module 4: After-Death Options and Support	Week 4: 2/23 – 3/1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Special Considerations: Horses and Exotic Pets • After-Death Decisions • Mourning and Bereavement • Children’s Grief • Memorializing a Pet
Bonus Module		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Emerging EOL Doula Career <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Meetings ○ Contracts ○ 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.