

## Portland Institute for Loss and Transition

### Grief Therapy Learning Retreat (August 15-19, 2025)

#### List of Presenting Faculty

##### **Barros-Lane, L., PhD**

**Liza Barros-Lane** is an Assistant Professor of Social Work at the University of Houston-Downtown. Just six months into her tenure, her husband, Dr. Brent Lane, died in a tragic drowning accident, leaving her a widow at 36 with a three-year-old son. This profound loss led Liza to refocus her research on the emotional, psychological, and social challenges faced by young widows—a subject she intimately understands. She has published on hidden issues in premature widowhood, with articles featured in *Death Studies*, *OMEGA: Journal of Death and Dying*, and the *Journal of Loss and Trauma*. Driven by a commitment to raise awareness of the unique challenges faced by young widows, Liza founded *The Young Widowhood Project*, an organization dedicated to advancing research and social consciousness on this topic. Additionally, she shares her insights through her social media platform, @The Widowed Researcher, making her research accessible and relevant to non-academic communities.



##### **Brooks, M. P., PhD**

**Maegan Parker Brooks** is an Associate Professor and the Chair of Civic Communication & Media at the Willamette University, where she teaches courses in Death Communication, Grief Communication, and Autoethnography. Brooks recently completed the Certification in Art-Assisted Grief Therapy to bring innovative expressive arts approaches to the classes she teaches and the grief support groups she facilitates. Brooks serves the bereaved as a co-founder of the Diversity of Loss Arts-Based Grief Support Group on Willamette's campus and as a facilitator at The Dougy Center for Grieving Children and Families in Portland, Oregon. Brooks' grief-related research has appeared in the *Journal of Autoethnography*, *Willamette* magazine, and *The AutoEthnographer: A Literacy & Arts Magazine*. Brooks has also spoken about her grief journey, grief education, and research as a guest on the Dougy Center's "Grief Out Loud Podcast," the Rhetoric Society of America's "Remote" webinar series, and the Willamette University's "Willamette in Dialogue" YouTube channel.



##### **Coenen, C., GTMR, FT, CGC, MTP**

**Claudia Coenen** is a grief counselor and thanatologist in private practice in Hudson, NY. After a lifetime as a performer in music, choreography and dance, Claudia now leads experiential workshops, keynotes and in-service training on creative techniques for grief. Claudia is the author of *Shattered by grief: Picking up the pieces to become WHOLE again*, *The creative toolkit for working with grief and bereavement: A practitioner's guide*, the *Karuna Cards*, creative prompts for grief, and *Seasons of grief: Creative interventions to support bereaved people*, with chapters from 17 therapists, end-of-life practitioners, artists and poets. She is currently writing a book on resilience and thriving through difficult transitions and multiple loss. A new deck of *Karuna Cards* for personal growth and resilience is also in the works.



**Coplan, E., Award-Winning Playwright, 2024 Pulitzer Prize Nominee**

**Elizabeth Coplan** is an award-winning playwright whose play *TIL Death* was produced Off-Broadway by the Abingdon Theatre Company in 2023. Her work explores themes of love, loss, and human connection, earning her critical acclaim in the theatrical community. As the founder of [Grief Dialogues](#), a Seattle-based nonprofit, Elizabeth uses theatre to spark meaningful conversations about dying, death, and grief. In November 2024, she developed and presented the groundbreaking theatrical experience *Grief Dialogues* in New York City, expanding the dialogue on end-of-life issues through powerful stage performances.

**Fecho, B., PhD**

**Bob Fecho** is professor emeritus of English Education at Teachers College, Columbia University where his work continues to focus on issues of language, identity, sociocultural perspectives, and dialogical pedagogy as they relate to adolescent literacy among marginalized populations. His most recent book, co-authored with Dawan Coombs and Trevor Stewart, is *Two years in the lives of two English teachers: To be, to do, to become*. His first book, *“Is this English?” Race, language, and culture in the classroom*, received the James N. Britton Award (CEE/NCTE) recognizing exemplary studies published by English/language arts teachers. His work has also received the Richard Meade Award for Education Research (CEE/ELATE) as well as the Alan C. Purves Award (NCTE), which honors articles published in *Research in the Teaching of English* most likely to influence classroom practice. Bob and Reinekke are working on an edited book called *Good Divorces*.

**Harris, D. L., RN, RSW, MEd (Couns), PhD, FT**

**Darcy L. Harris** is a Professor of Thanatology at the King's University College / Western University in London, Canada, where she also maintains a private clinical practice specializing in issues related to change, loss, and transition. Dr. Harris developed the degree program in Thanatology at King's University College. She serves on the International Work Group on Death, Dying, and Bereavement board of directors. She is the co-editor of the Routledge Publishing Company's *Death, Dying, and Bereavement Series*, and she is an internationally recognized speaker and author. Her research interests include non-death loss and grief, including political grief and environmental grief. She is also interested in the application of social justice and compassion-based approaches to loss and grief. Her most recent book is *Compassion-based approaches to loss and grief* and the second volume of *The handbook of social justice in loss and grief* is due to be released later in 2025.

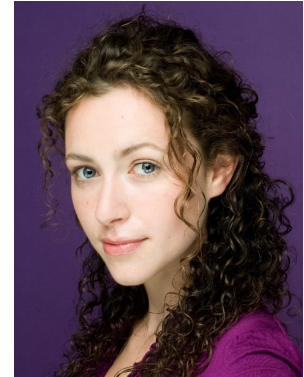
**Lengelle, R., PhD**

**Reinekke Lengelle** is associate professor of Interdisciplinary Studies at Athabasca University, Canada and a researcher at The Hague University, The Netherlands. Her book, *Writing the self in bereavement*, was published by Routledge in 2021 and won the Qualitative Inquiry Book Award in 2022 and the Way of Life: Best Book Award for Ethnography in 2021. Her Dutch book, *Jezelf Schrijven* (2018), describes how poetry can be a creative, expressive, and reflective way to develop one's "warm inner compass." Reinekke has been teaching for 26 years and created the graduate courses: MAIS 616: *Writing the Self* and MAIS 621: *Narrative Possibilities*, and redeveloped MAIS 662: *Mourning and Trauma*. Her latest co-edited books with Routledge are *Writing for wellbeing: Research, theory, and practice* (2023) and *Art that tells the truth: Creative methods in guidance and counselling* (2024). Her writing journey began in childhood, and her first genres were poetry and playwriting. See more information at: [www.writingtheself.ca](http://www.writingtheself.ca).



**Milman, E., MA, PhD, LP**

**Evgenia (Jane) Milman** is a postdoctoral fellow through the Canadian Institutes of Health Research in a joint position with the Center for the Advancement of Bereavement Care at the University of Miami and with the Psychology Department at Western University. Dr. Milman is also a research fellow at the MacDonald Franklin Operational Stress Injury Research Center and a faculty member at the Portland Institute for Loss and Transition. She has authored dozens of research articles and book chapters, most recently collaborating to develop the *Handbook of Grief Therapies*. In addition, Dr. Milman actively practices psychology, teaches university-level coursework, and directs the professional development webinar series at the Association of Death Education and Counseling (ADEC). Dr. Milman is honored to serve on the advisory board for the Tragedy Assistance Program for Survivors (TAPS) and as an At-Large Board Member for ADEC.

**Neimeyer, R. A., PhD**

**Robert A. Neimeyer** is Professor Emeritus of the Department of Psychology, University of Memphis, maintains an active consulting practice, and directs the Portland Institute for Loss and Transition, which provides global online training in grief therapy. Neimeyer has published 37 books, including *Living beyond loss: Questions and answers about grief and bereavement* and *New techniques of grief therapy*, and serves as Editor of *Death Studies*. The author of over 600 articles and book chapters, he has been recognized in the Stanford University/Elsevier list of Top 2% Scientists in the world, with 57,968 citations to his work according to Google Scholar. Neimeyer is currently working to advance a more adequate theory of grieving as a meaning-making process. In recognition of his contributions, he has been made a Fellow of the American Psychological Association and given Lifetime Achievement Awards by both the Association for Death Education and Counseling and the International Network on Personal Meaning.

**Ng, C., PsyD, MMSAC, RegCLR**

**Carolyn Ng** maintains a private practice, Anchorage for Loss and Transition ([www.anchorage-for-loss.org](http://www.anchorage-for-loss.org)), for training, supervision and therapy in Singapore, while also serving as an Associate Director of the Portland Institute. Previously she was a Principal Counsellor with the Children's Cancer Foundation in Singapore, specializing in cancer-related palliative care and bereavement counselling. She is a registered counselor, master clinical member and approved supervisor with the Singapore Association for Counselling (SAC), as well as a trained end-of-life doula and advanced care planning facilitator. She is also trained in the Critical Incident Stress Management (CISM) by the International Critical Incident Stress Foundation, USA, community crisis response by the National Organisation for Victim Assistance (NOVA), USA, and Applied Suicide Intervention Skills Training (ASIST) by LivingWorks, Canada. Her recent writing concerns meaning-oriented narrative reconstruction with bereaved families, with an emphasis on conversational approaches for fostering new meaning and action.



**Rynearson, E. K., MD**

“Ted” Rynearson is a clinical psychiatrist and researcher from Seattle, Washington where he founded the section of psychiatry at the Mason Clinic. In addition to full-time clinical practice, he has served on the clinical faculty of the University of Washington as a Clinical Professor of Psychiatry. For over 40 years, Dr. Rynearson has maintained a particular clinical and research focus on the effects of violent death on family members published in clinical papers, book chapters and three books entitled, *Retelling Violent Death*; *Violent Death: Resilience and Intervention Beyond the Crisis*; *The restorative nature of ongoing connections with the deceased*. Dr. Rynearson lives on Puget Sound and when younger rowed each dawn in his rowing scull (weather and tide permitting) and almost always saw a seal or an eagle.



**Strouse, S., MA, ATR-BC, LCPAT**

Sharon Strouse is a board-certified and licensed clinical professional art therapist and Associate Director for the Portland Institute. Her art therapy private practice, national presentations, trainings and practitioner supervision/mentoring focus on traumatic loss, specifically with parents who have lost a child, suicide bereavement, and military family loss. The theoretical foundations of her group and individual art therapy work are grounded in meaning reconstruction, attachment informed grief therapy, continuing bonds with the deceased and restorative retelling. She is author of *Artful grief: A diary of healing* ([www.artfulgrief.com](http://www.artfulgrief.com)), written twelve years after the suicide of her seventeen-year-old daughter, as well as many articles and chapters. She is co-founder of The Kristin Rita Strouse Foundation ([www.krsf.com](http://www.krsf.com)), a non-profit dedicated to supporting programs that increase awareness of mental health through education and the arts.



**Vollmann, S., MPS, ATR-BC, LICSW**

Sarah Vollmann is a board-certified and registered art therapist and a licensed clinical social worker. She is a faculty member of the Portland Institute for Loss and Transition, and she maintains a private practice with a specialization in grief and traumatic loss. As a member of the Artful Grief team of art therapists, Sarah works with military families facing suicide bereavement and traumatic loss. She is also the Lead Counselor at Buckingham Browne & Nichols School in Massachusetts. Her international art therapy work has included projects in Kenya and in Rwanda. Sarah has published articles and book chapters on grief and loss and has an upcoming book about individuals who were born after the death of a sibling. She is currently enrolled in a social work doctorate program at Tulane University. She enjoys teaching graduate courses on art and play therapy, and she presents both nationally and internationally on art therapy, grief, and bereavement.



**Zampitella, C., PsyD, FT**

Christina Zampitella is a licensed clinical psychologist, Fellow of Thanatology, and founder of The Center for Grief and Trauma Therapy. She often works as an adjunct professor and professional speaker and especially enjoys training emerging mental health professionals. Dr. Zampitella is the host of her podcast, *Phoenix Rising with Dr. Z*. She focuses her clinical practice, research, course development, and teaching on bereavement studies, nature-based therapy, and integrative psychology. She served as the chair for the Continuing Education Committee for several professional institutions and is an advisory board member of the Tragedy Assistance Program for Survivors. She is the former resident psychologist for Fox 5 News in San Diego, and often appeared on NBC News. She has been featured in *Elle Magazine*, *BuzzFeed*, *The Huff Post*, *New York Post*, and several Delaware publications. Dr. Zampitella happily lives with her husband, three-bonus sons, and three cats in Delaware.

