Self-Designed Experience Proposal

**Guidelines**

* **Timeline**: Submit proposals to the UHP database by the 5th of each month. Proposals should be submitted one month prior to the expected start date of the experience. International travel experiences require at least two months’ notice.
* **Format**: Maintain the proposal format (e.g. headers, layout). Do not delete boxes.
* **Submission process**: Access the UHP Database (<https://webapps.uc.edu/uchonorsstudent>). Add a new record in the “Tracking Project” tab and upload your proposal document as an attachment (Word documents only – no PDFs).

***Note regarding Financial Aid and Honors Grants****: All proposals with a grant request are reviewed in collaboration with the Office of Student Financial Aid. There is no guarantee of grant funding nor of a specific grant amount. Honors grant awards are typically 20% or less of the approved budget. The quality of your proposal can also impact a grant award. Honors grants are posted to students' accounts as scholarships and can affect an individual student’s financial aid. Some students may not be eligible to receive a grant due to their financial aid status. If awarded an honors grant, students acknowledge full awareness of possible financial aid implications.*

**Independent International Travel**

If you are proposing travel independent of UC faculty, staff or a UC student group, you must submit your self-designed proposal by the following deadlines:

* October 5 – winter break experiences
* January 5 – spring break experiences
* March 5 – May/June experiences
* April 5 – July/August experiences
* June 5 – fall experiences

All independent, international honors experiences require a completed Worldwide Honors Experience application through UC International. UC International will verify successful completion of the application before an experience can be approved. Additionally, the [Student Travel Policy](https://www.uc.edu/content/dam/uc/af/financialpolicies/Docs/Student%20Travel%20Policy.pdf) restricts UC-sponsored travel to countries under a [U.S. Department of State Travel Advisory](http://travel.state.gov/content/passports/english/alertswarnings.html). Those who wish to visit a country with a **Level 3 or higher Travel Advisory Level** must seek an [exemption](http://www.uc.edu/international/study-abroad/applying-to-study-abroad/travel-restrictions---exemptions.html) through UC International. Students traveling without a faculty or staff leader must individually request an exemption. ***We cannot allow you to count this travel as an honors experience nor can we give you a grant without an approved exemption.***

**ACKNOWLEDGEMENT AND ASSUMPTION OF RISK**

*Assumption of Risks: The honors experience and related experiential learning as described below may contain certain inherent risks that cannot not be eliminated. Aware of the risks, dangers, and hazards known and unknown to me, I agree individually, and on behalf of my heirs, successors, assigns and personal representatives, to* ***ASSUME AND ACCEPT ALL THE RISKS, DANGERS, HAZARDS, AND RESPONSIBILITIES*** *resulting in or arising from my participation in the experience.*

*Your e-signature, which will be completed in the UHP database prior to proposal submission, confirms that you acknowledge that you have read the entire proposal, that you understand its terms, that you have had the time and opportunity to read and ask questions regarding the proposal, you are fully aware of possible financial aid and tuition implications, and that you have signed it knowingly and voluntarily.*

**Basic Information**

Full Name: Emily Meurer

Title of Experience: Good Grief

[Competency/Competencies](https://www.uc.edu/honors/about/competencies.html): Research

Expected Start Date: January 14, 2019

Expected End Date: May 1, 2019

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| **Personal Connection****Section must include:*** Explanation of why this experience matters to you
* Explanation of how this experience will help you progress toward becoming a [global citizen scholar](https://www.uc.edu/honors/about/vision.html)

When I initially set off to pick a topic to pursue for my capstone, the first thing to stand out in my mind was thanatology, the study of death and dying. I discovered the topic when I read Caitlin Doughty’s memoir, *Smoke Gets In Your Eyes*, a look back at how working at a crematory changed both her career trajectory and her life, and I was hooked. I started to delve into how coming to terms with your own mortality can change the way that you think about your life, how we culturally respect the dead, and why no one else was as excited about death as I was.However, it really started to push my ability to jump a huge cultural and social hurdle that the majority of Americans think that death is scary, because it really can be. I was hitting a wall about where to go with everything I was excited about and wanted other people to know, but I was also getting asked with increasing frequency, a question along the lines of “so you like death, right? My friend’s grandma just died, what do I say?” That’s when it all made sense to me: no one really knows how to deal with grief. I dove in and tried to learn as much as I could. Some people have told me that they’re worried about me knowing so much about death because it’s so depressing (I have chronic depression to begin with), but I don’t think I’ve ever felt so strongly connected to learning about something as I have with studying death and dying. I originally pursued design because I wanted to get people excited about learning, and now I can think of no better topic to get people interested in learning about than the one I am most excited about learning about.I’m not saying that I’m an expert, but no one is an expert on grief. Trying your best is really the most that you can do when it comes to supporting someone through a tough time, whether it be the loss of a loved one, a breakup, or getting bad news. The skills that we can learn from learning about grief support play a role in being a better listener and, ultimately, a closer friend.**Advisor Revisions/Feedback** |

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| **Abstract****Section must include:*** Brief description of the experience and explanation of how you will reach the 75+ hours requirement
* Description of risks (if any) inherent in this experience and safety precautions you will take
* Itinerary, including locations and dates, for any travel experience

Good Grief is the culmination of everything I learned in DAAP into my senior communication design capstone. I’m researching and writing a book on what to do and say to someone who is grieving and trying to connect it with other life lessons about being a good friend through emotionally hard times. I want to create a book that could fit comfortably within the self-help genre in any bookstore. After writing this content, I will design and illustrate the book so that it’s appealing to a majority millennial audience. My choice of audience really just comes down to the language, tone of voice, and aesthetics that I choose to use, but I hope that whatever I create can be useful to any person who is interested in learning from it.The design process for a book revolves around creating a brand, color palettes, page layouts, and graphics that can guide the reader through the topic. Essentially, I want to trick people into learning about death with pretty pictures. People tend to learn best from infographics and other visual cues, rather than just from text, so I want to spend time developing these visual elements as much as I am spending time writing an actual book about being a good friend in a hard time.Working on this project is essentially a full-time job for me. I spend around 6 hours a day, 5 days a week working on my capstone. When I’m not physically working on it, I’m usually talking about it with people because I genuinely enjoy the work I’m doing on it and want to share.The biggest risk that I take with this research is that it’s somewhat off-putting to people. Doing research on death and writing a book about how to be a better person isn’t exactly a pairing that people expect, and both the idea of learning about death and juxtaposing it with action items to do something good is kind of hard to grasp. A majority of the interviews and user tests that I plan on conducting will be conducted with respect to the best of my abilities, and I will stop any interactions that make people uncomfortable as soon as it becomes apparent.Schedule:Macintosh HD:Users:emeurer:Documents:2019 Spring:Capstone:Schedule-01.png**Advisor Revisions/Feedback:** |

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| **Advisor****Section must include:*** Experience advisor name and contact information
* Description of why advisor was selected
* Specific plans to engage with advisor

*Note: Advisor(s) should have knowledge or expertise in an area related to the experience and be able to help you craft your experience goals. Honors advisors, undergraduate students, and family members cannot be experience advisors.*Sean P. Haferhafersp@ucmail.uc.eduSean has been my capstone professor both over the summer semester when initially picking my topic and for this current semester. Sean is really good at taking time to meet with us individually about out projects, and has already spent a lot of time getting to know both my project and me. I trust him to give me good feedback and not bullshit me if what I’m working on doesn’t make sense. I meet with Sean at least once a week to discuss where I am, help me stay on track, and give me advice and feedback to help me in the next steps of my design process.**Advisor Revisions/Feedback:** |

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| **Goals Related to Competency/Competencies:****Section must include:*** Two specific and measurable **experience** goals related to chosen [competency/competencies](https://www.uc.edu/honors/about/competencies.html) outlining the intended results/outcomes/achievements
* Two specific **personal** goals related to chosen [competency/competencies](https://www.uc.edu/honors/about/competencies.html) outlining how you hope to grow as a result of this experience
* Examples of activities and explanation of how each will assist in the progress toward the goals

One of the harder parts of the research that I’ve already done is to find relevant sources about grief because our understanding of it has changed fairly recently. A lot of what people understand about grief really stems from Elizabeth Kübler-Ross’s five stages of grief, which while it is based in research, has been misinterpreted. I’ve also learned that the only people who can truly understand and teach about grief are the people that have experienced it firsthand. I’ve really learned that a cultural misunderstanding of grief has really been a barrier for my research, but once I crossed it, it was incredibly easy for me to dig in deep. Being able to find sources of people that can talk about the psychology of grief, the way that we culturally understand it, or have first-hand knowledge and work with families around funerals has been a lot easier than I expected in some ways. Everyone knows someone who has had a major loss or knows someone who has been willing to share their experience. Some of the nicest people that I’ve worked with on my project have been these people who carry their loss with them or work in the funeral industry, and they are often the most willing to share because no one wants to talk about something that they are passionate about with them because of the taboo of death.One of the main goals and biggest selling point of my capstone is along the lines of the competency to *articulate the broader significance of the research project and its relationship to other fields, research and ideas.*I want people to engage with my writing and design because it’s a tool to strengthen and support friendships based on tools that I’ve learned about through my research on death, dying, and grief support. Whether or not someone knows someone who is grieving, the language and advice based on methods that grief councilors use should be useful for people who want to improve their listening skills and ability to empathize with people.My first personal goal is along the same lines of being able to articulate the significance of my research, and I can already tell that I’ve really started to accomplish it. I want to be able to find life lessons and advice from learning about our cultural understanding of grief and death and connect it to my own daily practice. Compared to when I started exploring this topic, I’ve made noticeable progress, specifically that can be seen in the notes that I’ve taken as I’ve been reading or listening. Learning more has not only made me note very topic-specific facts, but has also provoked my thinking and I often write questions for myself or note larger thematic ideas.I also want to be able to be able to practice what I preach as a way to share the impact of what I’ve learned. I want to get better at thinking before I speak, listening to what people want to say, and being patient with other people. Being conscious of other people’s emotions isn’t hard to be just generally aware of, but it can be hard to put in the forefront when having a meaningful exchange with someone. I really want to be able to be someone that people can feel okay with talking to because I have these listening skills and will want to try to develop for themselves. I want people to know that it’s not hard to be more supportive and that anyone can do it.**Advisor Revisions/Feedback:** |

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| **Academic Resources Connected to the Goals** **Section must include:*** Two to three academic resources connected to your goals
* Title and author of each resource
* Description of how resources will help make progress toward the goals

*Note: Academic resources are professional/academic works that can be used to assist your understanding of the topic. Some examples are books, research journals, documentaries, or videos.* I use a variety of sources to understand more about the psychology of grief and our cultural understanding of death that I can’t learn from one-on-one interactions with people because I want whatever I produce and share to be as helpful and accurate as possible. A lot of the research conducted to understand grief has changed in the past decade or so, and it’s helpful to me to use sources that are fairly recent, with the exception of a few references that have been around for longer than that because they are a basis, although extremely outdated and potentially negative, for our cultural understanding of grief. The three below sources are the ones that I have found the most helpful, however I am also including links to my full bibliography because I’m obsessed with learning as much as I can about this topic and sharing it through this project.*It’s Ok That You’re Not Ok: Meeting Grief and Loss in a Culture That Doesn’t Understand* by Megan DevineThis is by far the most helpful resource that I’ve found on understanding and supporting grief. Devine is a therapist who specializes in grief and has gone through an extreme loss that transformed the way that she understands grief. It’s contemporary and (very important to me) includes actionable items for both people grieving and people supporting them. It breaks down concepts that are complicated and hard to imagine for people who are not grieving and provides first-hand accounts of how to be supportive of these emotions.The podcast *Ologies,* created by Alie Ward, has a fantastic interview with Cole Imperi on Thanatology, the study of death and dying. It’s a very concise summary of the benefits of understanding mortality and researching death care. Because Imperi is a Cincinnati local, I met up with her and interviewed her about her work and how design can play a role in helping people grieve. She has also created resources that dive deeper into all of this through her podcast, *Life, Death, and Tarot* and presentations with Heritage Acres Memorial Sanctuary in Cincinnati.I also utilized the video series “Ask a Mortician,” which was created by Caitlin Doughty (mentioned in my introduction) and her organization, The Order of the Good Death. Caitlin’s first book, *Smoke Gets In Your Eyes*, was instrumental to me in choosing this topic, and her work with creating content that is aimed at a younger generation is incredibly helpful to me in understanding the tone of voice that I need to use when sharing my work. The Order of the Good Death is also an excellent resource for me to find research on different topics that make up our cultural understanding of grief and loss.I’m a huge fan of audiobooks and podcasts as a way to learn because I’m an auditory learner, so my research has been fairly intense because I really love doing it. I currently have a several page bibliography of podcasts, videos, articles, and books that I’ve used to conduct my research. My current working bibliography can be found here: <https://drive.google.com/open?id=1BaYnDi-z9XYny5l30l1cIIvhSSVVDvuqKkPLMeYlHd0> A more expansive list of books that turned me on to my topic and further reading that I want to do on it is compiled on this list: <https://www.goodreads.com/review/list/21821398-em-meurer?shelf=death>**Advisor Revisions/Feedback:** |

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| **On-going Reflection****Section must include:** * Method for ongoing reflection
* List questions you plan to ask yourself to gauge your growth related to your goals as well as understanding of the selected competency/competencies

*The on-going reflection should help you process the experience and progress toward the goals you have identified.* *Note: A variety of methods can be used for reflection. Some examples are videos, drawings, blogs, songs, and journals.*On-going reflection and tracking my process are major aspects of my final project and are required as a deliverable for my capstone. Each student is required to create a process book to share research, design process, user testing, and reflections on what we learn. In order to track all of this, I’m creating weekly blog posts on what I’ve done. I also am a copious note-taker, and I often journal or note new things that I learn and smaller goals to work towards.A lot of the questions that I ask to gauge my growth are ones that I ask other people. Many of these questions gauge my ability to write and design graphics in a way that’s approachable and doesn’t cause anxiety when people read about scary topics like grief and death. I often ask myself how actionable is what I tell people to do, am I supporting the reader through my own language that would encourage them to support someone, and do I feel good about the work that I’m doing. I want to feel comfortable in creating this resource and I take time to learn more when I feel unsure about what I’m sharing. I take a lot of time to talk to my friends about what I’m designing, but I also share a lot about what I’m learning through my social media and with acquaintances that don’t know a lot about my topic. This is incredibly helpful to me because it gives me an opportunity to make sure that my information and way of talking about it is really approachable and to get a genuine response out of it. I also check in regularly with my professor, Sean, about my work and ask for advice. All of this is mostly helpful, though, as a way to vent about my frustrations and reflect on everything that I’ve already done and will have accomplished when I’m finished with this project. My blog posts can be found here: emmeurer.com/capstone**Advisor Revisions/Feedback:** |

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| **Sharing Your Learning****Section must include:** * At least one method to actively share what you learned focused on growth connected to competency/competencies
* A specific audience and why the audience was selected

*While social media can be an effective platform for sharing, only posting on your learning portfolio or social media account(s) does not reach a targeted audience.* *Consider signing up for the* [*Global Citizen Scholar Showcase*](http://www.uc.edu/honors/students/uhppride/impactforum.html) *as a method of sharing.*The audience that I’ve decided to focus my work on is people around my own age range, specifically people who know someone who is grieving a loss. I plan on connecting with my audience through the tone of voice and designed aesthetics of my project, but I think that the information that I’m sharing is really applicable to any age.I have already shared in-progress presentations of my research findings with both my studio at DAAP and my studio at work and received a lot of great feedback. Being able to share my learning and process is important to me to get the best feedback and critiques from my peers in the design field. I am sharing the bulk of my process and a final product at the DAAPworks show at the end of the Spring Semester. I know that a lot of people in my target audience will be able to see it there, and hopefully will physically interact with it and make a connection. I’m required to share a poster and process book in the show, along with whatever my final design is. Along with sharing it at the show, many of the people that I’ve talked to about my project, including people that I’ve interviewed and my coworkers, have asked to see the final project. I plan on documenting all of my physical and process work and sharing it on my portfolio website. I want to be able to display my entire project there because it’s often the first thing that employers and people interested in my professional work will come across. **Advisor Revisions/Feedback:** |

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| **Budget (if applicable)****Section must include:** * Itemized budget of expenditures with sources to justify estimates (review information on [Honors Grants](http://www.uc.edu/honors/students/grants.html))
* If you are engaged in an **unpaid internship or research**, please indicate the number of weeks and hours per week you plan to participate

DAAPworks requires individual posters to be printed at $58.50 each.I went to the Reimagine End of Life conference in New York, which was an amazing experience, and spent $15 on admission to one of the paid events.I’m currently researching vendors to print my final project, either Riso or laser printed. I’m hoping to spend around $300 or less. Currently the only price quote that I have is from Woolly Press, which is quality-wise, my current first choice, but it’s way above my price range. I’m hoping to find a vendor that works in the Cincinnati area that I can work with to negotiate a good price and figure out how I’m going to bind my final book.50 -  3 color, fully assembled books on stock 11x17: $676.00 + shipping100 -  3 color, fully assembled books on stock 11x17: $762.00 + shipping50 -  4 color, fully assembled books on stock 11x17: $986.00 + shipping100 -  4 color, fully assembled books on stock 11x17: $1,077.00 + shippingI’ve also already spent a solid amount of money on books and transportation to interview people, but I really loved it so it was really more of a Treat Yo Self purchase than just for work.**Advisor Revisions/Feedback:** |