

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



**COURSE OUTLINE**

**FSAD 307 Human Responses to Death**

**Prepared by: Barry Walch**

**SCHOOL OF SCIENCE, HEALTH & CRIMINAL JUSTICE  
Funeral Services Administration Program**

Revised: April 28, 2015

## FSAD 307 - Human Responses to Death

- A. **TITLE:** Human Responses to Death
- B. **COURSE NUMBER:** FSAD 307
- C. **CREDIT HOURS:** 4
- D. **WRITING INTENSIVE COURSE:** No
- E. **COURSE LENGTH:** 15 weeks
- F. **SEMESTER(S) OFFERED:** Fall or Spring
- G. **HOURS OF LECTURE, LABORATORY, RECITATION, TUTORIAL, ACTIVITY:**  
Three hours lecture, Two hours laboratory per week
- H. **CATALOG DESCRIPTION:**  
This course is a survey of the psychological, philosophical, and sociological components of human loss and grief. The understanding of bereavement is demonstrated through verbal and written communication and counseling exercises. The laboratory component gives the student the opportunity to conduct moot funerals and engage in mock counseling sessions as part of their basic training. The overall intent is the delivery of optimum services to the client.
- I. **PRE-REQUISITES:**  
SSCI 315 Death, Dying and Bereavement, and FSAD 225 Professional Funeral Practice
- J. **GOALS** (Student learning outcomes): By the end of this course, the student will:

Course SLO	Institution SLO
1 Describe the commonly accepted theories of grief as a response to bereavement	2 critical thkg, 3 prof comp
2 Direct a moot funeral within accepted religious and community practices	3prof comp,
3 Utilize basic counseling skills appropriate for guiding a funeral purchaser through the selection of funeral ceremonies and merchandise.	1communication, 3prof competence
4 Discuss the value of a funeral for bereaved people and community	1communication, 3prof competence 4 interpersonal skills

**K. TEXTS:**

Wolfelt, A. (2003). *Funeral Home Customer Service A to Z*. Compassionate Friends Press: Colorado

**L. REFERENCES:**

- A. Worden, J. W., Grief Counseling and Grief Therapy, Springer, New York, 1982
- B. Jackson, E. N., Understanding Grief
- C. NFDA, Compliance Manual for FTC Regulations, 1990
- D. Professional Training Schools, Types of Funeral Services and Ceremonies, 1977

**M. EQUIPMENT:**

Chapel space for conducting funerals  
Casket selection room meeting current practice standards  
Arrangement office conducive to funeral counseling scenario

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

**O. MEASUREMENT CRITERIA/METHODS:**

- 1. Essays evaluated by content and mechanics
  - 2. Lab grade for Funeral Director, Assistant FD, and Clergy
  - 3. Hour exams
  - 4. Final exam
- A grade of “C” or better must be obtained in this course.

**P. DETAILED TOPICAL OUTLINE:**

- I. Bereavement, grief, and mourning
- II. Grief as a psychological response to bereavement
  - A. Attachment Theory (Bowlby)
  - B. Mourning and Melancholia (Freud)
  - C. Psychological “pain” (Lindemann)
- III. Mourning
  - A. Grief cycle (Lamers)
  - B. Community activities
    - 1. purpose of the visitation
    - 2. viewing the deceased, therapeutic value of facing reality of loss
    - 3. value of the funeral and its components
    - 4. final disposition as symbolic and practical
    - 5. condolence letters and speeches
  - C. Four tasks of mourning (Worden)
  - D. Anticipatory grief and mourning (Rando, Kubler-Ross)
  - E. Disenfranchised grief and mourning (Greer)
  - F. Grief responses according to age and development
- IV. Complicated mourning
  - A. Signs of complicated grief
  - B. Psychosocial predisposition to complicated grief
  - C. Referrals available to funeral directors to assist clients
- V. Managing the arrangements conference
  - A. Creating a comfortable setting
  - B. Personal traits of effective funeral directors
  - C. Communication styles
    - 1. vocabulary and jargon
    - 2. metalanguage

3. therapeutic listening skills
  4. open ended question techniques
  5. reflection of feelings
- VI. Compliance with Federal Trade Commission Funeral Rule
    - A. Construction of GPL, CPL, OBCPL, IS
    - B. Requirements for distribution of documents
    - C. Disclosures made in writing
    - D. Prearrangement rules
  - VII. Counseling techniques during service and merchandise selection
    - A. Helping clients identify personal needs and preferences
    - B. Presenting choices without bias
    - C. Relating folkways, mores, and religious requirements to goods and services selected
    - D. Structuring pricing policies to prevent overselling
  - VIII. Effective written communication techniques
    - A. Writing cogent and compelling position papers
      1. proper writing skills
      2. clarification of personal opinion in the funeral business setting
      3. style modification dependent upon audience
    - B. Critiquing other written work as a means of personal improvement
    - C. Presentation as a major influence upon reception by the reader
  - IX. Funeral firms as community resource
    - A. Educational opportunities for groups and individuals
    - B. Publications available to the general public
    - C. Leadership during tragedies and disasters
  - X. Stress control for funeral professionals
    - A. Stressors prevalent in funeral profession
    - B. Recognition of signs of professional burnout
    - C. Short term strategies for coping with problems
    - D. Long term life style for prevention of burnout

Q. LABORATORY OUTLINE:

1. Practicing the arrangement conference with merchandise sales
2. Setting up appropriate arrangement room, selection room, and chapel
3. Creating and explaining GPL, CPL, and OBCPL to clients
4. Participating in funerals in each of the assigned roles over the course of the semester
  - a. graded roles: Funeral Director, Clergy, Assistant F.D., Family
  - b. non-graded roles: second & third family, pallbearer
  - c. religions vary weekly
  - d. all students give written feedback and criticism for each funeral regardless of role played