COURSE OUTLINE

SSCI 315  DEATH, DYING, AND BEREAVEMENT

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SCHOOL OF BUSINESS AND LIBERAL ARTS
SOCIAL SCIENCES DEPARTMENT
Spring 2015
A. **TITLE**: Death, Dying, and Bereavement

B. **COURSE NUMBER**: SSCI 315

C. **CREDIT HOURS**: 3

D. **WRITING INTENSIVE COURSE**: No

E. **WEEKS PER SEMESTER**: 15

F. **SEMESTER(S) OFFERED**: Fall/Spring

G. **HOURS OF LECTURE, LABORATORY, RECITATION, TUTORIAL, ACTIVITY**: 3 hours lecture per week

H. **CATALOG DESCRIPTION**: This course is designed to present various ways in which social science views the human experience of death, dying, and bereavement. Drawing from sociology and psychology, this course introduces macro and micro level theories and associated concepts. Micro-level concepts and theories about the interaction patterns between the dying patients and the family, medical staff and others involved are examined. Also discussed are: societal (or macro level) theories of social change, the ethical problem of euthanasia, and the needs of the dying; the biological, social, and psychological factors in the lengthening of life; and the consequences of death, dying, and bereavement. Cross-cultural experiences with these phenomena are also examined.

I. **PREREQUISITES/CO-COURSES**: Introduction to Psychology (PSYC 101) or Introduction to Sociology (SOCL 101) and 30 credit hours, or permission of instructor.

J. **GOALS (STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES)**: By the end of this course, the student will:

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<tr>
<th>Course Objectives</th>
<th>Institutional SLO</th>
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<tr>
<td>A. identify and explain social changes in attitudes toward death, dying, and the dead.</td>
<td>1. Communication 2. Critical Thinking</td>
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<td>B. explain the basic concepts and theories relevant to socio-cultural and biological conceptions of death and the processes of dying and bereavement across the life cycle.</td>
<td>1. Communication 2. Critical Thinking 4. Inter-Intrapersonal Skills</td>
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<td>C. explain and apply social science research methods.</td>
<td>1. Communication 2. Critical Thinking</td>
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D. apply concepts and theories to a particular case.

1. Communication
2. Critical Thinking
4. Inter-Intrapersonal Skills

E. explain and evaluate the ethical issues confronted in death and dying.

1. Communication
2. Critical Thinking
4. Inter-Intrapersonal Skills

K. TEXTS: At the discretion of the instructor:

Current texts include:

L. REFERENCES:

Carmichael, Elizabeth and Sayer, Chloe. The Skeleton at the Feast: The Days of the Dead in Mexico. Austin: University of Texas Press.

M. **EQUIPMENT:** Smart classroom (computer, projection system)

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

O. **MEASUREMENT CRITERIA/METHODS:** at the discretion of the instructor.

Examinations, term paper, group exercises, class presentations

P. **TOPICAL OUTLINE:** attached

Q. **LABORATORY OUTLINE:** Not applicable
TOPICAL OUTLINE

SSCI 315 - DEATH, DYING, AND BEREAVEMENT

I. Defining Death
   A. Introduction
      1. The conditions of rapid social change & Durkheim’s Theory of Anomie
      2. The growing importance of individualism
      3. The impact of mass media on everyday life and perceptions of death
      4. The impact of science and technology on the timing and nature of death
   B. Biomedical Definitions of Death
      1. Traditional determinants of death as event - determining when death occurs
      2. Contemporary ways of being dead - Harvard Criteria
   C. Cultural Interpretations of the Death State
      1. Religious systems of status hierarchy
      2. Other interpretations of the death state
   D. Conditions That Resemble Death
      1. Inorganic or Unresponsive Things
      2. Sleep and Altered States of Consciousness
   E. Mythical Beings and Human Personifications of Death
      1. Winged Beings
      2. Personifications
   F. Miscellaneous Aspects of Death
      1. Social Death and Phenomenological Death
      2. Death as preserver of status or as an agent of social change
      3. Death unites and separates
      4. Death as ultimate solution or ultimate problem

II. Historical Views of Death
   A. Traditional Patterns of Death and Dying - 5th-19th centuries
      1. The Tame Death - early Middle Ages
      2. Variations of the Tame Death - late 16th & 17th centuries
   B. Patterns of Death in US History
      1. Early Puritan Colonies
      2. End of the 17th Century
      3. 19th Century - Orphan Trains documentary & Lessy Wisconsin Death Trip
      4. 20th Century
III. Contemporary Facts, Experiences, Feelings, & Ideas about Death

A. The 4 Inventories (In textbook):
   1. Your knowledge about facts related to death
   2. Your beliefs & attitudes about death and the death state
   3. Your own experiences with death
   4. Your feelings (emotional responses) to death

B. Death Anxiety, Denial, & Acceptance
   1. Death Anxiety
      a. 3 forms of death anxiety (Corr, Nabe, and Corr)
      b. Theories
      c. Findings from research
   2. Death Denial (Aries)
   3. Acceptance (Kubler-Ross)

C. Social Science Research Methods
   1. Indirect Methods using secondary sources
   2. Direct Methods for collecting primary data
      a. Survey and Interview questionnaires
      b. Observation
      c. Participant-Observation
      d. Experiments
      e. Content Analysis

IV. The Social System of Death

A. Kastenbaum’s Model - 5 Components of the Social System of Death
   1. People (in various roles)
   2. Places
   3. Times (calendar dates)
   4. Objects
   5. Symbols

B. Kastenbaum’s Model - 7 Functions of the Social System of Death
   1. Warnings & Predictions
   2. Preventing Death
   3. Caring for the Dying
   4. Disposing of & Memorializing the Dead
   5. Social Consolidation after Death
   6. Making Sense of Death
   7. Killing

C. Medicalization of Dying
   1. Bureaucracy
   2. Lofland - 6 societal factors that shape the contemporary dying process
   3. Physicians
   4. Nurses

D. Increasing Life Expectancy & Causes of Death
   1. Changes in life expectancy
   2. Leading causes of death

E. Death Language & Mass Media Images of Death
   1. The language of death avoidance: euphemisms
   2. Mass media distortions
V. Cross-Cultural Comparisons: The Days of the Dead in Mexico (reading, video & display of artifacts)
   A. The Main Parts of the Holiday
      1. Events
      2. Preparations
   B. Class Exercise Questions:
      1. What are some examples for each of Kastenbaum’s 5 Components of the Social System of Death?
      2. What are some examples for each of Kastenbaum’s 7 Functions of the Social System of Death?
      3. Compare the language of death (speech) & mass media (folk art) in Mexico and the US

VI. Dying - The Process of the Cessation of Life
   A. The Onset of the Dying Process
      1. Dying begins when the facts are recognized (physician)
      2. Dying begins when the facts are communicated to the patient
      3. Dying begins when the patient realizes or accepts the facts
      4. Dying begins when nothing more can be done to preserve life
   B. Glasser and Strauss - 3 Trajectories of Dying
      1. The Lingering Trajectory
      2. The Expected Quick Trajectory
      3. Unexpected Quick Trajectory
   C. Communications about Death
      1. The SUPPORT Study
      2. Suggestions about improving communications
   D. Factors that Influence the Experience of Dying
      1. Age
      2. Gender
      3. Interpersonal Relationships
      4. Disease, Treatment, & Environment
   E. Theoretical Models of the Dying Process
      1. The Buddhist Tradition
      2. Elizabeth Kubler-Ross
      3. The Developmental Coping Model (Corr)
      4. The Dying Person’s Own Reality as a Model
      5. The Multiple Perspective Approach

V. James Agee - A Death in the Family
   A. Social Setting and Background
      1. Pulitzer Prize winning novel - An American masterpiece
      2. Geographical setting
      3. Historical time
      4. Technology of the era
      5. Nature of social life in the period (Prologue)
   B. The Characters and Their Social Background
      1. The protagonist’s nuclear family
      2. Mary, the wife’s parents
      3. Jay, the husband’s family
      4. Other characters
C. Sociological Analysis of the Text (Group Theoretical Application Exercise)
   1. Becker’s Labeling Theory
   2. Cooley’s Looking-Glass Self
   3. Kastenbaum’s 5 Components of the Social System of Death
   4. Kastenbaum’s 7 Functions of the Social System of Death

VI. Death in Childhood Experience
   A. Adult Assumptions about Children’s Responses to Death
      2. Hall’s Early Study (1922)
      3. Death in the Songs & Games of Childhood
      4. Case History Research
      5. The Mary Nagy Study (1948 & 1969)
      6. Cultural Influences on Children’s Conceptions of Death
   B. The Bereavement Process for Children
      1. The Impact of Bereavement is Influenced by 3 Main Factors
      2. The Long-Term Effects of Childhood Bereavement
      3. Helping Children Cope with Bereavement
   C. The Dying Child
      1. Bluebond-Langner - 5 stage model
      2. Care of the Dying Child
      3. Siblings of the Dying Child
   D. Guidelines for Helping Children Cope with their own Death

VII. Bereavement, Grief, & Mourning
   A. Review of Basic Concepts
      1. Death
      2. Bereavement
      3. Grief
      4. Mourning
   B. Cross-Cultural Comparisons of Mourning
      1. Among people in US
      2. African-American - Alice Walker’s Mr. Sweet
      3. Yuroba Tribe in Africa
   C. Theories About Grief
      1. Freud’s Grief Work Theory
      2. Bowlby’s Theory of Attachment Behavior
      3. Park’s Findings
   D. Grief Recovery - in a Variety of Situations
      1. When a spouse dies
      2. When a child dies
      3. Bereavement later in life
      4. Are bereaved at higher risk of death?
   E. Conclusion