

SYLLABUS*
PSYCHOLOGY 418/518
Death, Dying, & Grieving/Bereavement
Summer 2013

Instructor: Rebecca Morse, PhD (rmorse@gmu.edu)

Class Hours & Location:

Class 12:00 pm - 2:15 pm | MTWR | Nguyen Engineering Building 1108 | Jul 01, 2013 - Aug 03, 2013

Office Hours: Tuesdays 2:30 to 3:30 (the hour after class)
Also available by appointment.

Office Location: David King Hall 1027

Office Phone during hours: 703.993.4095

REQUIRED TEXT:

Death, Society and Human Experience 11/E
Robert J. Kastenbaum, Arizona State University
ISBN-10: 0205863515
ISBN-13: 9780205863518
Publisher: Pearson
Copyright: 2012

COURSE OBJECTIVES AND GOALS:

Upon completing this course, students should be able to:

- Understand our relationship with death, both as an individual and as a member of society
- See how social forces and events affect the length of our lives, how we grieve, and how we die
- Learn how dying people are perceived and treated in our society and what can be done to provide the best possible care
- Master an understanding of continuing developments and challenges to hospice (palliative care).
- Understand what is becoming of faith and doubt about an afterlife

Additionally, assigned readings and the independent research required for engaged participation will utilize and expand on research, communication, and writing skills acquired in other courses.

TECHNOLOGY:

Students will be expected to access and use Blackboard on a regular basis (<https://courses.gmu.edu/>). Important class information, such as the syllabus and weekly practicum assignments, will be posted here. To access Blackboard, students should use their George Mason email ID and password.

In addition, students should check their GMU email account regularly. Be sure to check that new messages can be received and that you are not over the message limit. You also have the option

for your GMU account to be forwarded to another email address. If anything important occurs (such as information about assignments, class cancellation, etc.) you will be notified via your GMU email.

ATTENDANCE & PARTICIPATION:

You are expected to come to class prepared to discuss and apply the material. In order to make the most out of your learning experience, it is imperative that you are not only present at each class meeting, but are alert, attentive, and ready to learn.

Throughout the semester we will have class discussions. You are responsible for being prepared to discuss the material, and are expected to actively participate in discussion with your classmates about the material. Participation is worth 10% of your grade. This is based on engagement, willingness to speak up, and being present. I do not grade strictly on attendance; however, if you miss more than a couple of classes, you will lose participation points accordingly. Similarly, if you are on your laptops or phones for non-class purposes, you will also risk losing participation points.

EXAMS:

There will be two exams (non-cumulative), each worth 25 points. These will be a combination of multiple choice, essay, and/or short answer. They will be on Blackboard, open-book, open-note, and timed.

WRITTEN ASSIGNMENTS: Death, Dying, Bereavement, & The Media

Numerous psychological studies have explored the link between media and behavior. In this case, students (you) are going to examine the possible relationship between popular/mainstream stories and grieving phenotypes. To do this, and to encourage your engagement with the material and understanding, instead of one larger research paper, students are required to submit 2 review & reflect papers. The papers will be double-spaced, 1" margins, and should have a cover page and a reference section, and should be 3-5 pages in *content* length (meaning that the absolute minimum length should be 5 pages, with 1 cover page, 3 pages of content/text, and 1 reference section page). These are not formal papers; however, spelling and grammar do count, and citations should be in APA 6th format. Please see <http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/560/01/> for a helpful formatting resource. Further instructions are on the following page.

Paper topics: You will select one from each of the following:

- (1) Select one book (popular fact or fiction, such as something from a main-stream Best Sellers list, or Book Club list—New York, Oprah, etc.), which has either a thematic component of grief, or the protagonist (principal character) has been bereaved (or is dying).
- (2) Select a popular movie (something non-independent and that is/was mainstream) OR 2 one-hour episodes of the same show (such as two episodes of such as Go On, or two episodes of Law & Order, etc.), which has either a thematic component of grief, or the principal character has been bereaved (or is dying).

Your purpose is to evaluate one book, and one of the movie/television programs, to examine the “media” portrayal of the griever of that particular type of loss/grief. You will evaluate the two on the following:

Review:

- How accurately did the book/show demonstrate the profile of that type of griever?
- How did the griever respond?
- How did others respond to the griever before, during, and after the event?
- What, if any, was the outcome for the griever?
- Did the griever receive help/demonstrate healing?
- Compare and contrast it with what we have learned in class about that “type” or profile of griever/type of loss.

Reflect:

- Put yourself into that character...do you think you (based on your personal experiences) would have responded differently? Why or why not?
- If you were a real-life griever of that type of loss, how do you think you would feel watching/reading this?
- How do you think your family/friends would respond?
- Do you think that the way in which it was handled/portrayed would help, or hinder, your healing process?
- If you were the director/author/screen-writer, knowing what you know about death, dying, and grief, what would you change?

***You MUST include at least 5 sources, three of which must be from the grief literature outside of your textbook or class discussions

i.e.

1. The textbook
2. Your movie or book reference
3. Article/book on grief research/theory #1
4. Article/book on grief research/theory #2
5. Article/book on grief research/theory #3

GRADES:

Review & Reflect Papers = 40 points (20 points each)

Participation = 10 points

Mid-term = 25 points

Final (non-cumulative) = 25 points

Total Possible Points: 100 points

GRADE CALCULATION:

For simplicity, the points have been assigned such that a student can track their own grade without any confusing arithmetic acrobatics (hence the even 100 points). I round to the second decimal, so a grade of 91.49 is considered a 92 (A-), and a grade of 96.03 is a 96 (A).

Grade Breakdown:

A+ 101 and up

B+ 89 – 87

C+ 79 – 77

D 69 - 60

A 94 – 100

B 86 – 83

C 76 – 73

F 59 and below

A- 93 – 90

B- 82 – 80

C- 72 - 70

HONOR CODE:

All provisions of the GMU Honor Code will be followed in this class. Information regarding the Honor Code and what constitutes academic dishonesty can be found in the 2011-201 University Catalog or online at the following website: <http://www.gmu.edu/catalog/apolicies/>.

DISABILITY HELP:

If you are a student with a disability and you need academic accommodations, please see me and contact the Disability Resource Center (DRC) at 703-993-2474. All academic accommodations must be arranged through that office.

SCHEDULE OF CLASSES:

*Topics subject to change as needed to ensure that the majority of students are comfortable with material covered prior to moving to the next topic.

Date	Topic	Readings
July 1	Introduction to Class; Inventories; As we think about death.	Chapter 1
July 2	What is Death?	Chapter 2
July 3-5 NO CLASS		
July 8	The Death System	Chapter 3
July 9	Dying	Chapter 4
July 10	Hospice & Palliative Care	Chapter 5
July 11	End of Life Issues & Decisions	Chapter 6
July 15	Suicide	Chapter 7
July 16	Violent Death	Chapter 8 R&R Paper #1 due Midnight
July 17	Euthanasia, Assisted Death, Abortion, & the Right to Die	Chapter 9
July 18	Death in the World of Childhood	Chapter 10
July 22	Movie: Ponette (1996)	Exam 1 Due at Midnight
July 23	Bereavement, Grief, and Mourning	Chapter 11
July 24	TENTATIVE : Guest Speaker	
July 25	The Funeral Process	Chapter 12
July 29	Do We Survive Death?	Chapter 13
July 30	Good life, Good Death?	Chapter 15
July 31	How Can We Help?	Chapter 14 R&R Paper #2 due at Midnight
August 1	FINAL EXAM: ONLINE 1:30 pm – 4:15 pm	(Exam may be taken earlier, but no later than 4:15PM)

*Syllabus subject to change.

Important Dates: Please see studentaccounts.gmu.edu/dates.html for drop/add deadlines, including associated tuition penalties.