

PSYC 4020.001(7068): Psychology of Death and Dying

Fall 2026

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Student Hours: By appointment

Class Meets: Tues & Thurs: 11:10 AM – 12:30 PM
Location: Terrill Hall 121
Course Dates: 8/17/2026 – 12/11/2026

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Student Hours: Wed 12:30pm-1:30pm and by appointment

Course Prerequisites:

- Junior or above
- C or better in PSYC 1630 and one of the following: PSYC 2580, PSYC 3100, or PSYC 3620.

Course Communication: Please Read Before Reaching Out

- Students are responsible for reviewing and following the syllabus and all course instructions, including Canvas.
- **Email is the only accepted form of communication (DO NOT use Canvas messaging).**
- **Attendance: Attendance is not recorded in this course.** Please do not email me or the TA about illness or other absences unless you are formally requesting an excused absence or need to discuss extenuating circumstances that may warrant an exception. Routine absence notifications will not receive a response.
- The TA should be your **first point of contact** for **(1) assignment grade concerns, (2) excused absence requests, and (3) submission of ODA accommodation documentation.** All other course-related inquiries should be directed to me.
- You must follow the email instructions on **page 9 of this syllabus** to receive a response. Emails that do not follow these instructions will **not** be answered.

*“Death and life are interdependent:
Though the physicality of death destroys us,
the idea of death saves us.”*

— Irvin D. Yalom

Course Overview

Welcome to Psychology of Death and Dying! This course provides a comprehensive psychological introduction to death, dying, and grief. We examine how people think and feel about death, how individuals navigate death, dying, and bereavement, and how these experiences are shaped by social, cultural, and institutional contexts. Topics include death attitudes and death anxiety; psychological experiences of dying and coping; coping with loss and bereavement; cultural approaches to death; hospice and palliative care; end-of-life decision-making and its ethical/legal debates (including aided death); and the meaning of death in life. The course also considers emerging issues such as the future of grief and the use of AI in grief support. The primary goal of the course is to familiarize students with major theories, research findings, and contemporary issues related to death, dying, and bereavement. Equally important, the course further seeks to encourage critical thinking, self-reflection, and thoughtful dialogue, enabling students to engage with death-related topics in informed, compassionate, and psychologically grounded ways.

Learning Objectives

After successfully completing this course, you will be able to:

- Define and differentiate key concepts related to death, dying, and bereavement.
- Analyze societal patterns of death using demographic, historical, and social data.
- Evaluate major theories of coping with dying and grief across individual and cultural contexts.
- Understand cultural approaches to death, dying, and bereavement.
- Assess the role of institutions (e.g., medicine, law, religion, media) in shaping end-of-life experiences.
- Apply developmental perspectives to death and bereavement across the lifespan.
- Examine ethical and legal debates regarding suicide, assisted dying, and end-of-life decision-making.
- Demonstrate death literacy through theory-driven, evidence-based analysis of real-world cases.

Required Resources

1. **Textbook:** Corr, C. A., Corr, D., & Doka, K. (2025). *Death & Dying, Life & Living* (9th ed). Cengage.
2. **iClicker + A charged laptop, tablet, pad, or phone**
 - Please attend class with a fully charged laptop, tablet, or phone to use iClicker or other polling tools during class. You will use your device to participate in interactive exercises, complete in-class activities, and submit responses via Canvas.
 - iClicker is a free app for UNT students that can be accessed via mobile devices and laptops (To create an account, please access: https://lms.unt.edu/supported_tech/iclicker.html).
 - Laptop checkouts are available at UNT libraries (<https://library.unt.edu/services/laptop-checkout/>).

How to Succeed in this Course

This is a 4000-level course, and thus, **this course requires a significant time (and emotional) commitment** from you. Because PSYC 4020 is a three-credit class, you should expect to spend, on average, 6 to 9 hours each week on coursework outside of class. If your schedule does not allow you to devote the time needed to succeed in this course, you may want to consider taking the course in a future semester when you are better able to meet its demands. **Although attendance is not required, students enrolled in this course are expected to attend class regularly.** Regular attendance will help support your success in the course by providing opportunities to engage with course material, participate in discussions and experiential activities, and learn from guest speakers.

This course emphasizes **active and experiential learning**. Class meetings will combine lecture, discussion, reflective and experiential activities, and the application of course material through cases, examples, videos, demonstrations, and occasional guest lectures. Rather than simply repeating the assigned readings, lectures will focus on clarifying complex concepts, integrating key ideas, and extending the material through psychological research and real-world applications. **You are expected to complete all assigned readings prior to class** so that you are prepared to engage fully in class activities and discussion. You are responsible for all assigned readings, whether or not discussed in class, and all material introduced in class.

I recognize that illness, loss, and other personal circumstances may affect your work during the semester. The course policies for dropped scores are designed to provide flexibility for occasional absences and disruptions, and you do not need to contact the teaching team about these routine situations. If circumstances are prolonged or substantially affect your ability to complete course requirements, please reach out as early as possible so that we can discuss available options. Formal accommodations or exceptions may require appropriate university documentation. If you are concerned about your ability to successfully complete the course, you should also consult with your academic advisor and review the university's deadlines for withdrawing (W) from a course.

Please note that an Incomplete ("I") grade is available only to students who are passing the course and who experience a documented, extenuating circumstance beyond their control late in the semester. Students seeking an Incomplete must follow procedures established by the Registrar and the Dean of Students.

Sensitive Content Statement: Emotional Impact of Course Content

As you might have guessed, this class engages deeply with topics of death, dying, and bereavement. These subjects can be **emotionally challenging**, particularly for students who have experienced recent loss, are living with serious illness, have been impacted by the death or suicide of someone close to them, or are currently navigating significant personal distress. **If any of these situations apply to you, I strongly encourage you to consider carefully whether taking this course at this time feels right for you, and to seek support from counseling or mental health services if that would be helpful.** While sharing personal experiences relevant to course topics is welcome and respected in our classroom, you will never be required to disclose a personal loss or any related experience. It is important to note that **this course is educational in nature and is not intended to be therapy or a substitute for therapy. If engaging with these topics feels overwhelming at this time, you may wish to consider taking this class when you feel more prepared** (see p. 8 of our textbook for further details). Choosing not to take this course may be the right decision for you, especially if grief or distress still feels fresh, painful, or deeply personal. There is no shame in prioritizing your well-being and recognizing your own limits. This note is not intended to discourage enrollment but to gently support thoughtful, informed, and compassionate decision-making. If you have any questions or concerns and would like to speak with me, I am happy to do so. Please email me as early as possible so that I can provide appropriate support and guidance.

Learning Activities & Assessments

Your grade will be based on the following assessments:

Learning Assessments	Point Calculation	Percentages
Exams	240 pts	53.3%
Exam 1	(80 pts)	
Exam 2	(80 pts)	
Exam 3	(80 pts)	
Pre-Class Reading Quizzes	40 pts (8 x 5 pts)	8.9%
In-class Discussion & Experiential Activities (IDEAs)	50 pts (10 x 5 pts)	11.1%
Reflection Papers	90 pts	20%
Reflection 1: <i>Memento Mori</i> : How Do You Want to Live?	(30 pts)	
Reflection 2: Conversations That Matter: A Life Interview	(30 pts)	
Reflection 3: Lossography: Making Meaning of Loss	(30 pts)	
Death & Dying Digital Symposium	30 pts	6.7%
Total Points	450 pts	100%

- Exams:** There will be **three required exams** administered **through Canvas during class**. Each exam will be timed and will consist of multiple-choice questions based on assigned readings and material covered in class. Exams must be completed individually using a laptop or other compatible device with LockDown Browser. Exams are closed-book and closed-note. Internet access, generative AI, and other external resources are not permitted, nor is discussion or collaboration with others.
 - Missed Exams:** If a student is unable to take an exam due to reasonable circumstances (e.g., an excused absence), the student **must notify** the teaching team in advance of the scheduled exam. An alternative make-up exam will be provided and must be completed **within one week** of the

original exam date. Make-up exams will assess the same course material but will differ in format from the original exam and will consist of short-answer and/or essay questions. Once a make-up date has been established, a 10% deduction from the total possible exam score will be applied for each 24-hour period the exam is submitted late. Failure to notify the teaching team in advance of a missed exam may result in a score of zero.

- **Academic Integrity:** Any violation of these exam policies will be considered academic dishonesty and handled in accordance with the Professional Conduct Policy described below. Violations may result in a zero on the exam and, depending on the nature and severity of the violation, additional course-level sanctions up to and including failure of the course.

2. Pre-Class Reading Quizzes: Prior to selected class meetings, you will complete a brief Canvas quiz on the assigned reading. These quizzes are designed to help you keep up with the readings, check your understanding of key concepts, and come to class prepared to engage with the material. **Quizzes are due before the start of class** on the dates listed in the Course Schedule. A total of 10 quizzes will be offered. Your two lowest quiz scores will be dropped, meaning that **only your eight highest quiz scores will count toward your final grade.** Quizzes may be completed at any time before the deadline. The two dropped quiz scores are intended to accommodate illness, emergencies, technical difficulties, missed deadlines, or other circumstances that may prevent you from completing a quiz. **Once the deadline has passed, late submissions, deadline extensions, and make-up quizzes are not permitted.**

- **Additional Quiz Policies:**

- **Technology:** Whenever possible, please use a laptop or desktop computer rather than a phone or tablet to complete quizzes. The Canvas app may be unreliable. Students are responsible for ensuring access to a reliable device and internet connection before the deadline. **Technical problems resulting from the use of an unsupported or unreliable device do not automatically qualify for an extension or make-up quiz.**
- **Attempts:** Each quiz may be **taken twice.** Your final score will be **the average of the two attempts.** This policy is intended to encourage completion of the assigned reading before the first attempt rather than using the first attempt to locate answers.
- **Academic Integrity:** Quizzes must be completed individually and may not be discussed or completed collaboratively. The use of outside sources, including generative AI tools, is not permitted. Any confirmed violation of these policies will result in **a score of zero** on the quiz. Additional sanctions may apply in accordance with the University's academic integrity policy.

3. In-class Discussion & Experiential Activities (IDEAs): Throughout the semester, IDEAs will provide opportunities to reflect on, discuss, and apply course material through brief individual and small-group activities. Activities may include written reflections, case analyses, discussions, questions and responses to guest speakers or media, and other experiential exercises. Most IDEAs will be completed during class and are designed to encourage active engagement with course concepts. A total of 12 IDEA opportunities will be offered. Your two lowest scores will be dropped, and **only your 10 highest scores will count toward your final grade. Because these dropped scores are intended to accommodate missed classes or activities, late submissions, extensions, and make-up IDEAs are not permitted.**

4. Reflection Papers: Throughout the semester, you will complete three reflection papers designed to help you connect course material to broader questions about life, death, dying, loss, and meaning. These assignments provide opportunities to reflect on topics related to death, dying, loss, grief, and meaning. **Each reflection paper is worth 30 points and should be no more than two double-spaced pages, formatted in APA style.** Specific instructions and prompts will be provided for each assignment via Canvas. Personal reflection is encouraged when appropriate, but you will never be required to disclose personal experiences that you do not wish to share.

- **Reflection 1: *Memento Mori*: How Do You Want to Live?**

- *Memento mori* is a reminder of mortality and the finite nature of life. For this reflection, consider how awareness of death may shape the way people think about living.

- In your paper, reflect on the question: ***How do you want to live, knowing that life is finite?*** You may consider your values, priorities, relationships, goals, use of time, or other aspects of life that feel relevant. Discuss whether thinking about mortality clarifies, challenges, or complicates the way you currently think about what makes a meaningful life.
 - Personal disclosure is not required; you may approach the topic at whatever level of personal reflection feels appropriate to you.
- **Reflection 2: Conversations That Matter: A Life Interview**
 - For this assignment, interview an adult who is meaningful to you—for example, a family member, mentor, friend, or another person who has played an important role in your life. The goal is to have a thoughtful conversation about life, aging, mortality, and meaning and to reflect on what you learn from that person’s perspective.
 - Your conversation may include questions such as:
 1. How would you describe what makes a life meaningful or well lived?
 2. How has your understanding of death and dying changed over the course of your life?
 3. What does a “good death” mean to you?
 4. When you think about the end of life, what feels most important to you?
 5. What experiences, beliefs, values, or cultural traditions have shaped the way you think about death and dying?
 6. In what ways, if any, has thinking about death shaped the way you think about living?
 7. Knowing that life is finite, what are three things you most hope to experience, do, or prioritize in the time ahead?
 - In your paper, **briefly introduce the person you interviewed, identify one or two ideas from the conversation that stood out to you, and reflect on what you learned from the experience.** If relevant, **compare their perspectives with your own, noting where your views are similar, different, or have been challenged or expanded by the conversation.** You do not need to submit a transcript of the interview.
 - Please explain the nature of the assignment to the person you interview and make sure they are comfortable participating. They should feel free to decline any question they do not wish to answer. Please respect their privacy; you may use a pseudonym and should include only the information necessary for your reflection.
- **Reflection 3: Lossography: Making Meaning of Loss**
 - Loss can take many forms, and its meaning varies from person to person. For this reflection, you will write a brief **lossography** about a loss that has been meaningful to you and consider it through the ideas we have discussed in this course. Your loss may be related to a death, but it does not have to be. You may also write about the loss of a relationship, pet, place, role, ability, expectation, or another meaningful part of your life.
 - You are not expected to disclose experiences that feel too private or painful to share. You may choose a loss that you feel comfortable examining, and you should share only as much personal detail as is necessary for your reflection.
 - In your paper:
 1. **Describe the loss and its significance.** What was lost, and why was it important in your life? Focus less on recounting every detail of what happened and more on the role the person, relationship, experience, or other loss held in your life.
 2. **Reflect on the experience of the loss.** How did the loss affect your relationships, routines, assumptions, sense of self, or the way you moved through life afterward? How, if at all, did family, culture, social expectations, or the circumstances of the loss shape your experience?
 3. **Connect the experience to the course.** Use at least one concept, idea, or framework from the course (e.g., Dual Process Model, Continuing Bonds, or Meaning Reconstruction) to help you think more deeply about the loss and your experience of it.

4. **Consider the loss over time.** Has the way you understand or relate to the loss changed? What has changed, what has remained, and what place does the loss hold in your life now?
 - The purpose of this assignment is **not to evaluate whether grief occurred in the “right” way or to fit an experience neatly into a psychological model.** Instead, the goal is to use the psychology of grief and bereavement as a lens for developing a deeper and more nuanced understanding of how people experience, carry, and make meaning of loss.
 - For late submissions, a 10% deduction will be applied for each 24-hour period after the deadline.

5. Death & Dying Digital Symposium: The Death & Dying Digital Symposium is an opportunity to translate what you have learned in this course into an accessible, evidence-based message for a broader audience. Drawing on course readings, lectures, discussions, IDEAs, guest speakers, media, or other course material, you will select one idea, concept, research finding, question, or issue that you believe more people should understand about death, dying, grief, bereavement, or living. You may also build on an idea that emerged in one of your reflection papers.

Your goal is not simply to summarize a course topic. You should identify a clear message worth sharing, support it with psychological evidence, and communicate it in a way that is accurate, engaging, and understandable to someone who has not taken this course.

A. Digital Exhibit: You will create **one public-facing digital post** that communicates your central message. The format may resemble an educational social-media post (e.g., a 1:1 square or 3:4 vertical post) and may be created using Canva or a similar platform.

Your post should make clear:

- **What should your audience understand?**
- **What evidence supports this message?**
- **Why does this idea matter?**

You should also consider who your intended audience is (e.g., college students, grieving friends or family members, healthcare professionals, or the general public) and communicate your message accordingly.

Visual creativity is encouraged, but artistic or graphic-design skill is **not** the focus of this assignment. Your work will be evaluated primarily on the clarity, accuracy, evidence, and effectiveness of your communication.

B. Written Rationale: Along with your digital post, you will submit **a one-page, double-spaced written rationale formatted in APA style**, explaining:

1. **the course idea or issue you selected and why you believe it is worth sharing;**
2. **the central message you want your audience to understand;**
3. **the intended audience for your post;**
4. **the psychological evidence that supports your message (APA citation); and**
5. **how you translated that evidence into an accessible public-facing format.**

Your rationale must incorporate and cite **at least one peer-reviewed scholarly article** that provides evidence relevant to your message. Include the full reference at the end of the page.

Your final submission will therefore include **two components: (1) the completed digital exhibit and (2) the one-page written rationale.** Because these activities are completed in class, late submissions are not accepted.

Final Week: Preparation & Symposium

- (1) **Symposium Preparation & Peer Review:** Class time will be devoted to preparing, revising, and receiving feedback on your digital exhibit. You are welcome—and encouraged—to begin your project before this class meeting. The purpose of this session is to refine your message, strengthen the connection between your evidence and your claims, and prepare your work for sharing.
- (2) **Digital Gallery Walk:** We will conclude the course with a Death & Dying Digital Symposium via Zoom. You will share your work with classmates in small groups, learn from their exhibits, and explore a range of ideas from across the course. As you move through the gallery walk, consider which ideas challenge, deepen, or complicate your own understanding.

The symposium is intended to leave us with a final question: **What is one thing we have learned about death, dying, grief, or living that is worth carrying beyond this classroom?**

Criterion

Criterion	Description	Points
Digital Exhibit: Content & Communication	Communicates a clear, accurate, and meaningful course-based message to the intended audience. The content reflects appropriate psychological complexity, and the visual format supports effective public-facing communication.	15
Evidence & Written Rationale	Clearly explains the topic, message, and intended audience and uses at least one relevant peer-reviewed article to support the claims presented.	10
Symposium Participation & Peer Engagement	Comes prepared to share the exhibit and engages meaningfully with classmates and their work during the Digital Gallery Walk.	5
		30

6. **Extra credit:** From time to time, I may offer opportunities to earn extra credit through activities that extend learning beyond our regular course requirements. These may include attending a course-related event and submitting a brief reflection, identifying and sharing relevant media or resources, or completing other activities that connect meaningfully to course content. Specific opportunities and requirements will be announced during the semester. Extra credit is optional and may add up to approximately 5% to your final course grade.

Evaluation of Learning

Your learning of course material and achievement of course objectives will be assessed through your performance on the assignments and assessments listed above. Evaluation is based on demonstrated mastery of course content. Final grades are calculated based on total points earned out of 600 possible points. Because opportunities for extra credit are provided, final grades are **NOT** rounded. Letter grades are assigned according to the grading rubric below.

Grade	Points	Percentages
A	405–450	90% – 100%
B	360–404	80% – 89%
C	315–359	70% – 79%

D	270–314	60% – 69%
F	< 270	< 60%

Your Responsibilities

This course requires substantial time and effort, both in and out of the classroom. You should expect to spend an average of six to nine hours per week on preparation and coursework outside of class. During class sessions, you are expected to actively participate in discussions, group work, and other activities. Please note that I will not discuss all topics of importance that I deem sufficiently covered in the text. It is your responsibility to complete the assigned readings before class and to bring questions about concepts that are unclear.

You are expected to take responsibility for your own learning. Your responsibilities include (but are not limited to) the following:

- 1) Reviewing and adhering to all course policies in this syllabus
- 2) Attending class and completing assigned readings before each session
- 3) Actively participating in class discussions and activities
- 4) Obtaining notes and announcements from a classmate if you are absent
- 5) Submitting all assignments on time
- 6) Taking exams on the scheduled dates
- 7) Asking questions about material or assignments when they are unclear (to peers, the TAs, or me)

My Responsibilities

As your instructor, I will support your learning by:

- 1) Communicating clear expectations
- 2) Maintaining a respectful and inclusive classroom environment
- 3) Designing the course to help you achieve learning objectives
- 4) Staying current with the course material
- 5) Providing timely and constructive feedback
- 6) Evaluating student work fairly
- 7) Responding to questions to the best of my ability, and acknowledging when I do not have an answer

Student Hours (a.k.a. Office Hours)

We are invested in your success in this course and want you to feel comfortable reaching out when you need support. If you have questions, feel stuck, or would like to talk through course material or assignments, please reach out. We offer a combination of **regular drop-in student hours** and availability **by appointment** so that students with different schedules have multiple ways to connect with us. Students in the past have found this format extremely helpful, and we hope you will as well. If you can stop by during regular student hours, feel free to do so. If those times do not work for you, email us with your weekly availability so that we can find a mutually convenient time. You are always welcome to reach out, and we encourage you to do so early if you have questions, feel stuck, or need support.

Email Policy

- Email is the **only accepted method of course communication**. We do **NOT** use the Canvas messaging system.
- All emails **MUST** follow the instructions below. Emails that do not follow these instructions will **NOT** receive a response.
- The **TA should be your first point of contact** for:
 - Assignment grade concerns
 - Excused absence requests
 - Submission of ODA accommodation documentation
 - Other matters specifically designated by the instructor
- **Routine absence notifications should not be emailed** to the instructor or TA. Please contact the TA regarding an absence only when formally requesting an excused absence or when extenuating circumstances may warrant an exception.
- **All other course-related inquiries**, including questions about assignment instructions, course content, syllabus policies, or other academic concerns, should be directed to the instructor.

Please review the Dos and Don'ts below before emailing the teaching team.

<u>DOs</u>	<u>DON'Ts</u>
• Use your UNT email address. • Include "PSYC 4020" and a clear, specific topic in the subject line. • Include your first and last name. • Address the recipient appropriately (e.g., Hi Dr. Yang, Professor Yang, or Hi Zeina.). • Use professional, respectful, and concise language (read this article for your reference). • Proofread your email before sending. • Send one email per issue and keep related communication in the same email thread. • Allow 24–48 business hours for a response before following up (Mon–Fri, 9 AM–5PM). • Proofread your email for clarity, grammar, and tone before sending. • Reach out early when you have questions or concerns.	• Do not use Canvas messaging. • Do not email if the answer is clearly available in the syllabus, Course Schedule, assignment instructions, or course announcements. • Do not submit assignments by email unless specifically instructed to do so. • Do not send repeated emails about the same issue. • Allow 24–48 business hours before following up. • Do not expect responses during evenings, weekends, or university holidays. • Do not expect an immediate response to questions sent shortly before an assignment or exam deadline. • Do not use casual, sarcastic, disrespectful, or hostile language. • Do not send multiple members of the teaching team the same question unless instructed to do so. • Do not repeatedly argue a decision by email. If further discussion is needed, you may be asked to attend student hours or schedule an appointment. • Requests for exceptions to course policies should be limited to documented or genuinely extenuating circumstances.

Course-Specific Policies

Course Climate and Etiquette

You will be invited to share your thoughts in class and a diversity of opinions is welcome. Respectful communication is expected, even when expressing differing perspectives. Supporting one's statements with research findings is encouraged. In accordance with free-speech statutes and university policies, speech that contains threats of violence or constitutes discriminatory harassment, which incites harm, violence, or substantially disrupts the educational environment, is prohibited.

Because this is a large class, I ask for your help in maintaining a respectful and focused learning environment. Please follow these guidelines:

- **Do not use your phone or laptop** unless it is related to a class activity.
- Do not talk or whisper during lectures or when others are speaking.
- **Avoid side conversations and distractions** during lecture.
- Silence all cell phones and other distracting electronic devices.
- Arrive to class on time and wait until the end of the class to leave.
- **Recording of lectures is prohibited.** All course materials are the instructor's intellectual property, and class discussions may include sensitive content. Students are expected to respect the privacy and confidentiality of their peers.
- Treat the teaching team, guest lecturers, and your fellow students with respect and courtesy.

Note. Repeated disruptions may result in a warning, and continued disruptive behavior may lead to being asked to leave the classroom.

Sensitive Topics and Privacy

This course addresses personal and sensitive topics, and you will have opportunities to share your own insights and experiences if you wish. Please share only to the extent you feel comfortable and respect your classmates' privacy by not discussing their personal disclosures outside of class.

All members of the teaching team (i.e., me and the TAs) are mandated reporters. If you disclose (orally or in writing, including assignments) sexual abuse, child or elder abuse, or intent to commit suicide or homicide, we are required to report this information to the appropriate campus authorities.

Attendance

- **Attendance is not required**; however, regular attendance is strongly encouraged.
- Classes will not be recorded or shared virtually in order to protect student privacy.
- In accordance with university policy, you may request an excused absence. All excused absences (including religious absences) should be requested via email **in advance**. Retroactive requests will not be accommodated unless there are documented extenuating circumstances. Further requirements for excused absences are described [here](#).
- Please do NOT attend class if you are sick, especially if you have a cold, flu, COVID-19, or other illness that could be easily passed on to others.

Excused Absence

Per [06.039 Student Attendance and Authorized Absences](#), the UNT recognizes that student success is promoted by regular attendance and participation in class.

An absence may be excused for the following reasons:

1. religious holy day, including travel for that purpose;
2. active military service, including travel for that purpose;
3. participation in an official university function (including athletic team members);
4. illness or other extenuating circumstances;
5. pregnancy and parenting under Title IX; and
6. when the University is officially closed.

Students are responsible for **submitting written requests for excused absences in advance, providing satisfactory documentation**, and delivering the request to the faculty member or teaching team assigned to the course, as specified in the syllabus.

When an absence is excused, the faculty member will provide a reasonable time after the absence for the student to complete a missed assignment or examination.

Need to Request an Excused Absence?

To request an excused absence, please email the TA and provide any required supporting documentation. The TA will review and process excused absence requests in accordance with University policy and will contact you if additional information is needed. **If your absence is approved, the TA will work with you to determine the appropriate next steps based on the missed course requirement.** Please do not send separate or duplicate requests to the instructor unless directed to do so.

Assignment Submission & Late Submission Policy

- When submitting assignments electronically, make sure you upload the correct file and confirm that it opens properly. A corrupt, blank, incorrect, or unreadable file will be treated as a non-submission.
- Technical difficulties do not automatically excuse a late or missing submission. It is **your responsibility** to submit assignments **on time and verify your submission on Canvas before the deadline**.
- Late submissions are not permitted for some assignments due to the nature or format of the activity. Other assignments may have a specific late submission policy. Please review the instructions for each assignment and the syllabus for details. If the policy is unclear, contact the instructor before the deadline.

Grade Dispute Policy

- All assignments and exams may be disputed **within 7 days** of the date the grade is posted in Canvas or the work/exam is returned. After 7 days, no grade changes or reviews will be considered.
- **Formal Appeal Process:** If you believe you should have received credit for a question or portion of an assignment or exam that was marked incorrect, you may submit an appeal under the following conditions:
 1. Appeals must be submitted in writing **via email only**.
 2. Your email **must** follow the email instructions outlined in the syllabus and include a clear, well-supported rationale; emails that do not meet these requirements **will not receive a response**.
 - a. **Appeals for assignments** must include (1) the submitted assignment, (2) clear identification or highlights of the specific portions being disputed, (3) an explanation of why points should be awarded, and (4) references to the grading rubric.
 - b. **Appeals for exams** must include (1) a screenshot of the relevant exam question(s) and (2) a clear rationale supported by references to specific textbook page numbers or lecture dates.
 3. All appeals must be submitted **within 7 days** of the date the work, assignment, or exam is returned, regardless of whether you were present that day.
- **Note:** While every effort is made to ensure accurate grading, errors can occur. If you believe a mistake has been made, you are always welcome to ask.
- **Note 2:** Please do NOT email the teaching team regarding grade disputes unless your request meets the criteria outlined above. Requests for additional points based on opinion, effort, personal circumstances, or grade rounding **are not valid appeals and are unfair to other students; therefore, such requests will not be considered.** Submitting such requests indicates that the syllabus has not been carefully reviewed and may be taken into account when grading.

Course Materials & Intellectual Property

Course materials are **the intellectual property of the instructor and/or other respective content owners** and may not be reproduced, distributed, posted online, or shared with external services without permission.

Reading Assignments

Required readings, other than the textbook, will be posted on Canvas. You are expected to complete all assigned readings before class and come prepared to engage with the material through lecture, discussion, and in-class activities.

Artificial Intelligence (AI)

The use of generative AI tools (e.g., ChatGPT, Claude, Gemini) is **strictly prohibited** for course assignments, quizzes, exams, and other graded work unless explicitly authorized by the instructor.

Course materials may not be uploaded, copied, recorded, transcribed, summarized, or otherwise submitted to generative AI tools or other third-party services. This includes, but is not limited to, lectures, lecture recordings, slides, class discussions, guest lectures, assignment instructions, study materials, and other content provided in this course. Course materials are the intellectual property of the instructor and/or other respective content owners and may not be reproduced, distributed, or shared with external services without permission.

This means that students may **not** use AI tools to record a class meeting, generate a transcript of a lecture or discussion, produce lecture notes or summaries, or create study materials from course content. This restriction also applies when the resulting AI-generated material is intended only for personal use.

Violations of this policy will be considered violations of the UNT Academic Integrity Policy and may be reported and addressed accordingly.

Student Evaluations

I will conduct a mid-semester evaluation to assess your overall experience in this course and identify ways to improve the course. Your input is valuable and will contribute to a better learning experience for your peers and future students. The Student Perceptions of Teaching (SPOT; <https://vpaa.unt.edu/news/spot-survey>) is a requirement for classes at UNT. This short survey will be made available to you at the end of the semester, which will provide you a chance to comment on the class.

Student Concerns about the Course and Performance

If you have a concern/complaint about the course or need support with understanding class materials, I encourage you to connect with me and/or the TAs for support either after class or stop by my student hours. Additional student hours, in person and virtually, will be offered as the semester concludes, as your success is our goal. The link listed below outlines UNT's procedure for resolving complaints against UNT faculty, staff, and the university. <https://policy.unt.edu/policy/07-016>

Course Communication and Messaging Forums Policy

You are encouraged to form friendships and study groups, but please be aware that unofficial messaging forums (e.g., GroupMe, Discord, WhatsApp) may lead to confusion or incorrect information about course content. Please note that, in order to comply with FERPA and university security policies, I cannot participate in or take responsibility for communication outside official university platforms.

All course materials and requirements are my intellectual property and will only be distributed through UNT Canvas, UNT Outlook, UNT Zoom, and/or the classroom. Communication with me or the course TAs must take place through these official channels. You are responsible for knowing course requirements as outlined in the syllabus. If you believe there is an error in the syllabus, course requirements, or content, please contact me or the TAs directly so we can address it.

Recording / Technology Policy

Except for learning and in-class activities that require device use, students are expected to refrain from using cellphones or laptops for non-class-related matters during class. If you have critical communication to attend to, please excuse yourself and return when you are ready. For more information about the science behind the policy watch: youtu.be/WwPaw3Fx5Hk. You may use laptops and tablets to take notes; however, it is expected that you will not use these devices for other tasks during class.

Changes to the Course

In the unlikely event that I need to change the course schedule, cancel a class, or modify a course policy or assignment, I will announce the change on the course website. In addition, the syllabus is a “living document,” meaning that I may alter aspects of it, such as its content or assignments, at my discretion. If any changes occur, I will make announcements in class and/or through Canvas.

ODA Accommodations

Some accommodations may involve **a course-specific agreement or form to clarify how the accommodation will be implemented in this course**, even if the accommodation is already listed in your ODA Letter of Accommodation. This may include accommodations related to attendance, assignment deadlines, recording, course materials, or other course-specific adjustments. **In this course, some accommodations may require an additional course-specific form so that we can clarify how the accommodation will be implemented.**

The TA will serve as **the primary point** of contact for course-specific accommodations and will collect the forms and documentation.

If your accommodation includes any of the areas below, please complete the corresponding form and send it to the TA **as early as possible**.

- Audio Recording Agreement
- Lecture Slides and Materials Agreement
- Modification of Course Attendance Policy Agreement
- Occasional Extension of Due Dates Agreement
- Link Here: <https://studentaffairs.unt.edu/office-disability-access/faculty/faculty-guide/forms.html>

If your accommodation involves one of the areas listed above:

1. Download the appropriate form.
2. Complete the form.
3. Send the completed form to the TA **as early as possible**.
4. Save the file using the following naming format:
 - **[Semester Year]_[Course Number]_[Form Name]_[Your Initials]**
 - Example: **Fall 2026_PSYC4020_Occasional Extension of Due Dates Agreement_NY**

Campus Policies

Incomplete Grades

“I” is a non-punitive grade given only during the last one-fourth of a term/semester and only if a form signed by the instructor, student, and department chair and must be entered on the grade roster by the instructor. See also “Removal of I” policy in the Academics section of undergraduate catalog. (The UNT Catalog generally allows up to 1 year to remove an “I” grade.). Grades of “I” assigned to an undergraduate course at the end of the Fall 2007 semester and later, will default to “F” unless the instructor has designated a different automatic grade.

Academic Integrity Policies

If you are in doubt regarding the requirements, please consult with the websites below and me before you complete any requirements of the course:

- Integrity: <https://facultysuccess.unt.edu/academic-integrity>
- Code of Student Conduct: <https://deanofstudents.unt.edu/conduct>

Use of Artificial Intelligence (AI)

According to the UNT Student Academic Integrity Policy (UNT Policy 6.003), the unauthorized use of any person or technology to complete an assignment, project, or paper is considered cheating. Unless explicitly authorized by the instructor, the use of AI tools is prohibited and may result in a violation of academic integrity (see UNT policy [here](#)).

ADA Policy

The University of North Texas makes reasonable academic accommodation for students with disabilities. Students seeking accommodation must first register with the Office of Disability Accommodation (ODA) to verify their eligibility. If a disability is verified, the ODA will provide you with an accommodation letter to be delivered to faculty to begin a private discussion regarding your specific needs in a course. You may request accommodations at any time; however, ODA notices of accommodation should be provided as early as possible in the semester to avoid any delay in implementation. Note that students must obtain a new letter of accommodation for every semester and must meet with each faculty member prior to implementation in each class. Students are strongly encouraged to deliver letters of accommodation during faculty office hours (student hours) or by appointment. Faculty members have the authority to ask students to discuss such letters during their designated office hours (student hours) to protect the privacy of the student. For additional information see the Office of Disability Accommodation website at <http://www.unt.edu/oda>. You may also contact them by phone at 940.565.4323.

Title 9 Policy

Please be aware that UNT policy (See <http://policy.unt.edu/policy/12-005>) based on Title 9 of the Education Amendments of 1972 (20 U.S.C. § 1681(a); See <https://www.aclu.org/know-your-rights/title-ix-and-sexual-assault>) entails a duty for institutional employees to report to the university any knowledge regarding recent events of sexual misconduct involving students or employees. Additionally, if you report any information indicating that you have been a victim of sexual harassment, sexual assault, dating violence, or stalking being a student or employee at UNT, I am required to report this information to concerned authorities as mandated by Texas State Law.

Professional Conduct Policy

- Students are reminded that academic misconduct will not be tolerated. For example: (a) copying another student's work, in part or whole; (b) unauthorized communication to obtain information about a test(s); (c) using unauthorized material during a test; (d) handing in any work product that is not your own; (e) failing to give credit to the intellectual property of another in any written work (including, but not limited to, plagiarizing).
- For a more extensive list of behaviors that are considered "cheating" or "plagiarism," please refer to the official statement of UNT regarding these matters, which may be assessed as part of the Student Handbook at the following website: <http://www.unt.edu/csrr>. Please note that specific penalties, including assigning a failing grade in the course, may be assigned by the course instructor. For further information on academic misconduct, penalties, and appeal procedures, please view the "Code of Student Conduct and Discipline" at http://www.unt.edu/csrr/student_conduct/index.html.

Prohibition of Discrimination, Harassment, and Retaliation (Policy 16.004)

The University of North Texas (UNT) prohibits discrimination and harassment because of race, color, national origin, religion, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, age, disability, genetic information,

veteran status, or any other characteristic protected under applicable federal or state law in its application and admission processes; educational programs and activities; employment policies, procedures, and processes; and university facilities. The University takes active measures to prevent such conduct and investigates and takes remedial action when appropriate.

Campus Closures and Schedule Changes

In the event that university operations are disrupted due to an emergency or hazardous conditions threatening the safety, health, or welfare of the campus community, UNT may be required to cancel classes, suspend operations, or close the campus entirely. If a campus closure occurs, you will be notified through Eagle Alert, and I will post an announcement via Canvas. In such circumstances, the course schedule is subject to change in accordance with the Campus Closures Policy (<https://policy.unt.edu/policy/15-006>).

Campus Closures and Schedule Changes

Student records pertaining to this course are maintained in a secure location by the instructor of record. All records such as exams, answer sheets (with keys), and written papers submitted during the duration of the course are kept for at least one calendar year after course completion. Course work completed via the Canvas online system, including grading information and comments, is also stored in a safe electronic environment for one year. Students have the right to view their individual record; however, information about student's records will not be divulged to other individuals without proper written consent. Students are encouraged to review the Public Information Policy and the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) laws and the University's policy. See UNT Policy 10.10, Records Management and Retention for additional information.

Additional Information

- UNT schedule to register and withdraw/drop a course: <https://registrar.unt.edu/registration/fall-academic-calendar.html>
- Information on student policies and resources: <https://deanofstudents.unt.edu/>
- Learning Center: <https://learningcenter.unt.edu/>
- Undergraduate Research Fellowship: <https://honors.unt.edu/research/unt-undergraduate-researchfellowship>
- **The Learning Center**
 - How to access resources
 - Sage 170 (Main Office) / Sage 130 (Math Lab)
 - learningcenter@unt.edu / 940-369-7006
 - Provides the following resources
 - Supplemental Instruction / Math Lab
 - One-on-one tutoring / Academic Coaching
 - Learning 101 Series (Academic workshops on varying topics)
 - Graduate Student Resources
- **Mental Health:** UNT provides mental health resources to students to help ensure there are numerous outlets to turn to that wholeheartedly care for and are there for students in need, regardless of the nature of an issue or its severity. Listed below are several resources on campus that can support your academic success and mental well-being:
 - Student Health and Wellness Center (<https://studentaffairs.unt.edu/student-health-and-wellness-center>)
 - Counseling and Testing Services (<https://studentaffairs.unt.edu/counseling-and-testing-services>)
 - UNT Care Team (<https://studentaffairs.unt.edu/care>)
 - UNT Psychiatric Services (<https://studentaffairs.unt.edu/student-health-and-wellness-center/services/psychiatry>)

Appendix A. Regarding Requests for Letters of Recommendation

Students may wish to request letters of recommendation for applications to graduate programs, internship/research positions, scholarships, or related opportunities. While I am committed to supporting students in their academic and professional development whenever possible, I am unable to write letters of recommendation for all students due to the sheer volume of requests received each semester.

To ensure that any letter I provide is both meaningful and professionally responsible, requests will be **considered only if** all of the following conditions are met. A request may be considered if:

1. You Have Completed Two Courses Taught by Me Across Two Semesters

You have successfully completed **at least two courses** under my instruction across two separate semesters, earning a final grade of A in both courses. This minimum requirement allows me to assess consistency in your academic performance over time. Preference will be given to students who demonstrate outstanding engagement, such as active participation, strong academic work, and clear commitment to the courses. Requests will **not** be considered before the semester has concluded and final grades have been officially released.

2. You Have Had Significant Interaction with Me

It is extremely important for me to know who you are as a person beyond your academic performance. I must be able to comment meaningfully on your character, work habits, and individual strengths. Therefore, I can only write letters of recommendation for individuals who have had significant interaction with me, to the extent that I can provide a genuine and informed recommendation. If you feel that I do not know you well enough, it is likely that I may not be able to write a strong letter of recommendation, and in such cases, I may choose to decline the request.

3. You Have Demonstrated Strong Overall Academic Performance

Your cumulative GPA reflects strong academic achievement. GPA is considered an indicator of sustained effort, perseverance, and readiness for future academic or professional opportunities. As reference letters represent professional judgment, I can only support students who are well qualified for the programs or positions to which they are applying.

4. You Have Provided At least One Month's Advance Notice

I only consider requests that are submitted **at least one month** prior to the earliest deadline. Requests that do not meet this timeline will **not** be considered. Students are strongly encouraged to submit requests well in advance.

5. You Have Shared the Following Materials with Me via Email

Your first request email **must** include all of the following:

- A current CV or résumé
- An unofficial transcript
- An essay or statement of purpose (if it is one of the required application materials)
- A list of programs, schools, positions, and/or scholarships you are applying to, along with the links and deadlines
- A brief statement explaining your interest in these opportunities (e.g., why you are applying to graduate school) and why a letter from me would be relevant (e.g., what makes you think that my words or recommendation would persuade reviewers that you are a competitive candidate).
- A brag sheet summarizing your strengths, achievements, and relevant experiences.

Additional Notes

- All requests and correspondence must be professional, respectful, and clearly written.
- I reserve the right to decline any request at my discretion.
- I will only **consider** requests that meet the above criteria and for which I believe I can write a strong letter of recommendation.
- Meeting the above criteria does **not** guarantee that a letter will be written, as the number of letters I can provide each semester is limited.
- In most cases, I will only write letters that are submitted through official institutional or program portals and for which the student has waived their right of access.
- I do not share, preview, or discuss the contents of letters of recommendation with students.
- Follow-up requests after being informed that I am unable to write a letter are not appropriate or professional. Please do not submit additional requests.

Course Schedule

Note. All chapter readings are expected to be completed *prior* to class and are intended as *preparation* for class (except Chapter 1).

Wk	Date	Topics & Readings Due	Assignments (DUE)
Part 1. Learning about Death, Dying, and Bereavement			
1	Tues, 8/18	Course Introduction & Review Syllabus Ch 1. Education about Death, Dying, and Bereavement	
	Thurs, 8/20	Documentary: Being Mortal	
Part 2. Death			
2	Tues, 8/25	Ch 2. Changing Encounters with Death	Reflection Paper 1 <u>Due by 11:59 PM</u>
	Thurs, 8/27	Ch 3. Changing Attitudes toward Death	Pre-Class Quiz: Ch. 3 <u>Due by 11:10 AM</u>
3	Tues, 9/1	Ch 4. Death-related Practices and the American Death System	Pre-Class Quiz: Ch. 4 <u>Due by 11:10 AM</u>
	Thurs, 9/3	Ch 5. Cultural Patterns and Death	Pre-Class Quiz: Ch. 5 <u>Due by 11:10 AM</u>
4	Tues, 9/8	Guest Speaker: Dr. Calvin Sims Senior Lecturer, Department of Psychology Lecture on <i>Serial Killers</i>	
	Thurs, 9/10	Exam 1	
Part 3. Dying			
5	Tues, 9/15	Documentary: The Last Ecstatic Days	
	Thurs, 9/17	Ch 6. Coping with Dying	Pre-Class Quiz: Ch. 6 <u>Due by 11:10 AM</u>
6	Tues, 9/22	Ch 7. Coping with Dying: How Individuals Can Help	
	Thurs, 9/24	Guest Speaker: Shaena Whitney, EOLD Transitional Support Specialist & Death Doula at Angel Hands Hospice	Reflection Paper 2 <u>Due by 11:59 PM</u>
Part 4. Bereavement			
7	Tues, 9/29	Ch 9. Coping with Loss and Grief	Pre-Class Quiz: Ch. 9 <u>Due by 11:10 AM</u>
	Thurs, 10/1	Ch 10. Coping with Loss and Grief: How Individuals Can Help	Pre-Class Quiz: Ch. 10 <u>Due by 11:10 AM</u>
8	Tues, 10/13	Ch 11. Coping with Loss and Grief: Funeral Practices and Other Ways Communities Can Help	Pre-Class Quiz: Ch. 11 <u>Due by 11:10 AM</u>

	Thurs, 10/15	Guest Speaker: Dr. Greta J. Khanna (via Zoom) Attending Psychologist at Dana-Farber Cancer Institute & Instructor at Harvard Medical School	
9	Tues, 10/20	Exam 2	
	Thurs, 10/22	Documentary: Speaking Grief	
10	Tues, 10/27	<i>How Do We Live With Loss? Contemporary Models of Grief</i> <i>Dual Process Model, Meaning Reconstruction, and Continuing Bonds</i> • Stroebe, M., & Schut, H. (1999). The dual process model of coping with bereavement: Rationale and description. <i>Death Studies</i>, 23(3), 197–224. doi:10.1080/074811899201046 • Gillies, J., & Neimeyer, R. A. (2006). Loss, grief, and the search for significance: Toward a model of meaning reconstruction in bereavement. <i>Journal of Constructivist Psychology</i>, 19(1), 31–65. doi:10.1080/10720530500311182 • Klass, D. (2006). Continuing conversation about continuing bonds. <i>Death Studies</i>, 30(9), 843–858. https://doi.org/10.1080/07481180600886959	
	Thurs, 10/29	Ch 17. Suicide and Life-Threatening Behavior	Pre-Class Quiz: Ch. 17 <u>Due by 11:10 AM</u>
11	Tues, 11/3	Guest Speaker: Dr. Jan Holden Professor Emerita of Counseling at UNT Lecture on <i>After-Death Communication</i>	Reflection Paper 3 <u>Due by 11:59 PM</u>
	Thurs, 11/5	Ch 16. Legal Issues	Pre-Class Quiz: Ch. 16 <u>Due by 11:10 AM</u>
12	Tues, 11/10	Ch 18. Aided Death: Assisted Suicide, Euthanasia, and Aid in Dying	Pre-Class Quiz: Ch. 18 <u>Due by 11:10 AM</u>
	Thurs, 11/12	Ch 19. The Meaning and Place of Death in Life	
13	Tues, 11/17	The Future of Grief: AI and Grief Support • Yang, N., & Khanna, G. J. (2025). AI and technology in grief support: Clinical implications and ethical considerations. <i>The Counseling Psychologist</i>, 53(4), 579-604. https://doi.org/10.1177/00110000251352568	
	Thurs, 11/19	Exam 3	
14	11/24 - 11/26	Thanksgiving Break (no classes)	
15	Tues, 12/1	Death & Dying Digital Symposium: Preparation & Peer Review Day (via online)	
	Thurs, 12/3	Death & Dying Digital Symposium: Digital Gallery Walk (via online)	Death & Dying Digital Symposium Due by 11:10 AM

NOTE: This syllabus is not a binding document. I reserve the right to modify the syllabus as needed to meet the learning needs of the class. Any changes will be communicated to the class in advance, both in class and on Canvas. It is your responsibility to keep up with course announcements and updates. If you have any questions or concerns about the syllabus, you are responsible for asking either me or the TAs for clarification.