

DEATH AND GRIEF AS SOCIAL PROCESSES

SOCL/GRNT 304 001 CRN 11384/11385 001

Classroom: 112 Sims Science Bldg.

Time: MW 6:30- 7:45PM

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Professor: Lee Q. Miller

Office Hours: MW 5:00-6:00 PM

and by appointment

Office: Sims 101 and 212B

INTRODUCTION

Death is an inevitable part of life. In this course, we examine death, dying, and grieving as a part of life involving social processes, structures, and relationships. After taking this course, you will understand the customs, behaviors, and beliefs related to death, dying, and grieving in the U.S. and other societies and cultures. You will also become familiar with practical matters associated with death such as funeral preparation, wills, and advance directives. We discuss controversial issues related to medical ethics, organ donation, and euthanasia. Information in the course is presented through required readings, class discussion, lectures, guest lectures, videos and fieldtrips.

REQUIRED READING:

- Death, Society, and Human Experience (11th Edition) by Robert J. Kastenbaum (2012) Boston: Allyn & Bacon
- Handouts and assigned articles/websites

COURSE GOALS:

1. Students will become familiar with death, dying, and grief using a social science perspective.
2. Students will investigate the phenomenon of death as it relates to the social structure of various cultures.
3. Students will gain an understanding into the patterns of social interaction that surround death and give meaning to it.
4. Students will acquire critical thinking skills to understand a growing body of knowledge of the ways in which power and influence, age, class, ethnicity, gender, religion, and other social phenomena are related to death.
5. Students will be better able to assess new and unfamiliar situations, solve practical problems in creative ways, and communicate effectively, both orally and in writing.
6. This course, by its very nature, promotes the **Global Learning Initiative**. Winthrop University defines “global” as applying to local, regional, national, and/or international experiences that may differ from one’s own culture (adapted from Olson, Green, and Hill, 2006, p. v). For more information on **GLI** go to <http://www.winthrop.edu/sacs/default.aspx?id=8238>

These goals are consistent with the mission of the Department of Sociology & Anthropology. Please go to <http://www2.winthrop.edu/sociology/departmissionstatement.htm> for the department mission

Student Learning Outcomes in SOCL/GRNT 304 001 11384 /11385 001 and University Level Competencies addressed in the Touchstone Program.

SOCL/GRNT 304 section 11384 is completed as part of the Touchstone Program, Winthrop University’s distinctive approach to general education. Thus, SOCL/GRNT 304 11384 helps students make progress toward the following University Level Competencies:

- **Competency 1: Winthrop graduates think critically and solve problems.** Discuss controversial or differing practices and propose suggestions and solutions regarding policies that govern death and dying in society
- **Competency 2: Winthrop graduates are personally and socially responsible.** Will complete on time all assignments and engage in class discussions and respect the differences among classmates and others whose beliefs and practices differ from their own

- **Competency 3: Winthrop graduates understand the interconnected nature of the world and the time in which they live.** Students will be exposed to a wide range of cultural practices and rituals and beliefs and will reflect on these in discussion and writing.
- **Competency 4: Winthrop graduates communicate effectively in written or oral presentations by writing a legacy letter and responding in writing to several internet assignments, field trips and DVD's.** They will also have a research on a related course topic and engage orally in class discussions in small groups and with entire class

STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES: After successfully completing this course, students should:

1. Develop a personal understanding of their attitudes toward death and dying
2. Understand the socio-cultural and psychological aspects of death, dying, and bereavement
3. Understand issues involved in working with people who are terminally ill
4. Be aware of and appreciate the experiences and challenges of caregivers and of ways to assist them
5. Understand and recognize the impact on individuals and society of the universality of impermanence, death, and loss
6. Understand ethical and legal issues in death and dying
7. appreciate the rich complexity of literature, humor, art, music, and other cultural and artistic media that address death, dying and loss and which help individuals and cultural groups heal, cope, and come to terms with death.

LEARNING ENVIRONMENT: (What is it and who creates it?) Learning is an interactive and cooperative process. It takes place both inside and outside of the classroom. In the classroom, course information is presented through readings, lectures, discussions, questions, exercises, guest lectures, and videos. Learning occurs outside the classroom through reading the textbook and other required readings, doing assignments, studying alone or in groups, thinking about course material, developing questions, and applying course concepts, perspectives, and knowledge to understanding both personal and social issues related to the course content. **Students and teachers together create a supportive and stimulating learning environment.**

CLASSROOM BEHAVIOR:

1. We treat each other with respect, regardless of gender, race, ethnicity, national origin, religious affiliation, sexual orientation, political beliefs, age, ability, or social role.
2. All students should consider this classroom a safe environment.
3. We appreciate and encourage diverse perspectives and opinions.
4. Students attend class, arriving before class begins, and staying until it ends.
5. We pay attention by discussing, questioning, and listening thoughtfully to each other.
6. Students do not sleep, eat, drink (except water), or engage in non-course related activities.
7. Students **turn off** (not just put on vibrate) their cell phones, iPods, and all other electronic devices **before** entering the classroom. Keep these devices out of sight in your book bag, purse, or pocket.
8. Students using laptops, net books, Ipads, or similar technology for note-taking must sit in the first two rows of desks.

STUDENT BEHAVIOR DURING EXAMS

1. Students sit as evenly spaced as possible throughout the classroom.
2. No one may leave the classroom after the test has started. Plan ahead—use the restroom before class, bring tissues, water, pens, pencils, etc.
3. Students who arrive late on the day of a quiz or exam may be disqualified from taking the quiz or exam. If you arrive late, please take the first available desk closest to the door. If you must leave class early, please notify the instructor before class begins and sit in a desk close to the door to minimize distractions.
4. Baseball caps may not be worn during exams or quizzes.

HAND-HELD AND WIRELESS TECHNOLOGY POLICY

Unless otherwise specified by the instructor on the syllabus, the following statements govern the appropriate use of hand-held and wireless technologies in courses in the College of Arts and Sciences.

1. Students may not use cell phones, pagers, PDAs, or similar communication devices during scheduled course meetings (including class time, laboratories, review sessions, individual instruction, or similar activities) in the College. Such devices must be silenced or turned off and should not be taken out during course meetings.

Communication by electronic devices, including but not limited to instant messaging, text messaging, web surfing, and telephoning during class, is strictly prohibited unless expressly designated as part of the learning activities. Electronic audio or video recording of the classroom environment is prohibited unless permission is given by the instructor prior to recording.

2. Laptops (or any wireless computers or similar electronic devices) may be used for note-taking or specified course activities with the instructor's permission. Students using these devices for note-taking must turn off the wireless function and close all applications/windows other than the appropriate document or application unless the instructor specifically permits otherwise. Students must avoid non-course-related activities such as checking email or social networking sites, web-surfing, or playing games because these diminish their—and their classmates'—engagement with instructional activities.

3. Unauthorized use of electronic communication or wireless devices during quizzes, examinations, or other graded activities may warrant disciplinary action under the terms of the Code of Student Conduct. In certain circumstances (exams, laboratories, presentations, etc.), students may be temporarily required to deposit cell phones, laptops, or other electronic devices with the instructor or lab supervisor for the duration of the specific class or activity.

4. A course instructor, administrator, or facility manager may prohibit activities that violate laws and/or University policies, such as those related to intellectual property rights or copyright, eavesdropping, or sexual harassment. (Examples of such activities might include using a camera phone to videotape performances or taking inappropriate photos without the subject's knowledge and permission.)

5. Students who require access to hand-held or wireless technology as assistive measures for documented disabilities may use them according to stipulations in the student's Professor Notification Form.

. The instructor will decide if such access is appropriate; students may appeal these decisions to the Dean or the Dean's designated representative.

6. Where personal emergency, family care responsibilities or employment situations *require* access to electronic communication devices, arrangements must be made *in advance* with the instructor

7. Because hand-held communication devices are an integral part of the University's emergency notification system, the instructor's or a designated student's hand-held device should be activated during scheduled course times. In an emergency situation or if a security alert sounds or is sent by the Alertus system, the instructor or his/her designee will consult their devices to determine if an emergency exists and may then give students permission to consult their own devices. Once the alert is over, students' devices should be immediately silenced and put away.

8. Other exceptions to this policy may be granted at the discretion of the instructor.

Sanctions for violation of this policy:

Sanctions for violation of this policy will be determined by the instructor and may include dismissal from the class, attendance penalties or loss of class participation points, zero grades on quizzes or examinations, failure in the class, or other penalties that the instructor determines to be appropriate. These sanctions should be explicitly stated on the instructor's syllabus.

SOCL 304-001: Sanctions for violation of this policy:

You **must turn off** your cell phone, iPod, and all other electronic devices **before** entering the classroom. Keep these devices **out of sight** in your book bag, purse, or pocket. If you violate this policy, you will be asked to leave the classroom immediately and will be counted absent for that class. **If you violate this cell phone policy during an exam, you must leave the classroom immediately and will receive a grade of zero on the exam.**

ATTENDANCE POLICIES: Undergraduate Catalog (page 8)

http://www.winthrop.edu/uploadedFiles/recandreg/Catalogs/09-10/2009_10catalog.pdf

“Students are expected to attend classes and should understand that they are responsible for the academic consequences of absence. The student is responsible for all requirements of the course regardless of absences. Instructors are obligated to provide makeup opportunities only for students who are absent **with adequate cause, such as incapacitating illness, death of an immediate family member, or authorized representation of the university**. The instructor will be responsible for judging the adequacy of cause for absence. The student is responsible for providing documentation certifying the legitimacy of the absence to his or her instructor in advance of such absences. In health related or family emergency cases where advance notice is not possible, documentation should be provided to the instructor no later than the date the student returns to class. If the instructor denies the adequacy of cause, then the student can appeal the denial to the Vice President for Academic Affairs, who will judge the adequacy of cause, and if found to be adequate, will require the instructor to provide a make-up opportunity. The instructor may establish the attendance requirements for the course.”

SOCL 304: ATTENDANCE POLICY: In order to do well in this course, you must attend classes and take thorough lecture notes. Your final grade (i.e., percent of total possible points) will be reduced by 5 points for each day missed beyond **four absences**. I encourage you to attend every class! For example, if your percent of total possible points is 83% and you missed 6 days during the semester, your final percent will be reduced by 10 points (5 points for each absence beyond 4). Instead of receiving a “B” for an 83% average, you will earn a “C” for a 73% average. All absences count toward the maximum of four, except those identified in the **ATTENDANCE POLICIES: Undergraduate Catalog (page 8)**.

MAKE-UP EXAMS:

A student **may be allowed** to make up a missed exam, but only due to exceptional circumstances. If a student has a certified and serious reason for missing an exam, the student **MUST** notify me of the reason **within 48 hours** of missing the exam to discuss a make-up exam. The student must take the exam within one week of the missed exam. The make-up exam will be different from the original; for example, it may consist entirely of essay or short-answer questions. If a student fails to contact me within 48 hours of missing an exam, he/she is not eligible for a make-up exam. The student earns a zero for that exam. No make-up for quizzes or class participation.

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY: Infractions of academic discipline are dealt with in accordance with the student Academic Misconduct Policy in the *Student Handbook*. Academic misconduct includes, but is not limited to, providing or receiving assistance in a manner not authorized by the instructor in the creation of work to be submitted for academic evaluation including papers, projects, and examinations; presenting as one’s own, the ideas or words of another for academic evaluation without proper acknowledgment; doing unauthorized academic work for which another person will receive credit or be evaluated; and presenting the same or substantially the same papers or projects in two or more courses without the explicit permission of the professors involved. In addition, academic misconduct involves attempting to influence one’s academic evaluation by means other than academic achievement or merit.

Student code of conduct statement: As noted in the Student Conduct Code: “Responsibility for good conduct rests with students as adult individuals.” The policy on student academic misconduct is outlined in the “Student Conduct Code Academic Misconduct Policy” online at

<http://www2.winthrop.edu/studentaffairs/handbook/StudentHandbook.pdf>

***** STUDENTS WHO ENGAGE IN ANY INSTANCE OF ACADEMIC MISCONDUCT WILL EARN A FAILING GRADE FOR THIS COURSE. I WILL ALSO REPORT THE INCIDENT TO THE DEAN OF STUDENTS AND THE DEAN OF THE COLLEGE OF ARTS & SCIENCES*****

CORRESPONDENCE WITH THE INSTRUCTOR: When you send me an email, please include the course (SOCL/GRNT 304) in the subject line. Voicemail messages should contain your name, telephone number (speak slowly and repeat phone #). I will not discuss students’ grades through email. If you have questions, concerns, or just want to discuss a topic sociologically, please meet with me during office hours or make an appointment. I look forward to talking with each of you during the semester.

STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES: Winthrop University is dedicated to providing access to education. If you have a disability and require specific accommodations to complete this course, contact the Office of Disability Services (ODS) at 323-3290. Once you have your official notice of accommodations from the Office of Disability Services, **please inform me as early in the semester as possible. ODS website: <http://www.winthrop.edu/disabilities/>**

WINTHROP'S ACADEMIC SUCCESS CENTER is a free resource for all undergraduate students seeking to perform their best academically. The ASC helps students achieve academic excellence by offering a variety of personalized and structured resources such as tutoring, academic skill development (test taking strategies, time management counseling, and study techniques), group,

STUDENT LEARNING ACTIVITIES: 450 total points can be earned

1. Preparation and Participation

- Complete the assigned readings by the date listed on the syllabus.
- Be prepared to respond when I call on you in class. Do not worry about knowing the "correct answer"; say something that shows me you completed the readings. Thoughtful questions are fine.
- Attendance: you will be amazed at what you miss when you do not attend class.
- Class discussion=contributions, critical thinking, respect for others at all times

2. Writing Assignments (100 points): You will have writing assignments worth 20 points each. These assignments provide you with the opportunity to express your personal insights and reactions to the readings, discussion topics, and videos, guest speakers and field trips, as well as demonstrate your knowledge of the course material. You will also be able to practice your critical thinking and writing skills. Assignments handed in late receive no points. The assignments must be 1 ^{1/2} to 2 typed pages, doubled-spaced, using Times Roman, size 12 font. Place your name on assignment along with topic. Cover sheet does not count in required number of pages. Reflections on speakers and fieldtrips, DVDs will be due the class immediately following speaker, DVD or field trip.

Handouts will be provided for the following: Due dates as follows:

AUG 31 **Death and Grief Information Essay** : Educators in the field of death studies stress the importance to the learner of identifying his/her thoughts, feelings, and attitudes about death. This process helps students understand death as a part of life. You will write **essay responses** to a set of questions (**inventories** in text provided in handout) exploring your beliefs, experiences and feelings about death and dying.

OCT 26 **Funeral Home Comparison**

NOV 2 **Cultural interviews**

NOV 9 **Cemetery Assignment**

NOV 23 **Legacy Letter**

3. Reflective Essays (50 points) due the next class following tours/ DVD's and speakers

4. Exams (300 points): You will take three exams, including the final exam, consisting of multiple choice, true/false, and essay questions (100 points each exam). **Essay questions** are graded on your knowledge of the subject, use of examples, and writing ability. Please write legibly; I cannot grade it, if I cannot read it.

YOU MUST TAKE ALL TESTS & COMPLETE ALL ASSIGNMENTS IN ORDER TO PASS THIS COURSE.

GRADES: Your final grade is calculated by dividing the **points you earned** during the semester by the **total of 450 possible points**.

A	94% or better	C+	77 - 79%
A-	90 - 93%	C	70 - 76%
B+	87 - 89%	D+	67 - 69%
B	80 - 86%	D	60 - 66%
		F	less than 60%

I strongly recommend that you keep track of your grades throughout the semester. To calculate your grade at any time during the semester, add all of your scores and divide by the total possible points at that particular time.

THE MEANING OF LETTER GRADES:

A ***grade of A*** indicates work of unusual excellence as well as originality and style. Written work is insightful and illustrates a comprehension of (e.g., use of examples) and control over the requirements for the assignment. The best information is used and used effectively. The information is communicated clearly, concisely, and directly. Writing contains very few or no errors in grammar, punctuation, and spelling.

A ***grade of B*** means excellent work, above average. The information is detailed, persuasive, and clearly organized. The paper meets and, at times, exceeds the basic requirements of the assignment. The message is communicated with generally effective clarity, directness, conciseness, and examples. There are infrequent and minor errors in grammar, punctuation, and spelling.

C level work is satisfactory and meets the basic requirements of the assignment. The information is reasonably clear, concise, and direct, however there are problems with the grammar, punctuation, and spelling. There is little or no use of examples.

D work inadequately fulfills the requirements of the assignment. It is often difficult to determine whether a student understood the purpose of the assignment. For example, the information may be inappropriate, out of order, or irrelevant. Important evidence may be missing. The reasoning is flawed or inadequately supported. The written work may have numerous errors in grammar, punctuation, and spelling.

A ***grade of F*** indicates unsatisfactory work and a failure to understand the assignment. The thesis is unclear and evidence is missing. The organization is haphazard and there are numerous and consistent errors in grammar, punctuation, and spelling. It may also be seriously short of the appropriate length of the assignment.

The following dates and topics are subject to change. Please read emails (make sure you are on listserv and also check Black Board) for changes and these will also be discussed in class accordingly.

DATE TOPIC

AUG 24	First class introduction Chapter 1: As We Think About Death (exploring cultural history And self-exploration exercises of attitudes, beliefs and feelings Inventories 1 Your Knowledge Base answered and discussed in class Inventories 2- My Attitudes and Beliefs, 3- My Experiences with Death and 4- My feelings These are due on AUG 31 for discussion. Each inventory answered separately, completely and printed.
AUG 26	Chapter 1 Theoretical Perspectives, Anxiety, Denial and Acceptance- Early Psychoanalytic Theory, Existential Challenge, Edge Theory
AUG 31	Inventories due Chapter 1 continued
SEPT 2	Chapter 2: What is Death? Ways we interpret death Hand out Cultural Interview assignment
SEPT 7	No Class Labor Day
SEPT 9	Chapter 3: The Death System- Characteristics, Components and Functions of Death; causes of death yesterday, today and tomorrow
SEPT 14	Chapter 4: DYING- What is dying and when does it begin; trajectories of dying from beginning to end; communications; experience of dying, theoretical models of dying.
SEPT 16	FIRST EXAM Chapters 1-4
SEPT 21	DVD Changing the Face of Dying reflection due
SEPT 23	Chapter 5: Hospice and Palliative Care
SEPT 28	Chapter 6: End of life decisions; Right to die or not to die; organ donation
SEPT 30	HOSPICE AND COMMUNITY CARE tour mandatory. Reflection due
OCT 5	Chapter 7: Suicide- Human side; cultural meanings; Sociological Theory and individual meanings; facts and myths and prevention; emerging issues and challenges
OCT 7	Chapter 8: Violent Death: Murder, Terrorism, Genocide, Disaster, and Accident
OCT 9	MID-TERM grades
OCT 12	Chapter 9: Euthanasia, Assisted Death, Abortion and the Right to Die: changes; dilemmas; Terri Schiavo; Dr. Kevorkian; Brittany Maynard
OCT 14	CORNER Give out cemetery assignment & funeral home comparison
OCT 19-20	FALL BREAK
OCT 21	Second exam chapters 5-9

OCT 23	Class withdrawal deadline
OCT 26	Chapter 10: Death in the World of Childhood: concepts and fears; how do children cope with bereavement? The Dying Child; Guidelines for Sharing the Child's Death Concerns Funeral Home Comparison Due
OCT 28	Chapter 11: Bereavement, Grief and Mourning: Responding to Loss; Cultural variations; Kinds of Grief; Theories of Grief; How we grieve
NOV 2	Chapter 11 continued Cultural Interviews Due
NOV 4	<u>Chapter 12: The funeral Process</u>
NOV 9	FUNERAL DVD and reflection Cemetery Assignment Due
NOV 11	Chapter 13: Do We Survive Death: Instructions on Legacy Letter
NOV 16	Facing Death DVD and reflection due
NOV 18	Chapter 15 Good Life, Good Death
NOV 23	Legacy Letter due
NOV 25-29	Thanksgiving Break
NOV 30	Speaker: Death of a Child (indefinite)
DEC 2	Chapter 14 How Can We Help
DEC 7	Last Class: summary of class and preparation for exam.
DEC 14	FINAL 6:30 pm covers chapters 10 – 15