

Seminar in Psychology: Death and Dying (PSYC 5380.560)

Summer 2023

Wednesdays, 2:00p.m. to 4:00p.m., online

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COURSE OVERVIEW

This course covers concepts concerning death and dying, primarily from a psychological perspective; current research on death and dying; development of insights and understanding to prepare the student to interact effectively with people who are terminally ill and their family members.

Note: This course will cover topics – and course materials (e.g., texts, slides, videos) may contain information and images – that some may find offensive or controversial. This is not a required course; therefore, students who may find these materials are objectionable are encouraged to consider alternatives.

TEXTBOOK AND MATERIALS

There is no textbook for the course. Readings and videos will be posted on Canvas or external links provided, and material from the readings and videos will be on the exams.

A student at UT Tyler is not under any obligation to purchase a textbook from a university-affiliated bookstore. The same textbook may also be available from an independent retailer, including an online retailer.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS:

Grading:

Task	Points	Final Grade
Quizzes (15) 10 points ea.	150	A = 360-400
Project 1	100	B = 320-359
Project 2	100	C = 280-319
Five Wishes Document	50	D = 240-279
		F = 239 and below

COURSE GUIDELINES

Academic Misconduct: Academic misconduct (e.g., cheating, plagiarism) will not be tolerated. All work on course tasks is to be completed individually. A first violation will result in a zero for the assignment and a second violation will result in a zero for the class.

Academic Accommodations: If there is anything I can do to make the course more accessible, please let me know.

Project. Students will complete two projects of their choosing. Choose from among the following options:

- Read a book related to death and dying. Examples of such books include: *The Denial of Death* (Becker), *Man's Search for Meaning* (Frankl), or *The Ghost Map* (Johnson). You can choose a different book with instructor approval. You will write a reaction paper to the book.
- Write an obituary, either for yourself or another person. You can write it assuming that your life and death take a particular course but be sure that you explain why you made those choices. For example, you could write an obituary for yourself assuming that you lived a long life, accomplished many things, and died peacefully. You would explain that you chose this because it represents your ideal scenario. Alternatively, you could choose a most-likely scenario or even worst-case scenario.
- Plan a funeral, either for yourself or another person. Be sure to consider cost and cultural factors. Again, be sure to explain why you made the choices you made.
- Using one of the many free online life expectancy calculators (examples below), calculate your life expectancy. Experiment with putting in your current information (such as if you exercise rarely) and then see what lifestyle changes (such as exercising often) would do to your life expectancy. Write up what your actual life expectancy came to and how various lifestyle changes (good or bad) would impact it.
 - <https://www.livingto100.com/>
 - <https://www.myabaris.com/tools/life-expectancy-calculator-how-long-will-i-live/>
- Write a research paper related to death and dying. Obtain instructor approval.
- Other idea. Obtain instructor approval.

Regardless of which option you choose, you will do a write-up for the project. This write-up should be at least 5 pages long (double-spaced, not including title page, references, etc.). Be sure to do the following in the write-up:

- Cover the content of the project (e.g., summarize the book, provide the obituary, give the funeral order of service and budget, etc.). As noted above, be sure to explain the choices you make.
- Relate the project to concepts from class. Be sure that you explicitly link the material to a minimum of 5 concepts from class.
- Provide your reaction to the project: your thoughts, feelings, and opinions as well how it may shape your personal or professional activities.

Five Wishes Document. Students will complete the Five Wishes document. Note that the Five Wishes document does not currently have legal standing in Texas.

Quizzes: Quizzes will primarily cover material from lectures, readings, and films. Quizzes will be offered the week that the chapter's material is covered and are untimed; students are expected to be available at those time to take the quizzes.

Week	Module	Format	Topics	Due
05/13 - 05/19	1	Async: Canvas	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Introduction to Death and Dying (Ch. 1) ● Listen to: "The Lonesome Death of Hattie Carroll" by Bob Dylan ● Read: "Foreword to <i>The Denial of Death</i>" (Becker, 1973) ● Read: "The Pornography of Death" (Gorer, 1955) 	
05/20 - 05/26	2	Async: Canvas	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Death Statistics (Ch. 2) ● Watch: <i>Frontline: Living Old</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Quiz 1 due 05/22 at 11:59 p.m.
05/27 - 06/02	3	Async: Canvas	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Mortality and Society (Ch. 3) ● Death Over the Lifespan (Ch. 4) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Quiz 2 due 5/29 at 11:59 p.m.
06/03 - 06/09	4	Sync: ZOOM @2PM 06/05	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Historical and Cultural Perspectives on Death (Ch. 5) ● Watch: <i>American Experience: Influenza 1918</i> ● Read: "A Generation in Japan Faces a Lonely Death" (Onishi, 2017) ● Dying in the American Health Care System (Ch. 6) ● Read: "What Good Is Thinking About Death" (Beck, 2018) ● Watch: <i>Frontline: Facing Death</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Quiz 3 & 4 due 06/05 at 11:59 p.m. ● Five Wishes document due 06/07 at 11:59 p.m.
06/10 - 06/16	5	Async: Canvas	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Living with Dying (Ch. 7) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Quiz 5 & 6 due 06/12 at 11:59 p.m.
06/17 - 06/23	6	Async: Canvas	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Death and Dying (Ch. 8) ● Watch: <i>Frontline: Being Mortal</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Quiz 7 due 06/19 at 11:59 p.m. ● Project 1 due 6/21 at 11:59 p.m.
06/24 - 06/30	7	Async: Canvas	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Suicide (Ch. 9) ● Watch: <i>Jonestown: Life and Death of People's Temple</i> ● Read: "Let's Die Together" (Samuels, 2018) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Quiz 8 due 06/26 at 11:59 p.m.
07/01 - 07/07	8	Async: Canvas	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Biomedical Ethics and Choosing Death (Ch. 10) ● Watch: <i>How to Die in Oregon</i> <p>**NOTE – this is the topic of discussion of the zoom for the following week</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Quiz 9 due 07/03 at 11:59 p.m.
07/08 - 07/14	9	Sync: ZOOM @2PM 07/10	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● End-of-Life Preparation (Ch. 11) ● Last Rites (Ch. 12) ● Read: Orentlicher et al. (2016) ● Watch: <i>Frontline: The Undertaking</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Quiz 10 due 07/10 at 11:59 p.m.
07/15 - 07/21	10	Async: Canvas	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Peril (Ch. 13) ● Life After Death (Ch. 14) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Quiz 11 & 12 due 07/17 at 11:59 p.m. ● Project 2 due 07/19 at 11:59 p.m.
07/22 - 07/28	11	Async: Canvas	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Grief (Ch. 15) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Quiz 13 & 14 due 07/24 at 11:59 p.m.
07/29 - 08/05	12	Async: Canvas		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Quiz 15 due 07/31 at 11:59 p.m.

The instructor reserves the right to modify or change the syllabus as the curriculum and/or program require(s). This syllabus should not be interpreted as a contract. This syllabus and the course schedule are subject to change. Any changes to this syllabus will be communicated to you by the instructor.