

Sociology of Death and Dying

SYA 4930
Fall 2016
Online Course
Course Website: <http://campus.fsu.edu>

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Course Description:

Sociology of Death and Dying is the study of the structure of the human response to death, dying, and bereavement in their socio-cultural, interpersonal, and individual context. Cultural and medical factors shaping a “good death”, formation of death perceptions and grief over the life course, functions of the funeral, death-related ethical debates; and traumatic deaths are the topics to be discussed.

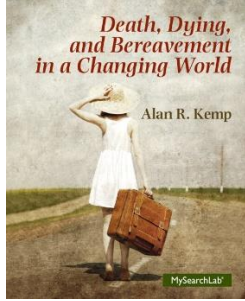
Course Objectives:

By the end of the course, students should be able to:

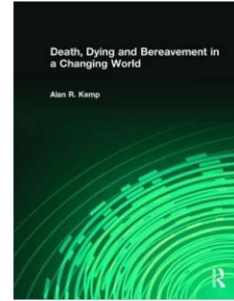
- (1) Describe changing demographics, attitudes, and practices surrounding death.
- (2) Recognize how individuals and groups deal with the social-psychological aspects of death, dying, and bereavement and how death, dying, and bereavement differs for persons at various ages of life.
- (3) Compare societies and groups within societies on how they deal with dying, death, and bereavement. This will include cultural and religious contexts, media influence, and childhood socialization.
- (4) Summarize how various institutions and professionals manage dying, death, and bereavement. Included will be the social functions of funerals and religious rituals surrounding death.
- (5) Explain current trends, attitudes, and dynamics regarding end-of-life issues such as suicide, grief, widowhood, and the social organization of death and dying in modern society.

Required Texts:

Students are responsible for all assigned readings. At the end of this syllabus is a class schedule that details all readings, major assignments, and important dates. All students are required to purchase/rent the following textbook:



Kemp, Alan R. 2014.
Death, Dying, and Bereavement in a Changing World.
ISBN-13: 978-0205790760 / ISBN-10:
0205790763



NOTE Both Pearson and Routledge are publishers of this book (see 2 images of cover), depending on the version (digital/print) and its year of print (pre-post 2015). Searching the ISBN number online will give you access to new and used print versions, along with digital, from a number of retailers. As long as the copyright reads 2013-2015 you should have the correct book.

Additional Reading(s): Additional/supplemental readings and video content for the course will be posted on Blackboard (BB) and will be available to you from the time you begin each module through the end of the semester. These are **REQUIRED** and are meant to be used in conjunction with the textbook. You will be evaluated on this material in quizzes, and they will also be particularly useful in enhancing your papers and assignments. You must be able to read pdf documents on your computer, view streaming audio and video, as well as basic word processing and spreadsheet documents in accessing the required content for this course.

It is assumed that by registering for an online course, you will acquire sufficient Internet access for yourself in such a way that your completion of course assignments will not be impeded. In the event that you find yourself having problems with Internet access, it is up to you to sort it out and complete your assignments on time. Obviously, college libraries are good places to access Internet, but keep in mind that there is free WIFI in many places on FSU's campus as well (all you need is your FSU ID to log on). I also encourage internet use at public libraries, in addition to establishments such as Panera Bread, Starbucks, Crispers, and many other local coffee shops.

CLASS FORMAT:

Although this class will not meet face-to-face there are several ways that you can connect with the instructor, mentors, and each other over the semester. First, we will have interaction via the discussion board. Within the first few days of class, we will post online biosketches in order to get to know one another. This discussion board will then be available to ask general questions that will remain open throughout the semester. There you may find answers to some of your questions, removing the necessity for you to wait for a response from your mentor or me. The instructor and mentors will also be available to you via email. If you send an email to either your mentor or me, know that you can expect an answer in about 24 hours during the week. If you email us during the weekend, it is best to assume that we will not respond until Sunday night or Monday morning. Remember that you will have narrated INTRO PowerPoints for each learning module to remind you of the contents, materials, and assessments of that module along with important due dates. Watching/listening to these short lectures is especially important for your success in this course.

*Please Note: Florida State University operates on Eastern Standard Time (EST), so this course will too. Therefore, all due dates and time windows will refer to EST. Also keep this time zone in mind when sending emails to the instructor and online mentor.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS & GRADING:

Online bio: (30 points): Students should create a short bio to post on Blackboard on the Course (not group) discussion board. This bio will count as your first-day attendance. **Students not completing this assignment will be dropped from the class.**

Email to online mentor (20 points): Students will receive an email from their online mentor establishing contact and introducing themselves. The subject line of the email will include the course name and number. Students need to send a **reply email** to their mentor within 48 hours of this email acknowledging receipt of the email.

Self-Inventory Assignment: (100 points) Students will complete a Death and Dying Self-Inventory during the first week of class on their own attitudes and experiences surrounding death prior to enrolling in the course. **Note, Part 1 is available in the first Learning Module (Week 1) and is due the second week of class. Part 1 is worth 20 of the 100 points.** The student will later be paired with another student in the class. Partners will not be assigned until the third week of class as an attempt to alleviate any issues with students dropping the class. Students will share their Self-Inventories with their partners, via Blackboard, and briefly discuss similarities and differences in their inventories. Finally, each student will write a 2-3 page reflection on their own and their partner's Self-Inventory, applying concepts and information learned throughout the class. The papers are not collaborative, they are written independently after correspondence with partners. This paper will be turned in under **Turnitin**, not posted on the discussion board, etc. and thus not visible to any other students.

Field Research Assignment: (250 points) Students will take a self-guided field trip to a local cemetery or 2 to analyze gravestones/markers. There will be two specific options for students on the topic of analysis but both topics will require the same amount of field time/analysis/research. Students will then write a 5 page report synthesizing their findings and relating these experiences to concepts from the course readings or other scholarly literature. This assignment should be submitted through **Turnitin**.

Quizzes: (200 points) A quiz will be given for 13 of the learning modules (with the holiday off) and will cover material from the Powerpoint slides/lectures, textbook chapter/s, additional readings and any additional course materials (including videos, etc.) indicated on the course calendar. **These quizzes will be available during the entire week of the Module we are covering, closing Friday at 11:59PM EST unless otherwise noted. They are open book/open note but you CANNOT work together. NOTE you will have 30 minutes to take each quiz and only 1 attempt. You are responsible for a working internet connection etc. when you take the quizzes and for making sure you complete the quiz within this time. I will drop your three lowest quiz grades (so 10 quizzes total at 20 points each=200 points total), and "drops" will include quizzes missed due to internet connection problems, etc. The quiz for the first module is non-graded (you get points just for taking it!). If you register late for the class and miss the first quiz, then that will count as one of your "drops" (you do not get an additional dropped quiz grade).**

Assignments (400 points): During the course of the semester, students will be required to submit **four writing-based** assignments. This means much of your grade in this course is based on **effective writing and critical thinking skills**. Many of these assignments will have **collaborative or discussion** components, where you will post to group discussion boards on what you have learned and/or be put into

working groups for part of the assignment. This means you are responsible for keeping up with numerous due dates for posts and these will be assignment specific so please watch Announcements carefully, watch and listen to your Powerpoint INTRO presentations for each module, and read assignment descriptions carefully well ahead of the due date! Note, there are 5 possible assignments throughout the semester, such that students can “opt out” of one. I highly suggest you plan to do all of the assignments, and save the one you “opt out” of for an unforeseeable conflict. I will also drop your lowest grade if you complete all 5. Assignments will vary from writing topical essays on course materials to collecting and reporting data from the internet or personal interviews. Students may choose to complete **any** four assignments. Although often collaborative in part, students must **write papers individually** and not together. **Assignments are usually due by Wednesday at 3PM EST via Turnitin.** I choose to have you submit them midweek before 3 so that the Blackboard help will be available in the case of any glitches or upload problems. Papers should be 2-3 pages, 12pt. font, double spaced, with APA format unless otherwise noted.

Assignments will be graded on a standard grading scale (0-100). **A satisfactory assignment goes beyond a summary of what you did/read, and critically engages the material.** An “A” paper should relate the assignment to concepts presented in course materials and possibly outside resources you cite. You will have grading rubrics for all assignments. **Again, please also consult the weekly INTRO Powerpoint for guidance and reminders.**

Extra Credit (30 points): Around week 12 of the course you will receive an official course evaluation from the Office of Distance Learning (ODL) to be completed online. It is important to me and FSU that you complete this anonymous evaluation. I will create a no-credit “Assignment” in Blackboard. Once you have completed and submitted your course evaluation online you will see a confirmation or “successful submission” screen. Take a screen shot or digital photo of this screen (showing me it has been submitted) and then upload the image to the extra credit assignment.

GRADING SCALE:

Grading will be according to a 1000 point scale, and plus/minus grading will be used for final grades. FSU does not allow a final grade of “A+.” The specific ranges are below.

A =930-1000	A- =900-920	B+ =870-890	B=830-860	B- =800-820	C+ = 770-790
C=730-760	C- =700-720	D+=670-690	D=630-660	D- =600-620	F=<590

University Attendance Policy:

Excused absences include documented illness, deaths in the family and other documented crises, call to active military duty or jury duty, religious holy days, and official University activities. These absences will be accommodated in a way that does not arbitrarily penalize students who have a valid excuse. Consideration will also be given to students whose dependent children experience serious illness. Although this is an online class, your assessments will occur in a daily or weekly basis. You will need to stay up to speed and pay attention to due dates like in any other class.

Late Work:

I don’t accept late work. This is driven by practicality rather than any principle on tardiness. The reason I do not accept late work is that it is difficult to stay organized with grading when assignments are received after the due date. Exceptions are granted at my discretion, but only related to **excused** absences as outlined above in the University Attendance Policy. Since this course does not rely on face-to-face contact with the instructor and does not require physical presence to turn in assignments, “illness”, “internet issues”, etc. do not constitute acceptable reasons for late work. Remember that **instead** of accepting late work, I drop lowest quiz grades and allow you to opt out of one assignment.

OTHER POLICIES:

Academic Honor Policy:

The Florida State University Academic Honor Policy outlines the University's expectations for the integrity of students' academic work, the procedures for resolving alleged violations of those expectations, and the rights and responsibilities of students and faculty members throughout the process. Students are responsible for reading the Academic Honor Policy and for living up to their pledge to "...be honest and truthful and...[to] strive for personal and institutional integrity at Florida State University." (Florida State University Academic Honor Policy, found at <http://fda.fsu.edu/Academics/Academic-Honor-Policy>)

Americans with Disabilities Act:

Students with disabilities needing academic accommodation should: (1) register with and provide documentation to the Student Disability Resource Center; and (2) bring a letter to the instructor indicating the need for accommodation and what type. Please note that instructors are not allowed to provide classroom accommodation to a student until appropriate verification from the Student Disability Resource Center has been provided. This syllabus and other class materials are available in alternative format upon request. For more information about services available to FSU students with disabilities, contact the: Student Disability Resource Center 874 Traditions Way 108 Student Services Building Florida State University Tallahassee, FL 32306-4167 (850) 644-9566 (voice) (850) 644-8504 (TDD) sdrc@admin.fsu.edu <http://www.disabilitycenter.fsu.edu>

Free Tutoring from FSU: On-campus tutoring and writing assistance is available for many courses at Florida State University. For more information, visit the Academic Center for Excellence (ACE) Tutoring Services' comprehensive list of on-campus tutoring options at <http://ace.fsu.edu/tutoring> or contact tutor@fsu.edu. High-quality tutoring is available by appointment and on a walk-in basis. These services are offered by tutors trained to encourage the highest level of individual academic success while upholding personal academic integrity.

Syllabus Change Policy: Except for changes that substantially affect implementation of the evaluation (grading) statement, this syllabus is a guide for the course and is subject to change with advance notice.



Tentative Class Schedule

The following dates and topics are tentative and subject to change, depending upon class progression through the material. Note, however, that the official end date of the class is set by the University and is not subject to change.

Week # (Dates)	Weekly Topic	Things to Read “Bb” = available on Blackboard	Things to Watch/Listen to	Things to Do/Turn In
Module 1 /Week 1 (Aug. 29- Sept. 2)	Thinking and Talking About Death	Kemp Ch. 1 & 2	Video: <i>Frontline: A Very Short History of Death</i> Video: <i>Let’s Talk about Death-Stephen Cave</i> Video: <i>Ask a Mortician - Confronting your Death</i>	Quiz 1: Knowledge of Death – full points just for completing it! Due Wed 9/9 11:59 PM EST Post an Online Bio to Course Discussion Board. This counts as your first day attendance. Students not completing the bio will be dropped from class. Due Tuesday 8/30 by 3PM EST Reply to Online Mentor email (Due within 48 hours of receipt stating you have read the syllabus and watched the intro video)
Module 2 /Week 2 (Sept. 5-9)	Death and Mortality Today	Kemp Ch. 13 Fontana & Keene (Bb) Davey Smith, Carroll, Rankin, and Rowan. (Bb)	Video: <i>Moment of Death Parts 1-3</i>	Self-Inventory (Part 1) Assignment Due 9/9 by 11:59 PM EST Quiz 2 Due Monday 9/12 by 11:50 PM EST
Module 3 /Week 3 (Sept. 12- 16)	Undertaking and Funeral Practices in History	Kemp Ch. 5 Roach Ch. 2 (Bb) Doughty Ch. 6 (Bb)	Video: <i>Ask a Mortician, Episode 1</i> Video: <i>Ask a Mortician, Viking Burials</i> Video: <i>Here, Living with Dead Bodies ...</i>	Assignment #1 (Life Expectancy and Mortality Related Statistics) Due 9/14 at 3PM EST ***Note, includes brief Group Discussion Board post as part of your grade*** Quiz 3
Module 4 /Week 4 (Sept. 19- 23)	The Death System & Modern Undertaking	Kemp Ch. 6 Doughty Ch. 2 (Bb) Jokinen Ch. 4 (Bb)	Video: <i>Ashes to Ashes</i> Video: <i>Ask a Mortician – Is the Funeral Industry a Pyramid Scheme</i> Video: <i>A Day In The Life Of A Funeral Director</i>	***Note, Group Discussion Board post for Assignment 2 is due 9/20 at 3PM, see Assignment 2 description for details*** Quiz 4

Module 5 /Week 5 (Sept. 26-30)	Dying	Kemp Ch. 8 Kauffman Ch. 2 (Bb) Kessler Ch. 1 (Bb)	Video: <i>Let's Talk about Death – Peter Saul</i> Video: <i>Elisabeth Kubler-Ross – Speaks to a Dying Patient</i>	Assignment #2 (Plan Your Own Funeral) Due 9/28 at 3PM EST Quiz 5
Module 6 /Week 6 (Oct. 3-7)	Surviving Death and the Afterlife	Kemp Ch. 14 Roach Ch. 8, <i>Stiff</i> (Bb) Roach Ch. 8, <i>Spook</i> (Bb)	Video: <i>Perspectives on Death</i> Video: <i>Near Death Experience</i>	Quiz 6
Module 7 /Week 7 (Oct 10-14)	Death and Culture/ Death in Pop culture	Kemp Ch. 4 Carroll, Ch. 18 (Bb)	Video: <i>Death, Dying, and Bereavement - African American</i> Video: <i>Why do we love zombies?</i>	Assignment #3 (Afterlife Position Paper) Due 10/12 at 3PM EST Quiz 7
Module 8 /Week 8 (Oct 17-21)	The Right to Die: Ethical Debates	Kemp Ch. 12 The 10-Year Experience of Oregon's Death with Dignity Act (Hedberg et al.) (Bb) Confronting Physician-Assisted Suicide (Wolf) (Bb)	Video: <i>The Brittany Maynard Fund</i> , Video: <i>Brittany Maynard, A New Video for my Friends</i>	Quiz 8
Module 9 /Week 9 (Oct 24-28)	Traumatic Deaths	Kemp Ch. 7 In Orlando Massacre...(Melber) (Bb) A Search for Death (Murray) (Bb)	Review Course Link: <i>Grief and Mental Health Resources</i> Video: <i>Speak Truthfully...: Mari Okazaki</i>	Assignment #4 (Right to Die Position Paper) Due 10/26 at 3PM EST Quiz 9
Module 10 /Week 10 (Oct 31-Nov. 4)	The "Good Death"	Criteria for a 'Good Death' (Shneidman) (Bb) "Ars Moriendi, in search of the 'good death' " (Morris) (Bb) Introduction and Courage (Ch. 8) (Gawande) (Bb)	Video: <i>What Really Matters at the End of Life: BJ Miller</i>	Quiz 10

Module 11 /Week 11 (Nov. 7-11)	Death and Childhood	Kemp Ch. 3 Death in Disney Films (Cox et al.) (Bb) Teaching your children about death (Morris) (Bb)	<i>Video: Why are infant mortality rates so high among African Americans</i> <i>Video: 10 Darkest Disney Deaths</i> <i>Video: Ask a Mortician – Talk to Your Kids about Death</i>	Self-Inventory (Part 2) Assignment Due 11/9 at 3PM EST Quiz 11
Module 12 /Week 12 (Nov. 14-18)	End-of-Life Issues and Decisions	Kastenbaum Ch. 6 (Bb) Pellegrino, 2000 (Bb) Cohen, 2005 (Bb) Wade, 2013 (Bb)	<i>Video: Talk to your Parents about Death</i> <i>Video: Before I Die</i> <i>Video: Frontline examines difficulty...</i>	Quiz 12
Module 13 /Week 13 (Nov. 21-25)	THANKSGIVING BREAK!			
Module 14 /Week 14 (Nov. 28-Dec. 2)	Bereavement, Grief, and Mourning	Kemp Ch. 10 Grief in the Age of Facebook (Stone) (Bb) Dealing with the Dead (Egan) (Bb) Disenfranchised Grief (Doka) (Bb)	<i>Video: Mom texts son to cope with grief</i> <i>Video: Complicated Grief Q&A</i>	Assignment #5 (End-of-Life Planning) Due 11/30 at 3PM EST Quiz 13
Module 15 /Week 15 (Dec. 5-9)	Hospice and Palliative Care	Kemp Ch. 9 (pg. 182-196 only) Hospitals Embrace Palliative Care (Kuehn) When Hospice is the Best Option (Prince-Paul)	<i>Video: Interview with Palliative Care: Provider</i>	Cemetery/Gravestone Field Research Project (in Assignments folder) Due 12/7 at 3PM EST