

**STATE UNIVERSITY OF NEW YORK
COLLEGE OF TECHNOLOGY
CANTON, NEW YORK**



MASTER SYLLABUS

SSCI 315 – DEATH, DYING, AND BEREAVEMENT

**Created by: Victoria Rosenholtz, Ph.D.
Updated by: Christina Lesyk, LMSW**

**SCHOOL OF BUSINESS AND LIBERAL ARTS
SOCIAL SCIENCES DEPARTMENT
Fall 2021**

- A. **TITLE:** Death, Dying, and Bereavement
- B. **COURSE NUMBER:** SSCI 315
- C. **CREDIT HOURS:** 3 lecture hours per week for 15 weeks
- D. **WRITING INTENSIVE COURSE:** No
- E. **GER CATEGORY:** None
- F. **SEMESTER(S) OFFERED:** Fall and Spring
- G. **COURSE DESCRIPTION:**
 This course is designed to present various ways in which social science views the human experience of death, dying, and bereavement. Drawing from Sociology and Psychology, this course introduces macro and micro level theories and associated concepts. Micro-level concepts and theories about the interaction patterns between dying patients and the family, medical staff and others involved are examined. Also discussed are: societal (or macro level) theories of social change, the ethical problem of euthanasia, and the needs of the dying, the biological, social, and psychological factors in the lengthening of life, and the consequences of death, dying, and bereavement are also discussed. Cross-cultural experiences with these phenomena are also examined.
- H. **PRE-REQUISITES/CO-REQUISITES:** Introduction to Psychology (PSYC 101) or Introduction to Sociology (SOC 101) and 30 credit hours, or permission of the instructor.
- I. **STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES (see key below):**

By the end of this course, the student will be able to:

Course Objective	Institutional SLO
A. identify and explain social changes in attitudes toward death, dying, and the dead.	1. Communication – Written [W]
B. explain the basic concepts and theories relevant to socio-cultural and biological conceptions of death and the processes of dying and bereavement across the life cycle.	1. Communication – Written [W]
C. explain and apply social science research methods.	5. Industry, Professional, Discipline Specific Knowledge and Skills
D. apply concepts and theories to a particular case.	2. Critical Thinking - Critical Analysis [CA]
E. explain and evaluate the ethical issues confronted in death and dying.	4. Social Responsibility – Ethical Reasoning [ER]
G. explain and compare cross-cultural customs using social science methods to interpret their meaning.	4. Social Responsibility - Intercultural Learning [IL]

KEY	<u>Institutional Student Learning Outcomes [ISLO 1 – 5]</u>
ISLO #	ISLO & Subsets
1	Communication Skills Oral [O], Written [W]
2	Critical Thinking <i>Critical Analysis [CA], Inquiry & Analysis [IA], Problem Solving [PS]</i>
3	Foundational Skills <i>Information Management [IM], Quantitative Lit./Reasoning [QTR]</i>
4	Social Responsibility <i>Ethical Reasoning [ER], Global Learning [GL], Intercultural Knowledge [IK], Teamwork [T]</i>
5	Industry, Professional, Discipline Specific Knowledge and Skills

J. **APPLIED LEARNING COMPONENT:** No

K. **TEXTS (Suggested):**

Corr, C.A., Corr, D.A., & Doka, K.J. (2019). *Death & dying: Life & living* (8th ed.). Cengage Learning.

L. **REFERENCES:**

Albom, M. (1997). *Tuesdays with Morrie: An old man, a young man, and life's greatest lesson*. Doubleday.

Callanan, M. & Kelley, P. (2012). *Final gifts: Understanding the special awareness, needs and communications of the dying*. Simon and Schuster.

Despelder, L., Strickland, A.L., Potts, J.M., & Mason, M. (2019). *The last dance: Encountering death and dying*. (11th ed.). McGraw-Hill Education.

Durkheim, E. (1997). *Suicide: A study in sociology*. Free Press.

Kubler-Ross, E. (1970). *On death and dying*. Macmillan Publishing.

M. **EQUIPMENT:** Technology Enhanced Classroom / Blackboard LMS

N. **GRADING METHOD:** A - F

O. **SUGGESTED MEASUREMENT CRITERIA/METHODS:**

- Exams
- Written Assignments
- Quizzes
- Projects/Research Papers
- Discussion Boards

P. **DETAILED COURSE OUTLINE:**

I. **Education About Death, Dying, and Bereavement**

A. Exploring the nature and role of education about death, dying, and bereavement (often called “death education”)

B. Examining concerns that lead people to discuss and study death-related subjects

- C. Looking at how education about death, dying, and bereavement is conducted
- D. Describing four dimensions of education about death, dying, and bereavement
- E. Identifying six main goals of education about death, dying, and bereavement
- F. Determining lessons we can learn about four central themes in life and living by studying death, dying, and bereavement

II. Changing Encounters with Death

- A. Defining and explaining death-related encounters as a component of death-related experiences
- B. Identifying principal features of death-related encounters in the United States early in the 21st century
- C. Indicating some ways in which these principal features have changed over time
- D. Describing six factors associated with these changes

III. Changing Attitudes toward Death

- A. Explaining the concept of an “attitude” and to identify death-related attitudes as a component of death-related experiences
- B. Describing the meaning of “death anxiety” and to explore interest in understanding that concept
- C. Examining terror management theory
- D. Identifying four basic categories of death-related concerns and responses found in individuals
- E. Sketching a theory of five dominant social patterns in Western attitudes toward death
- F. Illustrating the role that attitudes play in death-related experiences through examples from:
 - a. Contemporary Amish life in North America
 - b. The New England Puritans of the 17th century

IV. Death-Related Practices and the American Death System

- A. Explaining death-related practices as a component of death-related experiences
- B. Explaining the concept of a “death system” in every society; including its functions and components
- C. Describing selected examples of death-related practices in the United States:
 - a. Human-induced death
 - b. Accidents; homicide; terrorism; war, genocide, and ethnic cleansing; the Holocaust; and the nuclear era
- D. Exploring death-related language
- E. How the media depicts death

V. Cultural Patterns and Death

- A. Demonstrating how racial, cultural, & other factors interact with death-related experiences

- B. Fostering resistance toward ethnocentric tendencies in encounters with differing racial, cultural, &/or ethnic groups
- C. Suggesting some of the many lessons we all can learn as we seek culturally conscientious ways of understanding & helping each other

VI. Coping with Dying: How Individuals and Communities Can Help

- A. Defining *coping* & explain some of its key elements
- B. Describing *coping with dying*, recognizing that such coping typically involves more than one person
- C. Explaining the concepts of dying trajectories and awareness contexts
- D. Exploring two types of models—one based on stages, the other on tasks—that have been proposed to explain what is involved in coping with dying
- E. Examining an account of five phases of living with a life-threatening illness
- F. Exploring formal programs of care that seek to help individuals who are coping with dying
- G. Emphasizing the importance of recognizing and responding to the needs of persons who are coping with dying and growing awareness of the need for better end-of-life care
- H. Describing the hospice philosophy through ten principles or desirable elements in an institutional program of care for those who are coping with dying

VII. Coping with Loss and Grief: How Individuals and Communities Can Help

- A. Exploring the nature of the death-related experiences of loss and grief, the language and concepts employed to understand those experiences, and efforts involved in coping with them
- B. Defining the key concepts of loss and bereavement
- C. Clarifying the concept of grief itself and five critical variables that influence an individual's grief
- D. Defining the terms *mourning* and *disenfranchised grief*
- E. Explaining the phenomena of anticipatory grief and anticipatory mourning
- F. Describing classical models of normal or uncomplicated grief and mourning, such as those involving phases or stages
- G. Showing how new understandings of grief and mourning have replaced those classical theories
- H. Contrasting accounts of mourning as having fixed end points with opportunities for growth and transformation
- I. Clarifying what is involved in complicated grief
- J. Describing grief and mourning in families
- K. Discussing some implications for pet loss and deaths of companion animals
- L. Exploring four types of community programs

VIII. Working with Children

- A. Enhancing our discussion of children and their distinctive developmental tasks
- B. Describing typical encounters with death in the United States during childhood
- C. Exploring research on the development of death-related concepts and attitudes during childhood

- D. Identifying key issues for children who are coping with life-threatening illness and dying
- E. Surveying central issues for children who are coping with bereavement and grief
- F. Establishing principles for helping children cope with death, dying, and bereavement

IX. Working with Adolescents

- A. Enhancing our understanding of adolescence and its developmental tasks
- B. Describing typical encounters with death in the United States during adolescence
- C. Exploring factors influencing death-related attitudes during adolescence
- D. Identifying key issues for adolescents who are coping with life-threatening illness and dying

X. Working with Young and Middle-Aged Adults

- A. Enhancing our discussion of distinctive developmental tasks of young and middle-aged adults
- B. Describing typical encounters with death in the United States during young and middle adulthood
- C. Exploring death-related attitudes during the adult years
- D. Identifying key issues for young and middle-aged adults who are coping with life-threatening illness and dying
- E. Examining central issues for young and middle-aged adults who are coping with bereavement & grief

XI. Working with Older Adults

- A. Enhancing our discussion of distinctive developmental tasks of older adults
- B. Describing typical encounters with death among older adults in the United States
- C. Exploring death-related attitudes among older adults
- D. Identifying key issues for older adults who are coping with life-threatening illness and dying
- E. Surveying central issues for older adults who are coping with bereavement and grief
- F. Investigating issues related to suicide among older adults
- G. Exploring Alzheimer's Diseases and Related Disorders

XII. Suicide and Aided Death

- A. Understanding legal issues
- B. Considering issues of suicide
- B. Exploring issues of assisted suicide
- C. Examining euthanasia

XIII. The Meaning and Place of Death in Life

- A. Exploring issues related to the meaning of death
- B. Examining several religious and philosophical ideas about the afterlife and the meaning of death
- C. Considering the content and interpretation of near-death experiences

D. Reflecting on the place of death in human life

Q. **LABORATORY OUTLINE:** None