

Middlesex Community College

Fall 2016 - online

Death & Dying - SOC F225-30 – CRN#3918 – 3 credits

Text: *Death & Dying Life & Living*, Corr & Corr

Instructor: Dr. Sheila Dupuis, Psy.D. (860) 659-0579; **Blackboard e-mail.**

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Course overview:

This course is a study of death and dying. The field is known as *thanatology*. Topics of study include cultural attitudes toward death, self- confrontation and value identification concerning death and dying, dealing with the dying and the process of death, grief and bereavement, survivors, the impact of death and dying across the life span, suicide, end of life planning, hospice care, euthanasia.

Core competencies:

The following core academic competencies, as established by Middlesex Community College, are met by taking this course: communication skills; conceptual and critical thinking skills; quantitative reasoning (through the understanding and interpretation of research statistics); technological literacy; information literacy; understanding of diversity; and the recognition of values, ethics, and responsible citizenship.

Course objectives:

By the end of this course, the student will have a greater understanding of the following:

- a. one's attitudes, beliefs, and feelings about death;
- b. theoretical perspectives regarding the meaning of death;
- c. biomedical approaches to the definition of death;
- d. the death system from a micro and macro perspective;
- e. historic and current causes of death;
- f. theoretical perspectives regarding the process of dying;
- g. hospice and palliative care;
- h. end of life issues and decisions;
- i. the tragedy of suicide;
- j. death due to violence;
- k. euthanasia, assisted death, the right to die;
- l. death in the life of a child;
- m. bereavement, grief, and mourning;
- n. rituals of response to death;
- o. caregiving for those who are dying and those left behind.

Method of evaluation: Total points 500 = 100%

1. Movie review – 100 points
2. Projects (2) – 100 points (obituary 50; death experience 50)
3. Weekly Discussions – 300 points (20 points each)

Movie Review (due 12/1):

View the movie *Tuesdays with Morrie* (available at the MXCC Library). Write a 400 – 500 word review addressing the following questions (You need to do more than summarize the movie):

1. What is your initial reaction to this movie? (include thoughts and feelings)
2. What lessons did Mitch **and** Morrie learn from each other? (Relate what they learned to the material from the text)
3. What is said in the movie about the difficulty of facing death?
4. Describe the coping tasks you observed in the movie that individuals use to help the dying person (from chapter 7)?
5. How does Mitch change in the movie? Why do you think he changes?
6. **Due date: 12/1. Submit through assignment drop box.**

Projects:

#1 Obituary: Write your own obituary for use by a newspaper upon your death. For this assignment, you are to write a 300 – 400 word obituary that would be submitted to the newspaper upon your death (which should be in the future, not present day). What would you want an obituary about you and your life to state? How do you want to be remembered by others? Once you write the obituary, you will write a concluding paragraph or two that provides an introspective reflection on these questions: how did it feel to write this obituary (explain your answer)? What does the final product tell you about how you want to be remembered? Would you change anything about how you will live your life after completing this assignment? Does the obituary reflect who you are now or who you are aspiring to be or a little bit of both?

Due date: 9/22/16. Submit this paper in the assignment drop box.

#2 Recollection of Death Experiences: The purpose of this 3 - 4 page paper is to explore your personal experiences with death and how these experiences have shaped you and your attitudes toward death. This paper will cover one death or loss that you have experience on a personal level. For this event, you will provide the following:

- 1.) a detailed description of the event, (who died, how old you were at the time, how the person died, circumstances surrounding the death, etc.);
- 2.) your reflections of your **physical, cognitive, and emotional responses** to the event;
- 3.) your understanding of how the event impacted others around you, family members, friends, and the community if applicable;
- 4.) the funeral/memorial service planning process, if you were privy to it;
- 5.) the funeral/memorial service;
- 6.) the short and long term effect on you and your family and friends;
- 7.) and, finally, in a concluding paragraph, you will discuss how your attitudes and reaction to death have changed since your first experience to now. Do you believe your reactions to your death experiences reflect a “healthy” response? Why or why not? Do you feel a need to change your response pattern and, if so, what resources do you need to assist you with this?

Please note: While this paper should concentrate on death experiences, (the loss of a family member, friend, neighbor, pets,) you may describe other events of loss or separation such as

divorce. This paper should be between 3 - 4 pages. The contents of the paper will remain confidential. Though this paper will be written as a narrative, it **must** reflect college level writing, (e.g. correct grammar and spelling,) and should reflect what you have read in the course.

Due date: 10/20/16. Submit through assignment drop box.

Weekly discussions: Each week, you will be assigned a 4-5 part discussion question that requires your response. You are required to post a response to each discussion question **and** to **two** of your classmates or a classmate and your professor in the discussion section of blackboard. Your responses must reflect the reading in the text and other lecture notes or links as assigned. Furthermore, your responses must reflect the standard of college level writing, be free of grammatical and spelling errors, (obviously, no “instant messaging”/texting lingo or spelling,) and incorporate citation as appropriate. The discussion grading rubric can be accessed from the course home page.

Discussion questions are assigned on the Monday of each week (except the first week) and your initial response is due the following Thursday at 11:59p.m; your two additional responses are due by Sunday 11:59pm. The weekly discussion assignments are worth **20 points each. Each question must be answered in the week assigned. Once the week ends (On each Sunday), the discussion is over.**

Reading assignments and due dates

<u>Class:</u>	<u>Topic:</u>	<u>Assignments:</u>
Week 1 - 8/29	Overview; getting acquainted	See “weekly assignments” Discussion
Week 2 - 9/5	Education about Death, Dying and Bereavement Goals of death education	Chapter 1 Discussion
Week 3 - 9/12	Changing Encounters with Death Causes of death; death rates Changing Attitudes toward Death Patterns of attitudes	Chapter 2 Chapter 3 Discussion
Week 4 - 9/19	Death-Related Practices & The American Death System Human induced death; death and media <i>Project #1 Obituary due 9/22</i>	Chapter 4 Discussion
Week 5 - 9/26	Cultural Patterns & Death A look at death among various cultures	Chapter 5 Discussion

Week 6 - 10/3	Coping with Dying Skills and approaches, living with Life-threatening illnesses	Chapter 6 Discussion
Week 7 - 10/10	Coping with Dying: How Individuals Can Help Guidelines; communication, burnout	Chapter 7 Discussion
Week 8 - 10/17	Coping with Dying: How Communities Can Help Hospice and palliative care <i>Project #2 Death Experience Due 10/20</i>	Chapter 8 Discussion
Week 9 - 10/24	Coping with Loss and Grief Mourning; anticipatory grief; Complicated grief Coping with Loss & Grief: How Individuals Can Help Death of pets; needs of bereaved	Chapter 9 Chapter 10 Discussion
Week 10 - 10/31	Coping with Loss and Grief: Funeral Practices Rituals and Memorials	Chapter 11 Discussion
Week 11 - 11/7	Children Concepts in childhood; attitudes; Children with illness Adolescents Concepts in adolescence; attitudes Homicide and suicide	Chapter 12 Chapter 13 Discussion
Week 12 - 11/14	Young and Middle-aged adults Encounters with death; attitudes	Chapter 14 Discussion
Week 13 - 11/21	Older Adults Attitudes; illness; loss of partner Legal, Conceptual, and Moral Issues Advanced directives; organ donation	Chapter 15 Chapter 16 Discussion
Week 14 - 11/28	Suicide and Life-Threatening Behavior Patterns of suicide; intervention Assisted Suicide & Euthanasia Arguments and social policy <i>Movie Review Due 12/1</i>	Chapter 17 Chapter 18 Discussion

Week 15 - 12/5	The Meaning & Place of Death in Life Afterlife; near-death experiences	Chapter 19 Discussion
Week 16 – 12/12	Alzheimer's Disease Dementia, Alzheimer's & related disorders	Chapter 20 Discussion

IMPORTANT COLLEGE POLICIES!! PLEASE READ CAREFULLY!

For information about the college's policies and procedures regarding academic honesty, accessibility/disability services, attendance, audio-recording in the classroom, grade appeals, plagiarism, religious accommodations, weather and emergency closings, and more, please go to the following website: www.mxcc.edu/catalog/syllabus-policies/ or scan the QR code with your smart phone. Also, please become familiar with the policies regarding nondiscrimination, sexual misconduct, and general student conduct at the following website: www.mxcc.edu/nondiscrimination/.

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The following people have been designated to handle inquiries or complaints regarding non-discrimination policies and practices:

- Primary Title IX Coordinator

Dr. Adrienne Maslin
Dean of Students/Title IX and Section 504/ADA Coordinator
amaslin@mxcc.edu; 860-343-5759; Founders Hall Room 123|

- Secondary Title IX Coordinator

Ms. Mary Lou Phillips
Director of Human Resources, Middlesex Community College
mphilips@mxcc.edu; 860-343-5751; Founders Hall Room 115

- Secondary Title IX Coordinator

Ms. Queen Fordham
Coordinator of the Meriden Center Welcome Desk
qfordham@mxcc.edu; 203-608-3011