

Middlesex Community College

Spring 2019 - online

Death & Dying - SOC F225 – CRN#1393 – 3 credits

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

Instructor: Dr. Sheila Dupuis, Psy.D. (860) 659-0579; Use **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. PowerPoint Presentation - 100 points
2. Projects (2) - 100 points (obituary 50; death experience 50)
3. Weekly Discussions - 300 points (20 points each)

PowerPoint Presentation:

Choose any topic related to death and dying from the list below. (If you want to research and present a topic not on the list, you **MUST** get my approval. You can email me your topic.) Presentation must be a minimum of 12 slides long: including 1 title slide and at least 1 slide with your sources; a minimum of 10 slides **MUST** contain content. You will be sharing your presentations with the class.

Slides should not be text heavy. Include bullet points on the slide and explain those points in the speaker notes. The information you present in the speaker notes must be cited using APA format.

You need to use at **least 5 sources** (other than the textbook.) Sources must be peer-reviewed (the facts/information in the source are validated by other professionals in the field). See list of recommended places to find valid resources. Presentation must be in your own words. Use quotes from your sources sparingly to support your points. Research the topic, then present what you learned. **Due date: Saturday 4/20. Submit this paper in the assignment drop box and in the discussion forum.**

Presentation should follow this format:

Title slide: title and name (using APA format.)

Introduction: (1 – 2 slides)

State your topic and include some brief background information on your topic

Body of presentation (minimum of 7 slides. Use as many as you need to explain the topic)

Explain issue/topic in detail (again, in your **speaker notes** below the slide)

Include research that *supports* the topic. If you are presenting a topic that has two sides (i.e. euthanasia), then you should present both sides of the debate.

Include your opinion on the topic. Do you agree or disagree? Include evidence from the research to support your views.

Conclusion (1 or 2 slides)

A brief summary or overview of what you wrote. No new information should be included here.

References: (Use as many slides as you need to include all sources)

The following website can help you with **APA format**:

<https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/560/01/>

Research project topics:

1. Life expectancy (changes, factors that impact the changes, is it rising or decreasing, and if so, why?, etc.)
2. Funeral practices (from a cultural point of view; How does your culture plan funerals, or report on a different culture)
3. How to discuss death with young children, or teens (according to the experts based on how they view death & dying)
4. Hospice (origins, current role and services)
5. Suicide (you can discuss in general, or focus on teens, or children, or older adults, or the factors that contribute to suicide)
6. Assisted suicide and euthanasia

7. Organ donation
8. Alzheimer's
9. Care giver burn out
10. How loss impacts older adults
11. Careers in the field of death & dying
12. Near Death Experiences (are they valid? What does religion say about this topic?)

Sources for peer -reviewed articles:

MxCC Library: Go to www.mxcc.edu/library → Articles → All Ebsco databases. When you enter the database, Select “scholarly (peer-reviewed) journals” in your search to ensure that you select the correct type of article. Enter the search terms of interest. For instance, if your topic is acupuncture, you might search the terms “acupuncture” and “effectiveness”.

There is a handout available on Blackboard (“How to Read a Scholarly Article”) which, as the title suggests, can help you with reading scholarly journal articles.

Other sources:

Association for Death Education and Counseling (ADEC)

Death Studies

Omega, Journal of Death and Dying

American Psychological Association

Grief Digest Magazine

Bereavement Resource Forum

National Grief Support Services, Inc.

National Hospice and Palliative Care Organization (www.nhpcolorg)

Suicide and Life-Threatening Behavior (Journal)

JAMA (Journal American Medical Association)

Due date: Saturday 4/20. Submit this paper in the assignment drop box and in the discussion forum.

Projects:

#1 Obituary: Write your own obituary for use by a newspaper upon your death. For this assignment, you are to write a 400 – 500 word obituary that would be submitted to the newspaper upon your death (**in the far future, not present day**).

What would you want an obituary about **you** and your life to state?

What do you think you will have accomplished (career-wise, personally, etc.)

How do you want to be remembered by others? Who will be part of your life over the next 50 – 70 years?

It needs to be substantial and include more than dates and people left behind.

Once you write the obituary, you will **write a concluding paragraph or two** (meaning it needs to be much more than a few sentences) that provides an **introspective reflection** on these questions:

how did it feel to write this obituary (explain your answering detail)?

What does the final product tell you about how you want to be remembered?

What might you change 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: Saturday 2/16. 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 need to address ALL of 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; All **three** must be addressed.
- 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; (be specific about the 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 IF you have not experienced loss through a death. 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 (using “I” statements), it **must** reflect college level writing, (e.g. correct grammar and spelling,) and should reflect what you have read in the course.

Due date: Saturday 3/23. Submit through assignment drop box.

Weekly discussions: Each week, you will be assigned a discussion question that requires your response. You are required to post a response to the discussion question **and** to **two** other posts in the discussion. 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) but will be available the Saturday before the week starts. **Your initial response is due the following Thursday at 11:59p.m; your two additional responses are due by Saturday 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. **Posts made after the week ends will not be counted.** I strongly encourage you to keep up with the weekly discussions. These discussions are worth a lot of points and cannot be made up later in the semester. Please post replies in your own words but include information from the text that you learned in the readings. Your additional posts **MUST** include factual information and not just a comment, compliment or personal story. Include **FACTUAL** information in all posts so you can learn from one another.

Reading assignments and due dates

Class:	Topic:	Assignments:
Week 1 – 1/21	Overview; getting acquainted Explore online classroom	See “weekly assignments” Discussion
Week 2 – 1/28	Education about Death, Dying and Bereavement Goals of death education	Chapter 1 Discussion
Week 3 – 2/4	Changing Encounters with Death Causes of death; death rates Changing Attitudes toward Death Patterns of attitudes	Chapter 2 Chapter 3 Discussion
Week 4 – 2/11	Death-Related Practices & The American Death System Human induced death; death and media <i>Project #1 Obituary due 2/16</i>	Chapter 4 Discussion
Week 5 – 2/18	Cultural Patterns & Death A look at death among various cultures	Chapter 5 Discussion
Week 6 – 2/25	Coping with Dying Skills and approaches, living with Life-threatening illnesses	Chapter 6 Discussion
Week 7 – 3/4	Coping with Dying: How Individuals Can Help Guidelines; communication, burnout	Chapter 7 Discussion

Spring break 3/11 – 3/17

Week 8 – 3/18	Coping with Dying: How Communities Can Help Hospice and palliative care <i>Project #2 Death Experience Due 3/23</i>	Chapter 8 Discussion
Week 9 – 3/25	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 – 4/1	Coping with Loss and Grief: Funeral Practices Rituals and Memorials	Chapter 11 Discussion
Week 11 – 4/8	Children Concepts in childhood; attitudes; Children with illness Adolescents Concepts in adolescence; attitudes Homicide and suicide	Chapter 12 Chapter 13 Discussion
Week 12 – 4/15	Young and Middle-aged adults Encounters with death; attitudes <i>PowerPoint Presentation Due: 4/20</i>	Chapter 14 Discussion
Week 13 – 4/22	Older Adults Attitudes; illness; loss of partner Legal, Conceptual, and Moral Issues Advanced directives; organ donation	Chapter 15 Chapter 16 Discussion
Week 14 – 4/29	Suicide and Life-Threatening Behavior Patterns of suicide; intervention Assisted Suicide & Euthanasia Arguments and social policy	Chapter 17 Chapter 18 Discussion
Week 15 – 5/6	The Meaning & Place of Death in Life Afterlife; near-death experiences	Chapter 19 Discussion
Week 16 – 5/13	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/.

NON-DISCRIMINATION STATEMENT

Middlesex Community College does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, religious creed, age, sex, national origin, marital status, ancestry, present or past history of mental disorder, learning disability or physical disability, sexual orientation, gender identity and expression or genetic information in its programs and activities. In addition, the College does not discriminate in employment on the additional basis of veteran status or criminal record.

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

To read all the Academic and College Policies A – Z, click here:
<http://mxcc.edu/catalog/academic-policies>