Course Description

Students in this course will explore the nature of death, dying, and bereavement in the United States. Topics covered will include:

- what is a "good death"
- where death occurs
- how social policy affects the experience of dying
- ethical aspects of terminal care
- how physician and medical perspectives affect the experience of dying
- how death affects family members
- race, class, and gender differences in death, dying, and bereavement
- what may be done to improve end-of-life care

Required Readings:


Additional required weekly readings will be made available on the D2L site.
Objectives:

In this course we will be considering a number of perennial questions. To what extent are our beliefs about death largely social constructs? Is there a best way to die or will what is considered "appropriate" vary? To what extent are our lives driven by our need to deny the reality that each of us will one die?

While this course is a 410/510 level course, I recognize that for many of you this will be the first exposure to the sociology of dying and death. Accordingly, part of the purpose of this course is to provide you with opportunities to critically analyze your personal experiences and understanding of dying, death and bereavement. Additionally, this course is designed to provide you with the opportunity to develop your analytic and written skills.

Course format and expectations

For Soc 410 students: this is a fully online course.

For Soc 510 students and Hon 407 students: this is a hybrid course, with both online and in-class components.

This course is designed as a seminar course, so the style and expectations may be different from other courses that you have taken. While I chose not to have a textbook (since the average costs of the textbooks were over a hundred dollars), there will still be a significant amount of both reading and writing in this course. Journal articles will be assigned most weeks, in addition to the two required books.

This is a four credit class, which would be approximately 3.5 classroom hours per week for a 10 week term. Studying and homework is on top of these hours (the general expectation is usually 2-4 hours per credit per week). Additionally, online classes require more work than in-person classes since all communication is done through the written word. This means that you should be devoting approximately 13.5 hours per week to the readings, online discussions, journals, and papers. It could take you more (or less) time. Students are expected to complete all requirements for the course in order to receive a grade. Specific details for assignments can be found in each assignment description.

A 400-level course requires a high level of independent thinking, organization, and self-discipline. While these skills are essential for success in all upper division courses, they are even more critical in an online course. You are expected to interact with your community of students in this course - in other words, be an active participant not a passive learner. You will not do well in this course if you fall behind on your readings, or do not actively, thoughtfully, and respectfully participate in discussions and coursework.

I encourage you to think seriously about whether you are willing to commit the time and effort necessary to be successful in this course.
Course requirements and evaluation

Prior computer/word processing experience is highly recommended. If this is the first class that you have taken using D2L please take advantage of the trainings offered at PSU to familiarize yourself with the online system and requirements. Regular and reliable access to the internet is mandatory. Problems accessing the course due to computer or internet issues will not be taken into consideration when grading.

Students are expected to complete all requirements for the course in order to receive a passing grade. Grades are assigned based on points earned for each assignment. Details about expectations and evaluation of specific assignments will be included in the assignment descriptions.

Your grades will be based on the following:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Soc 410</th>
<th>Soc 510</th>
<th>Hon 407</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Journal</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>16.3%</td>
<td>17.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discussion Posts</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>24.4%</td>
<td>26.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discussion Replies</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>4.1%</td>
<td>4.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paper &quot;Prep&quot;</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>3.3%</td>
<td>3.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paper Draft and Peer Review</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>7.3%</td>
<td>8.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Final Paper</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>12.2%</td>
<td>13.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ABQs</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>16.3%</td>
<td>17.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seminar presentation 1</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>8.1%</td>
<td>8.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seminar presentation 2</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>8.1%</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Final grades will be assigned based on percent total:

- A    93-100
- A-   90-92.9
- B+   87-89.9
- B    83-86.9
- B-   80-82.9
- C+   77-79.9
- C    73-76.9
- C-   70-72.9
- D+   67-69.9
- D    63-66.9
- D-   60-62.9
- F    < 60

**HON 407 students:** you are expected to attend the in-class portion of this course. You are allowed to miss ONE of these sessions. For each class that you miss beyond that, your course grade will drop. (We will discuss how this works at the first meeting).

**SOC 510 students:** you are expected to attend the in-class portion of this course. You are allowed to miss ONE of these sessions. For each class that you miss beyond that, your course grade will drop. (We will discuss how this works at the first meeting). As graduate students, there will be additional expectations for your work in the annotated bibliography, as well as in the in-class portion of the class. The expectation is that each assignment and exercise gives you the opportunity to really develop yourself as an academic. I want you to take some risks in your analysis and application of theory. The expectations of your behavior and work will be held to a graduate level.
**Confidentiality**

In respecting each other’s experiences and creating a safe environment, students should maintain confidentiality at all times. Students' individual experiences regarding class may be discussed with friends and colleagues outside of class. However, students may not discuss other students' experiences, and must refrain from using any identifying information about their colleagues. Because of the nature of this topic, as the instructor I reserve the right to break confidentiality if I am concerned about a student’s mental or physical well-being. If you become concerned about another student, please contact me directly. (I need to reiterate here - I am not a counselor and this class is not designed to be used for personal counseling.)

**Participation**

This class is designed for students to do individual work as well as to learn from one another. Participation in the online discussions and activities is therefore mandatory. The expectation is that you check into D2L a **minimum** of 2 times a week. Additionally, participation in this course requires that your participation is thoughtful and respectful.

**Written work**

All written work should be professional and polished, prepared in a recognized citation format (either ASA or APA), including proper citations and references. Journal entries and discussion posts can be more informal, but I expect proper spelling and complete sentences. Documents should be prepared and submitted in a standard word processing format. Due dates will be strictly enforced. Please see each assignment for due dates. Annotated bibliographies and papers that are submitted late will be deducted one full letter grade. After that, each additional day a paper is late will result in a reduction of 5% off the total possible points.

**Accommodations**

Students in need of accommodations due to a disability should notify me as soon as possible to arrange appropriate support.

**Instructor availability**

Please note that I will not respond to each and every post but I will read them and post questions or redirect if necessary.

Both the TA and I are available to answer questions via email or by appointment. My email responses will most likely be between 2-4 pm on Tuesdays and Thursdays. I will NOT be checking your emails over the weekends. It is your responsibility to ensure that your important messages are received in a timely manner - do not wait until just before an assignment is due and expect me to respond to you immediately. Just as I will not give you "pop" quizzes, you cannot give me "pop" emails.
**Academic Integrity**

Students are expected to maintain the highest standards of academic integrity. Cheating or plagiarism will not be tolerated. Students who are caught breaking the student code of conduct will be reported to the Office of Student Affairs and receive a zero on any relevant assignments.

**Support Services**

Students who would like assistance writing, formatting, or proofreading their written work should visit the PSU Writing Center. This is important for all written work. This is a free resource, though it does get busy towards the end of the quarter so it is important to make appointments early. Students may schedule regular appointments for assistance throughout the quarter. If you are unable to come to campus, they are available for online consultation. [http://www.writingcenter.pdx.edu/index.php](http://www.writingcenter.pdx.edu/index.php)

For additional support services and study skills assistance students may refer to the Skills Enhancement and Tutoring Center (SETC), also a free resource for all PSU students. [http://www.pdx.edu/tutoring/](http://www.pdx.edu/tutoring/)

Students who need assistance locating academic resources should consult the PSU Millar Library.