**Summer 2020 Syllabus SOCY 3045-400 (Online)**

**Sociology of Death and Dying**

This is an online course that runs for a single ten-week semester, session D (see academic calendar found on the CU Home Page). It will be delivered online using the Canvas platform. The main course material, which is available within the learning management system, is comprised of readings, films, and online discussion posts. This course is ideal for students who can commit to checking in (online) daily Mondays through Fridays, can schedule about 90 minutes during the designated 16 hour periods in which the exams will be available online, and who also benefit from the flexibility of choosing the specific dates (on all but exam days) and times in which to work on the course. The exams will be available to students for 90 minutes and can be accessed any time during the 16 hour window on exam days (8:00 AM to 11:59 PM Mountain Daylight Savings Time). Exams are timed and the “clock begins” for individual students when they choose to log-on (within the designated windows of time).

***Students are expected to check both their individual CU email and Canvas a minimum of every two days, Monday through Friday.***

**Course Description & Outcomes**

This course addresses sociological aspects of thanatology (the study of death and dying). We will analyze the social meaning of death and its normative treatment in western civilization, with a focus on the contemporary United States.

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

* Describe and discuss specific theoretical perspectives of thanatology.
* Describe and discuss significant social influences in the meaning given death.
* Describe and discuss social influences on the experience of dying and of grieving.
* Apply sociological theory to analyses of contemporary controversial issues such as physician-assisted death.

**Instructor and Grader Information**

**Instructor Contact Information**

Telephone: 303-818-4839

On-campus Office Ketchum 169 (not using campus office during the summer)

Email: [liane.gallegos@colorado.edu](mailto:liane.gallegos@colorado.edu)

The preferred method of communication is email. Please, no text messages. The best time to reach her is during “virtual office hours” (Mondays noon – 2 PM and by appointment). She will make every attempt to respond to questions/messages within 48 hours Monday through Fridays. Saturdays and Sundays are “off-line” days for Dr. Li when she will not be available. She will still check email and phone messages a minimum of every two weekdays.

**Grader Contact Information**

Luke Novack. Contact via email: luke.novack@colorado.edu

**Instructor Biography**

Liane Pedersen-Gallegos earned a Ph.D. in Sociology at the University of Colorado at Boulder. Dr. Pedersen-Gallegos (also known as “Dr. Li” by many students) earned a M.A. in Sociology at the University of Colorado at Boulder and a B.A. in Sociology/Psychology (double major) at the Metropolitan State College of Denver.

Dr. Li’s research interests are the Sociology of Thanatology (the study of death and dying), the Sociology of Religion, and Risk and Resilience. Dr. Li has been teaching at the University of Colorado since 1985. As of May 2020 she has taught 147 courses in the discipline of Sociology, taught mostly at the University of Colorado at Boulder, including both in person and on-line courses: Sociology of Death and Dying (62 courses); Sociology of Religion (41 courses); Ethical and Social Issues in Health and Medicine (13 courses); Introduction to Sociology (7 courses); Risk and Resilience (9 courses); Sociology of Race and Minorities (4 courses); Deviance (3 courses); Social Problems (3 courses); The Contemporary Research University and Student-Citizens (a pilot project at the University of Colorado) (2 courses); Research Methods/Field Methods (2 courses); and Current Social Issues (1 course). This list does not include teaching-assistant positions held as a graduate student.

In addition, Dr. Li worked 12 years as a research associate at the University of Colorado at Boulder. The focus of her research was the evaluation of pedagogical innovations in the teaching of physical sciences at the undergraduate and graduate levels, with an emphasis on student career development. Dr. Li was the co-director of Ethnography & Evaluation Research for 7 years and was the director for 3 years.

At this time Dr. Li devotes full-time to teaching through the Sociology Department at the University of Colorado at Boulder.

**Support and Technical Information**

This course includes embedded and streaming audio and video resources. Most modern browsers should be able to display this content. However, in some circumstances you may need to install the Flash or Quicktime media player. Should you have any difficulty accessing any of your course contents please contact the on campus IT help line at 303-735-HELP (4357).

**Reading Assignments**

All of the class materials are available online. There will be a brief introduction and one or more minilecture for each week’s reading assignment designed to optimize learning. This introduction will establish the context for the particular readings, maintaining the common threads that tie the coursework into a meaningful whole. The total amount of reading assigned each week is comparable, although it may be made up of several shorter, individual reading assignments or fewer, more in-depth assignments.

Every student is expected to read all the assignments.  ***It is necessary to keep up with the readings and the assignments in order to succeed in the class.*** While there is flexibility in the schedule for students to read and prepare the assignments up to two weeks ahead of time, the posting sites for each week will be “open” for a 48 hour period, closing at 11:59 PM on the day assignments are due. A suggested weekly assignment routine, which includes ***firm*** due dates for weekly posts is as follows:

Mondays: An introductory lecture(s) and/or written introduction is provided for each week’s unit. Ideally, this is watched/read first, followed by the reading assignment.

The reading assignment for each week should be finished by midnight on the Monday of each week.

Tuesdays: ***The first of two weekly posts is due by Tuesday 11:59 PM***. Both the Tuesday and Thursday posts are to include a direct quote from each of the assigned readings (see full directions as well as information on specific readings to be quoted on the discussions page). No quotes are to be repeated, so you will need to make sure that you are not duplicating those chosen by others who have posted ahead of you. ***No credit will be given for repeated quotes***.

Wednesdays: Read all students’ Tuesday posts. Watch any assigned films for the week (films do not need to be quoted in the posts, but may be discussed on the Thursday posts and will be reflected in the tests).

Thursdays: ***The second of the two weekly posts is due by Thursday 11:59 PM.*** Follow the same format for the Thursday posts as for the Tuesday posts.

Fridays: Read all students’ Thursday posts. There is an exam scheduled for three of the Fridays (see the syllabus). On exam Fridays the tests will be available during the 16 hour period from 8 AM to 11:59 PM Mountain Daylight Savings Time. Students will each have 90 minutes for the exams between the hours of 8 AM and 11:59 PM (log in no later than 10:29 PM to ensure you have the full 90 minutes), which will begin when students log in to the test page (see full directions for tests in the test section of the syllabus). Fridays are a good time to begin the readings due on the following Monday, particularly on those Fridays on which a test is not scheduled.

**Discussion Posts**

The purpose of the post assignments is two-fold: to demonstrate that the reading assignments have been done and to provide a forum for students to apply critical thinking to the topic at hand. The criteria for each of the two weekly posts are the same. For all the posts assignments students are to select a direct quote—one not already posted by another student-- from the reading assignment (when there are more than one reading assignments, a direct quote must be included from each), along with student commentary on the quote. Posts will ideally be comprised of three to five sentences to include: 1) the quote itself, which may be part of a sentence or a whole sentence, but should be no longer than one sentence, and must include an author and page reference so the readers can easily find the quote; 2) the student’s reaction to the quote, indicating why it was chosen; and 3) student commentary that indicates that the student understands the quote in context, ***having read the whole article from which the quote was chosen.***

The posts should be brief, in consideration to the other students, all of whom are required to read every post. The ideal post will be between two and five sentences long, not to exceed 100 words each. The limits placed on the posts are intended to keep the workload manageable for all students, while ensuring everyone has a voice in the on-line discussions.

The tenor of the posts is to remain collegial. This is not to say that everyone must agree with what others post—in fact a range of ideas and opinions is ideal—it is to say that the tone of the interchange is to be considerate.

Grading Criteria for Discussion Posts

Posts are worth five points each. Credit is earned by adhering to the assignment guidelines: using an original quotation, placing the quote in context sufficient to demonstrate that one has read and understands the whole assignment, relevance of commentary that indicates that the other posts have been read; and the application of insight/critical thinking in all cases. The occasional misspelling and grammatical error will be overlooked, but points will be deducted if too little attention is given to the quality of one’s post. That is to say that correct grammar and spelling are social courtesies writers extend to their readers and reflect a level of self-respect the writer has for their own thinking and writing. Inattention to spelling and grammar (other than the occasional, minor error, as already noted) demonstrates a careless attitude toward one’s readers, and disregard for or disinterest in the project at hand and those engaged in it. For this reason, significant lapses in attention to the quality of one’s contributions will result in the loss of points.

**Late posts and make-up posts will not be accepted**, as the timeliness of the online discussion is key. The discussion pages will be open for a two-day period each, closing at 11:59 PM on the respective due dates. Similarly, the instructor will make every effort to provide timely grading for weekly discussion posts, available to students via the online gradebook.

In summary, the posts will constitute an online “discussion” among the class members. Every student is to post two responses to each week’s reading assignment (in the event of additional posts, only the first post for a given post assignment will be graded). The instructor will provide guidance to facilitate discussions and students’ comprehension of the material as appropriate. Students’ responses to the readings should be about a paragraph in length—and limited to 100 words. Grades for discussion contributions will be based on the following: indication that the student has read and understands all the readings for the week and contributions to the online discussion reflect insight (See *Bloom’s Taxonomy* on the Contents Page for more information regarding grading work, both on tests and discussion submissions).

**Exams**

There will be three exams over the ten week semester, as noted in the course calendar: Friday, June 19; Friday, July 17; and Friday, August 7. Each is worth 30 points. The exams will be a combination of multiple-choice, short-answer and essay questions. Answer questions as completely as possible, explaining your (short answer and essay) answers. Your explanation of your answers is the heart of your answer—points are awarded for complete answers, including context provided. While points made may be “bulleted” use complete sentences for clarity and context. Tests are open-note in format; comprehensive answers are expected. ***Exams are to be taken individually, without consultation with other students.*** Refer to the CU Honor Code for guidance:

**On my honor, as a University of Colorado at Boulder student, I have neither given nor received unauthorized assistance on this work.**

See www.colorado.edu/policies/honor.html and http://www.colorado.edu/academics/honorcode/.

**Course Calendar**

The course is designed for topics to be studied in sequential order. Readings can be started and/or finished up to two weeks ahead of time, but all posts must be submitted during the two days up to and including the due date and time, in the interest of keeping the discussions current. Dr. Li reserves the right to adjust the course calendar and will alert students if there are any adjustments.

**1 Week of May 31 (first day of class is Monday, June 1) Introduction**

Reading Assignment:

* Tolstoy, “*The Death of Ivan Ilych*”

Initial Discussion Post due Wednesday, **June 3** (Tues/Thurs post schedule starts 2nd week of class)

Second Discussion Post due Friday, **June 5**

Film Assignment

* TedTalk with Peter Saul

**2 Week of June 7 The Changing Meaning of Death**

Reading Assignment:

* Aries, “*Western Attitudes toward Death*”
* Gorer, “*The Pornography of Death*”

Initial Discussion Post due Tuesday **June 9**

Second Discussion Post due Thursday **June 11**

**3 Week of June 14 Socialization**

Reading Assignment:

* Charmaz, “*Death Conceptions and Concerns*”

Initial Discussion Post due Tuesday **June 16**

Second Discussion Post due Thursday **June 18**

**Test #1 Friday, June 19**

**4 Week of June 21 Dying in an Institution/Hospice**

Reading Assignment:

* Sudnow, “*Preparation of the Corpse and Pre-Corpse*”
* Carey in Kubler-Ross, “*Living Until Death: A Program of Service and Research for the Terminally Ill*”
* Kastenbaum, *Hospice and Palliative Care”*
* Hannon, *“A Spreading Appreciation for the Benefits of Hospice Care”*
* Song et al., *“Dying on the Streets: Homeless Persons’ Concerns and Desires about End-of-Life Care”*

Film Assignments:

* TedTalk with B J Miller
* Elizabeth Kubler-Ross visits with a dying patient
* Elizabeth Kubler-Ross talks about hospice
* *“Dying Wish”*

Initial Discussion Post due Tuesday **June 23**

Second Discussion Post due Thursday **June 25**

**5 Week of June 28 Funerals**

Reading Assignment:

* Whalen, “*How Different Religions Pay their Final Respects*”
* Mitford, “*Fashions in Funerals”*
* Basler, “*Green Graveyards—A Natural Way to Go*”

Film Assignment

* “Dying Green”

Initial Discussion Post due Tuesday **June 30**

Second Discussion Post due Thursday **July 2**

**6 Week of July 5 Grief and Bereavement**

Reading Assignment

* Rando, “*The Increased Prevalence of Complicated Mourning”*
* Charmaz, “*The Social Psychology of Grief and Mourning”*
* Doka, *“Disenfranchised Grief*”
* Corr, “*Enhancing the Concept of Disenfranchised Grief*”

Initial Discussion Post due Tuesday **July 7**

Second Discussion Post due Thursday **July 9**

Film Assignment

* Diamonds from Cremains (commercial site of interest)
* TedTalk re green funeral idea

**7 Week of July 12 Suicide**

Reading Assignment

* Durkheim, “*Suicide*”
* Liu, “*Suicide Rates in the World: 1950-2004*”
* Murray, “*A Search for Death: How the Internet is Used as a Suicide Cookbook*”
* University of Colorado Suicide Prevention Materials

Initial Discussion Post due Tuesday **July 14**

Second Discussion Post due Thursday **July 16**

Film Assignment

* TedTalk with Kevin Briggs

**Test #2 Friday, July 17**

**8**  **Week of July 19 Medical Ethics: Euthanasia and Physician-Assisted Suicide**

Reading Assignment

* + Shneidman, “*Criteria for a Good Death*”
  + Orr and Meilander, “*Ethics and Life’s Ending: An Exchange*”
  + Childress, “*Priorities in the Allocation of Health Care and Health Care Resources*”
  + Brock, “*How Much is More Life Worth*?”
  + Collection of Lamm articles

Film Assignments

* Interview with Brittany Maynard
* “*Suicide Tourist”*

Initial Discussion Post due Tuesday **July 21**

Second Discussion Post due Thursday **July 23**

**9 Week of July 26 Terror Management Theory**

Reading Assignment

* Becker, “*The Terror of Death*”

Film Assignment

* “*Flight from Death: The Quest for Immortality*”

Initial Discussion Post due Tuesday **July 28**

Second Discussion Post due Thursday **July 30**

**10 Week of August 2 Sociological Analyses of Near-Death Experiences**

Reading Assignment

* Betty, “*Are They Hallucinations or Are They Real? The Spirituality of Death-bed and Near-Death Visions*”
* Rinpoche, “*The Near-Death Experience: A Staircase to Heaven?”*
* Zaleski, “*Evaluating Near-Death Testimony”*

Film Assignments:

* TedTalk with professor who had a near-death experience (NDE)
* *“The Day I Died”*

Initial Discussion Post due Tuesday **August 4**

Second Discussion Post due Thursday **August 6**

**Final Exam Friday, August 7**

**Grading Criteria**

Letter grades are assigned only at the end of the semester as final grades for the course. Individual assignments and exams will receive points and the final letter grade will be based on points accumulated, as indicated below. The instructor will make every effort to grade assignments and exams within one week of the date submitted. The instructor reserves the right to curve the final grades in the event of lower-than-expected average points accumulated.

Discussion Postings 100 points 171 – 190 A

Test #1 30 points 152 – 170 B

Test #2 30 points 133 – 151 C

Final Exam 30 points 114 – 132 D

*190 Total Points Possible*

Discussion posting grades will be determined by the instructor and recorded only in the student’s own grade book, which are available only to that specific student. Likewise, exams will be administered and submitted online, and students’ individual feedback and grades will be available only to the specific student whose work is being evaluated.

***Important Note: the on-line grade book is not the official grade book! Use this only as an estimate. The on-line grade book uses a plus/minus grading system, but this is NOT used by Dr. Li for final grades.***

Online tests will be a combination of multiple choice, short answer and essay format questions. Study guides will be provided prior to the exams, and the test questions will be based on the study guides, reading and film assignments, and on-line lectures.

**Student Responsibilities**

Students are expected to participate in assigned online discussions. This is where the majority of student and instructor interaction will occur. The substance of student participation will be graded. ***It is necessary to keep up with reading and all other assignments to succeed in the class.*** The workload for students is comparable to that of students enrolled in the corresponding face-to-face class. In sum, this is made up of:

* weekly readings and occasionally films or film clips,
* participation in weekly online threaded discussions with the class, and
* three exams (two tests and one final exam)

As in face-to-face classes, students are responsible for keeping up with postings and other class announcements. ***Students are expected to check both their individual CU email and the Canvas course material a minimum of every two days, Monday through Thursday.***

**Class Policies**

**Late and Missing Assignments**

Assignments must be submitted sequentially (in the order assigned). Missing assignments will receive zero points.

**Plagiarism Policy**

Class policy regarding plagiarism is in keeping with the university policies. Assignments turned in via Desire2Learn are routinely submitted to an anti-plagiarism soft-ware program. Appropriate citation of all sources used is required on all assignments. Failure to accurately and adequately cite sources is considered plagiarism.

**University Policies**

*Disabilities:* If you qualify for accommodations because of a disability, please submit a letter from Disability Services tome in a timely manner so that your needs may be addressed. Disability Services determines accommodations based on documented disabilities.   
Contact: 303-492-8671, Willard 322, or [www.Colorado.EDU/disabilityservices](http://www.Colorado.EDU/disabilityservices).

*Honor Code:* All students of the University of Colorado at Boulder are responsible for knowing and adhering to the academic integrity policy of this institution. Violations of this policy may include cheating, plagiarism, academic dishonesty, fabrication, lying, bribery, and threatening behavior. I will report all incidents of academic misconduct to the Honor Code Council. Students who are found to be in violation of the academic integrity policy will be subject to both academic and non-academic sanctions (including but not limited to university probation, suspension, or expulsion). The honor code:

On my honor, as a

University of Colorado

at Boulder student,

I have neither

given nor received

unauthorized assistance

on this work.

See www.colorado.edu/policies/honor.html and http://www.colorado.edu/academics/honorcode/.

*Discrimination and sexual harassment*: The University of Colorado policy on Sexual Harassment and the University of Colorado policy on Amorous Relationships apply to all students, staff and faculty. Any student, staff member, or faculty member who believes s/he has been the subject of discrimination or harassment based upon race, color, national origin, sex, age, disability, religion, sexual orientation, or veteran status should contact the Office of Discrimination and Harassment at 303-492-2127 or the Office of Judicial Affairs at 303-492-5550. For information and campus resources see [www.colorado.edu/odh](http://www.colorado.edu/odh).