

Fall 2014 Syllabus SOCY 3042-001

Topics in Population and Health: Death and Dying

Class Meets Tuesdays and Thursdays 12:30 – 1:45 Hellems 141

Liane Pedersen-Gallegos, Ph.D., Instructor

Office Hours (in Ketchum 8D): Tuesdays 2:00 – 4:00 and by appointment.

Email: liane.gallegos@colorado.edu

Course Description

This course addresses sociological aspects of thanatology. 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 suicide.

Term Paper

One term paper is assigned. It is **due Thursday, November 20** at 11:59 via the D2L Dropbox. No paper copies please. A late penalty of one point per day late will be assessed up to 7 days, after which the assignment will not be accepted without approval by the instructor.

Length: Approximately 2,000 words (about 7 pages), including a bibliography (student may choose among various citation formats commonly used in academia).

Thesis: The paper is to be a sociological analysis of a specific topic relevant to the class (topic must be approved ahead of time by the instructor).

References: A minimum of **five** references is required: a minimum of **three** are to include assigned readings and a minimum of **two** are to be scholarly sources not already included in the assigned readings. All sources used must be referenced, including non-scholarly sources used.

Grading criteria include: Critical thinking/insight (70%), Sociological context (10%), References (10%), and Writing mechanics (10%).

Exams

There will be three exams over the course of the semester: two midterms and a final exam. See the calendar below for these dates. If you have a conflict with an exam date, you are expected to speak with the instructor within the first six weeks of class. Make-up exams are only available by pre-approval.

Student Engagement in the Class

The “student engagement grade” is based on more than speaking in class. This grade will reflect the attention paid to lecture and class discussion. Surfing the web, checking email, texting, conversing with classmates other than in-class discussion, etc. are considered incompatible with engagement in class (as well as rude behavior), and will effect this grade. Because it is necessary to be present in order to be engaged in the class, attendance will be taken and considered in the “student engagement” grade. Attendance will be documented by “one minute papers” students are to submit at the end of each class. These are to be about a paragraph in length and will be based on a specific question asked at the end of the class each day. As a courtesy, please let the instructor know ahead of time if it is necessary to leave class early. Leaving class early constitutes an absence for the day.

Communication with the Instructor

Students are expected to check both their individual CU email and the Desire2Learn course site a minimum of every two days, Monday through Friday.

You may contact Dr. Li via email at: liane.gallegos@colorado.edu or by phone at: (303) 818 4839 (phone Dr. Li in case of emergency only please). No text messages please. The best time to reach her is during office hours (Tuesdays 10:00 - noon). She will make every attempt to respond to questions/messages within 48 hours Monday through Thursdays. Fridays, Saturdays, Sundays and after 9 PM all other days are “off-line” times for Dr. Li when she will not be available.

Technical Support 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 (for example, there are known compatibility issues with Chrome). Should you have any difficulty accessing any of your course contents please contact the on-campus IT help line at 303-735-HELP (4357).

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, as outlined below. The instructor reserves the right to apply a curve to the final grades.

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|-------------------------|-------------------|-------------|-----------|---|
| Term Paper | 100 points | 56% | 162 - 180 | A |
| Midterm #1 | 20 points | 11% | 144 - 161 | B |
| Midterm #2 | 20 points | 11% | 126 – 143 | C |
| Final Exam | 20 points | 11% | 108 – 125 | D |
| Engagement in the Class | 20 points | 11% | | |
| <i>Total</i> | <i>180 points</i> | <i>100%</i> | | |

Course Calendar

Dr. Li reserves the right to adjust the course calendar and will alert students if any changes are made. Reading assignments are due on the first day of the class each week.

1 Week of August 24 Introduction

Reading Assignment:

- Tolstoy, "*The Death of Ivan Ilych*"

2 Week of August 31 The Changing Meaning of Death

Reading Assignment:

- Aries, "*Western Attitudes toward Death*"
- Gorer, "*The Pornography of Death*"

3 Week of September 7 Socialization

Reading Assignment:

- Charmaz, "*Death Conceptions and Concerns*"

4 Week of September 14 Dying in an Institution

Reading Assignment:

- Sudnow, "*Preparation of the Corpse and Pre-Corpse*"
- Kubler-Ross, "*Living Until Death: A Program of Service and Research for the Terminally Ill*"

5 Week of September 21 Hospice

Reading Assignment:

- Kastenbaum, "*Hospice and Palliative*"
- 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*"

6 Week of September 28 Funerals

Reading Assignment

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

Midterm #1 Thursday, October 2

7 Week of October 5 Funerals (cont'd) and 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”*

8 Week of October 12 Grief and Bereavement (cont’d)

9 Week of October 19 Suicide

Reading Assignment

- Kastenbaum, *“Suicide”*
- Census Data re Suicide Rates by Age in the US
- Liu, *“Suicide Rates in the World: 1950-2004”*

10 Week of October 26 Suicide Prevention

Reading Assignment

- Murray, *“A Search for Death: How the Internet is Used as a Suicide Cookbook”*
- Franke, *“When Students Kill Themselves, Colleges May Get the Blame”*
- CU Suicide Prevention Information

11 Week of November 2 The “Duty to Die” Debate

Reading Assignment

- Childress, *“Priorities in the Allocation of Health Care and Health Care Resources”*
- Brock, *“How Much is More Life Worth?”*
- Collection of Lamm articles

12 Week of November 9 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”*
- Annual Report Oregon’s Physician-Assisted Suicide

Midterm #2 Thursday, November 13

13 Week of November 16 Terror Management Theory

Reading Assignment

- Becker, *“The Terror of Death”*

Papers Due Thursday, November 20 11:59 via D2L Drop-Box (no paper copies please)

Week of November 23 Fall Break No Assignments

14 Week of November 30
Reading Assignment

Sociological Analyses of Near-Death Experiences

- 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*”

15 Week of December 7

Synthesis

No New Reading Assigned

Final Exam Thursday, December 18 4:30 – 7:00 PM

University Policies

Accommodations for Disabilities

If you qualify for accommodations because of a disability, please submit to your professor a letter from Disability Services in a timely manner (for exam accommodations provide your letter at least one week prior to the exam) so that your needs can be addressed. Disability Services determines accommodations based on documented disabilities. Contact Disability Services at 303-492-8671 or by e-mail at dsinfo@colorado.edu. If you have a temporary medical condition or injury, see Temporary Medical Conditions: Injuries, Surgeries, and Illnesses guidelines under Quick Links at Disability Services website and discuss your needs with your professor.

Religious Holidays

Campus policy regarding religious observances requires that faculty make every effort to deal reasonably and fairly with all students who, because of religious obligations, have conflicts with scheduled exams, assignments or required attendance. In this class, *{{insert your procedures here}}* See full details at http://www.colorado.edu/policies/fac_religh.html

Code of Conduct

Students and faculty each have responsibility for maintaining an appropriate learning environment. Those who fail to adhere to such behavioral standards may be subject to discipline. Professional courtesy and sensitivity are especially important with respect to individuals and topics dealing with differences of race, color, culture, religion, creed, politics, veteran's status, sexual orientation, gender, gender identity and gender expression, age, disability, and nationalities. Class rosters are provided to the instructor with the student's legal name. I will gladly honor your request to address you by an alternate name or gender pronoun. Please advise me of this preference early in the semester so that I may make appropriate changes to my records. See policies at <http://www.colorado.edu/policies/classbehavior.html> and at http://www.colorado.edu/studentaffairs/judicialaffairs/code.html#student_code

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, aid of academic dishonesty, fabrication, lying, bribery, and threatening behavior. All incidents of academic misconduct shall be reported to the Honor Code Council (honor@colorado.edu; 303-735-2273). Students who are found to be in violation of the academic integrity policy will be subject to both academic sanctions from the faculty member and non-academic sanctions (including but not limited to university probation, suspension, or expulsion). Other information on the Honor Code can be found at <http://www.colorado.edu/policies/honor.html> and at <http://honorcode.colorado.edu>

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