

# PSY 443.001: Psychology of Death and Dying (Fall 2013)

## *Course Syllabus*

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**Class Location:** TR 2:00-3:15 in Education South Rm. 135

**Instructor:** Dr. Devin Pierce

**Office Location:** Binion 221

**Office Hours:** By appointment

**Email:** Devin.Pierce@tamuc.edu

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### **Course Overview**

**Course Description:** This course is an interdisciplinary analysis of death, dying, & bereavement. It includes such topics as facing death; coping with dying; hospice care; bereavement, grief, & mourning; funeral practices; lifespan perspectives on death; legal issues; suicide; and assisted suicide & euthanasia.

**Textbook:** Corr, A.C., & Corr, D.M. (2012). *Death & dying, life & Living (7th ed)*. CA:Wadsworth.

### **Course Requirements**

**Exams.** There will be three exams and one cumulative final exam. You are responsible for all lecture and reading materials. Exams may be rescheduled, without penalty, only when arrangements have been made in advance of the testing date. I expect people to come to me within the first week of class if they have conflicts with the exam dates. Make-ups will only be given in the case of verifiable medical or legal excuses. Verifiable means that written documentation is provided (e.g., signed doctors' notes, court appearance tickets, newspaper obituaries). The final decision concerning make-up exams rests with the instructor. No cell phones are allowed on desks during exam day. In addition, calls may not be received - if you answer the phone your exam will be forfeited (unless arrangements are made with me ahead of time). **Total=60%**

**Quizzes.** You will be given a quiz upon the completion of each chapter. They will be open-book/open-notes; however, there will be a time-limit imposed. A

principle reason for these quizzes stems from the fact that research has demonstrated that testing yourself on a frequent basis is a highly effective learning strategy. **Total=15%**

**Project.** The remainder of your grade will be composed of a project for which you will prepare your own death packet. In completing your packet you will be creating things such as your personal last will and testament, an organ donation form, your newspaper obituary, designs for your epitaph, tombstone or urn, and your personal funeral arrangements. Specific details pertaining to what you will include in this project will be provided to you in class. **Total=20%**

**Participation.** I consider class participation to be one of the most important, yet underrated elements of a student's education. There are numerous elements that go into class participation: (1) Attending class meetings (according to University rules, students may be dropped from the class for excessive unexcused absences); (2) Arriving to class on time and not packing up early; (3) Contributions to class discussions and activities; and (4) Treating others with respect and politeness. ["All students enrolled at the University shall follow the tenets of common decency and acceptable behavior conducive to a positive learning environment." (See Student's Guide Handbook, Policies and Procedures, Conduct)]. **Total=5%**

Your grade will be determined as follows:

Exams	60%
Quizzes	15%
Project	20%
Participation	<u>5%</u>
	100%

Final grades are based on the total number of points earned during the term in accordance, generally, with the following levels of proficiency: A = 90-99; B = 80-89; C = 70-79; D = 60-69; F = below 60.

## **Course and University Procedures/Policies**

**Academic Honesty.** Texas A&M University - Commerce has explicit rules and regulations governing academic dishonesty and academic misconduct. These policies are stated in detail in the Students Guide Handbook. Each student is expected to read the documents at the address and abide by the contained policies. These university policies will be followed in this class. The minimum penalty for an act of academic dishonesty will be the assignment of a grade of 0 on the relevant quiz, exam, or project.

**Assignment of an Incomplete Grade.** A grade of Incomplete is reserved for only those special cases where a student has completed a significant portion of the semester's work and an unavoidable circumstance prevents him or her from completing the course. If you have any questions, please contact me.

**Electronic Devices.** Please note that the use of laptops, tablets (e.g., ipad), and cell phones are not permitted during class. Please make sure that your cell phone is turned off (not on vibrate) prior to the commencement of class. If there is an emergency situation that may require you to take a call during class, talk to me before class.

**Email.** Make sure that you adhere to the following procedures when contacting me via email. First, you may only contact me through my university email. Second, the subject header for all messages should only contain the following: PSY 443. Third, make sure that each message contains your full name.

**Accommodations for Students with Disabilities.** The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) is a federal anti-discrimination statute that provides comprehensive civil rights protection for persons with disabilities. Among other things, this legislation requires that all students with disabilities be guaranteed a learning environment that provides for reasonable accommodation of their disabilities. If you have a disability requiring an accommodation, please contact:

**Office of Student Disability Resources and Services  
Texas A&M University-Commerce  
Gee Library, Room 132  
Phone (903) 886-5150 or (903) 886-5835  
Fax (903) 468-8148  
StudentDisabilityServices@tamuc.edu**

## Tentative Course Schedule

Week	Date		<i>Topic</i>	Reading
1	T	(8/27)	Course Introduction	Syllabus
	R	(8/29)	Education about Death, Dying, and Bereavement	Ch.1
2	T	(9/3)	Changing Encounters with Death	Ch. 2
	R	(9/5)	Changing Attitudes toward Death	Ch. 3
3	T	(9/10)	Death-Related Practices & the American Death System	Ch. 4
	R	(9/12)	Death-Related Practices & the American Death System (cont.)	Ch. 4
4	T	(9/17)	Cultural Practices & Death	Ch. 5
	R	(9/19)	<b>Exam 1 (Ch. 1 - Ch. 5)</b>	None
5	T	(9/24)	Coping with Dying	Ch. 6
	R	(9/26)	Coping with Dying: How Individuals can Help	Ch. 7
6	T	(10/1)	Coping with Dying: How Communities can Help	Ch. 8
	R	(10/3)	Coping with Loss and Grief	Ch. 9
7	T	(10/8)	Coping with Loss and Grief (cont.)	Ch. 9
	R	(10/10)	Coping with Loss and Grief: How Individuals can Help	Ch. 10
8	T	(10/15)	Coping with Loss and Grief: Funeral Practices & Other Ways Communities can Help	Ch. 11
	R	(10/17)	<b>Exam 2 ( Ch. 6 -Ch. 11)</b>	None
9	T	(10/22)	Children	Ch. 12
	R	(10/24)	Children (cont.)	Ch. 12
10	T	(10/29)	Adolescents	Ch. 13
	R	(10/31)	Young & Middle-Aged Adults	Ch. 14
11	T	(11/5)	Older Adults	Ch. 15
	R	(11/7)	<b>Exam 3 (Ch. 12 - 15)</b>	None
12	T	(11/12)	Legal Issues	Ch. 16
	R	(11/14)	Legal Issues (cont.)	Ch. 16
13	T	(11/19)	Suicides & Life-Threatening Behavior	Ch. 17
	R	(11/21)	Assisted Suicide and Euthanasia	Ch. 18
14	T	(11/26)	The Meaning & Place of Death in Life	Ch. 19
	R	(11/28)	THANKSGIVING	None

15	T	(12/3)	The Meaning & Place of Death in Life (cont.)	Ch. 19
	R	(12/5)	Alzheimer's Disease	Ch. 20
16	T	(12/10)	<b>Final Exam (1:15 - 3:15pm)</b> <b>Project due</b>	None

*Please note that any changes to the schedule will be announced during lecture.*