Purpose of the Course:

This course will provide an overview of topics related to death, dying and bereavement. We will study the objective aspects of death and the personal responses to death, grieving and how this impacts our lives. We will study overall attitudes toward death, cultural aspects of death and bereavement, information about how people die, death at different age periods, death by suicide or trauma and death by Alzheimer’s Disease and AIDS. We will also cover living with life-threatening illnesses, current health care and public policy, and laws governing death and body disposition.

Textbook(s):

DeSpelder & Strickland: The Last Dance: Encountering Death and Dying  Required
Nuland, S.: How We Die: Reflections on Life’s Final Chapter Optional

Using Blackboard:

This course will use Blackboard. To access it, go to http://blackboard.sdsu.edu. You will use Blackboard to access the syllabus, the lecture outlines, study guides and any announcements I think might help you. This is the way I will communicate with you. **You should check Blackboard before every lecture to download and print notes.** The budget issues have made it necessary for you to print a copy of your own syllabus and lecture and group notes. We will provide the exams for you. You should check Gradebook every week also to make sure your points are accurately recorded and you know how you are doing in the course.

Your Grade: Your grade will be based on three exams, ten group discussion reports (eleven opportunities, drop one) and two brief papers. The points for each are listed below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Course Points</th>
<th>Points Each</th>
<th>Points Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>EXAMS</strong></td>
<td>3 Tests</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>In-class Assign</strong></td>
<td>11 exercises (drop one)</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Papers</strong></td>
<td>2 papers (2 pages each)</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>470</strong></td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Test and Grading Policies

Tests must be taken when scheduled. If you cannot take an exam due to a very serious reason AND you contact me about this prior to the exam, you may make it up. Grades are based on percentage of course points received, with 90% and above = A- to A; 80-89% = B-, B, or B+; 70-79% = C-, C or C+; 60-69% = D-, D or D+; and below 60 = F.

Group Discussions and Assignments

You will be assigned to a group. There will be eleven in-class assignments, worth 10 points apiece. They will be given every class period there is not an exam. As already mentioned, one will be dropped giving a total of 100 possible points. (So, if you have to miss a class, this is the in-class you will drop). The in-class assignments will be a group discussion about a topic or activity relevant to the age we are studying. There will be an individual report due from each member about the group discussion and your response to the material. Before each group assignment there will be a group form posted on Blackboard that you will download and bring. Also, please note that the information from these group discussions will probably be asked about on the tests.

HERE IS THE IMPORTANT INFORMATION ABOUT GETTING YOUR POINTS: You will turn in your group response paper to me. All of the group papers should be turned in as a group. IF YOU DO NOT turn in a Group Response Paper, I WILL NOT GIVE YOU POINTS. BE RESPONSIBLE FOR YOUR OWN POINTS, CHECK BLACKBOARD EVERYWEEK TO MAKE SURE YOU ARE GETTING YOUR POINTS AND CONTACT me IMMEDIATELY IF YOU DON’T GET THE POINTS YOU EXPECT.

Communicating with me

Office Hours: by appointment. You can also contact me by email but be sure to indicate in subject line who you are and that you are writing about the class. My email is bamcdonald..psych@gmail.com. Please note the day(s) I will be gone from school due to the faculty furlough.

Important Information about the Impact of the State-Mandated Faculty and Staff Furlough at SDSU

The devastating California state budget cuts prohibit faculty and staff at SDSU from working on two days per month during the 2009/10 academic year.

The faculty furlough prohibits faculty members from teaching, being on campus, doing research, and consulting with students on two days per month. Faculty furlough days vary from faculty to faculty. The furlough days I will take on instructional days are the following: September 28, November 24 and 25. On those days, classes and office hours
are cancelled and telephone and e-mail messages will not be answered. None of these days will affect our class.

The staff furlough causes most University, College, and Department Offices to close on the following days: Sept 11, 18; Oct 2, 16; Nov 13, 25; Dec 21, 22, 23, 24.

**Swine Flu**

If you have the flu, please stay home and take care of yourself. Symptoms of the flu include bad cold, elevated temperature, body aches and chills and general fatigue. We will have at least one swine flue make-up exercise. Contact me and your TA to let us know you are ill.

**Class Schedule:**
3:30-4:45    Lecture  
4:45-5:00 Break  
5:00-6:10 Finish lecture, group discussion, or other activity

**Course Schedule:** Stay tuned for any changes to syllabus. Reading should be done before lecture.

**Date:**  Topic/Assignments  
Reading*

**WEEK ONE**

Thu  9/3  Introduction; important theories  
Chapter 1  
Overview of issues, research, terms  
Chapters 1&2  
Assignment: Paper on Media & Death

**WEEK TWO**

Thu  9/10  Cultural, historical views of death  
Chapters 3&4  
Defining death  
Paper Due: Media & Death

**WEEK THREE**

Thu  9/17  How we die: Heart attack, Stroke, Cancer, How We Die  
Suicide , Accident, AIDS, Alzheimer’s…  
Nuland
WEEK FOUR
Thu 9/24  Health care, End of life issues and decisions  Chapters 5&6

WEEK FIVE
Thu 10/1  Finish information from previous lectures and review for exam
TEST ONE, Scantron: Red Parscore F-289

WEEK SIX
Thu 10/8  Life Threatening Illness, Adult Death Chapters7&11

WEEK SEVEN
Thu 10/15  Funerals & body disposition Chapter 8

WEEK EIGHT
Thu 10/22  Bereavement, Grief, Mourning Chapter 9
Assignment: Paper on Interview with person who has lost someone

WEEK NINE
Thu 10/29  Child & Adolescent Death Chapter 10

WEEK TEN
Thu 11/5  Finish information from previous lectures and review for exam
TEST TWO, Scantron: Red Parscore F-289

WEEK ELEVEN
Thu 11/12  Suicide, Accidents, War, Violent death Chapters12&13
WEEK TWELVE  
Thu 11/19  AIDS, Alzheimers, Dying of Old Age How we Die  
Paper on bereavement DUE

WEEK THIRTEEN  
Thu 11/26  Happy Thanksgiving!

WEEK FOURTEEN  
Thu 12/3  Life after death: cultural and religious beliefs  
Chapter 14

WEEK FIFTEEN  
Thu 12/17  Final Exam at 4-6pm, Scantron: Red Parscore F-289