

Psychology 456
Death and Bereavement
Instructor: Barbara A. McDonald, Ph.D.
(bamcdonald.psych@gmail.com)
Office: 24K Life Sciences
594-6293
Office Hours: by appointment

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.

Course Points

		Points Each	Points Total
EXAMS	3 Tests	100	300
In-class Assign	11 exercises (drop one)	10	100
Papers	2 papers (2 pages each)	35	70
Total			470

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 bamedonald.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
beliefs

Life after death: cultural and religious
Chapter 14

WEEK FIFTEEN

Thu 12/17

Final Exam at 4-6pm, Scantron: Red

Parscore F-289