

**CRN: 17548 SECTION: 01 COURSE NUMBER: SOCI-786 COURSE
TITLE: Death**

SEMESTER: SPRING YEAR: 2008

**SCHOOL: College of Arts and Sciences DEPARTMENT: Sociology/Anthropology
INSTRUCTOR: Reviere**

WEB SITE:

EMAIL: rreviere@howard.edu

INSTRUCTIONAL METHODS

Blackboard
Audio Visual aids
Writing Across the Curriculum
Group projects
Undergraduate Research
Guest Speaker
Student Presentation

KEYWORDS

death,
grief,
loss,
funerals,
health
care,
causes

**This syllabus is to be used for informational purposes only!*

** Students will receive the official syllabus from their teacher.*

SYLLABUS DETAILS

DEATH AND DYING

Writing Intensive

UNDERGRADUATE: SOCI 786-01 CRN=17548

GRADUATE: SOC 286-01 CRN=17316

SPRING, 2008

3 credit hours

- Time:** 11:10—12:30, Tuesday and Thursday
Place: Engineering 3030
- Professor:** Dr. R. Reviere
E-mail: reviere@howard.edu or rebeccareviere@gmail.com
Office: 227 Douglass Hall
Office hours: 12:30—2:00, Tuesday and Thursday, 1:00—3:00 Wednesday, and by appointment
- Teaching assistant:** Ms. Valerie Stackman, M.A.
TA office hours: Same as professor
TA e-mail: vrs5142@hotmail.com
- Grammarian:** Mrs. Janét R.Griffin
Office Hours: 9:00—11:00, Monday, Wednesday and Friday,
12:00—2:00 Tuesday and Thursday
Office: Academic Support Building B Room #105
- Required Texts:** Leming, Michael R. & Dickinson, George E. (2007). *Understanding dying, death, and bereavement. 6th edition.* Belmont, CA: Thomson/Wadsworth.
- Recommended Texts:** your freshman English handbook
- Flower, Aaron, and Ikoomian. The Little, Brown Handbook. Addison-Wesley Educational Publisher Inc.

Lynn, Quitman, Troykan. Simon & Schuster Handbook for Writers. Prentice Hall.

Warriner, John E. English Grammar and Composition.
Harcourt Brace Jovanovich Publishers.

Blakesley and Hoogeveen. The Thomason Handbook.
Thomson Wadsworth.

Resources: Writing Center: Human Ecology Building,
Room 1024; Locke Hall, Room 100. See posted hours on
doors.
WAC website: www.english.howard.edu/wac

Final Exam: (in classroom) Friday May 11, 2008 8:00a.m. – 10:00a.m.

Prerequisite: “C” or better in Freshman English 003 or 004
for COAS students; a passing grade in 003 for other students.

SOCI 786-01 fulfills the third writing requirement in the COAS.

Prohibition: This course is not open to students who have
taken the non-writing-intensive version of the course.

Blackboard: See www.cetla.howard.edu if you need help.
Check often for notes, grades, and messages. I will post all
assignments on Blackboard, and you may be expected to post
assignments and do on-line quizzes.

Course Description:

This course is designed to introduce students to death and dying as a sociological phenomenon. Death as an event and dying as a process are multi-dimensional. Discussion and critical thinking must, therefore, approach the subject from biological, psychological, interpersonal, and cultural avenues to broaden the meaningfulness of this event. This class is a survey course that covers many different topics concerning death and dying and approach them in different ways.

Death in the early 21st century is not the same as death in the early 20th century. We are faced with issues and possibilities that were once only science fiction. At the same time, we are bombarded with deaths from violence and war. Rarely do we have the opportunity to think about and talk about death as a topic of intellectual interest. That is the point of this class. We will examine all dimensions of death; some are more personal than others. You must be able to incorporate both your own background and experiences with a mature scholarship to look at this topic. The writing assignments in this class will allow you to explore your ideas and emotions about these topics as you improve your writing skills by acquainting students with the rules of grammar that govern how language works together to create effective formal writing.

Objectives:

After this class, you should be able to:

- discuss death from various theoretical and disciplinary perspectives
- define death from both medical and legal perspectives
- trace developmental changes in understanding death
- discuss near-death experiences
- trace the impact of living with a terminal illness
- describe the health care systems in place for dying patients
- debate the major issues of medical ethics
- plan a funeral
- evaluate issues of living wills, advance directives, physician-assisted suicide
- describe various types of loss common to adults
- discuss the various aspects of suicide
- list and discuss the major causes of death in the modern world
- explain various historical and cross-cultural beliefs about death and life after death
- talk about death and dying freely and openly
- read about and discuss issues related to death and dying from a sociological perspective
- write to explore your thoughts and feelings about death and dying
- learn to produce quality writing at university-level standards that requires reviewing and understanding the function of the sentence outline as well as the structure of the effective formal essay, such as arrangement and patterns of development
- proofread and correct your own papers to recognize the importance of your own grammatical errors, such as the use of subject and verb agreement, pronouns and antecedents, and other sentence errors that are discovered in your essays
- recognize the importance of your punctuation and other mechanical errors, such as the comma and the semicolon

Class policies and procedures:

Students are expected to prepare for classes by reading assigned work and by processing this material mentally. In other words, students are expected to prepare by reading and thinking for each class, and the writing assignments should help you focus your reading and thinking. With this background, classes can be more informal and discussions more focused. You will be expected to participate in meaningful and appropriate ways, especially in small groups. Part of your grade will come from your ability to interact with the group on the chosen topic; both quality and quantity of your group discussion will be considered. Your grade for that exercise will come from attendance and participation. Just being in a group does not mean that you will receive full credit for that assignment. In-class discussion grades cannot be made up.

In addition, you are expected to approach the writing process with an openness to improvement and refinement. If you have problems with your writing, I will refer you to the writing lab. Use this opportunity to develop and to enhance those skills that will be used throughout your university and professional career.

You are expected to be on time for class. If I call roll at the beginning of class and you are not yet present, you will not be given credit for attendance. Also, if you have to leave early, please let me know and leave quietly.

There will be no incomplete grades given in this class unless there is a written medical excuse. Excuses to be considered for an incomplete must be turned in by the 15 April: no exceptions. On test days, do not leave if you find a note on the board that class is cancelled. Always check with the main sociology office (Douglass 207) before leaving on test days.

You are expected to behave in a fashion fitting a student at Howard University. Inappropriate language or behavior will not be tolerated. Please turn off all beepers and cell phones before class. If you answer a phone during a test, it will be considered cheating, and you will receive a grade of zero (0) for that exam.

Assignments that are to be turned in must be neat, typed, double-spaced, and carefully proofread. Use one-inch margins. If appropriate, a full bibliographic citation must be included with your work (author's full name, date and name of publication, publishing company for a book, page numbers and volume number for a periodical). You will get a chance to practice using the American Psychological Association citation format. See the format for required texts earlier in the syllabus to get an idea of how citations are written.

Your work is expected to reflect an upper division university status. You will be graded on that standard. In other words, spelling, punctuation, and grammatical errors, messy papers, and lateness will be considered in grading. Make yourself proud of your work. A paragraph is, by definition in this class, a minimum of five complete sentences.

Academic Integrity:

Cheating or plagiarism will not be tolerated. See the "Academic Code of Conduct" in the *Student Reference Manual*. Any evidence of these will be reason for failure on that assignment or test. If you use your cell phone during a quiz, that will be considered cheating. You will receive a zero on that quiz.

Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA):

Howard University is committed to providing an educational environment that is accessible to all students. In accordance with this policy, students who need accommodations because of a disability should contact Dr. Barbara Williams, Dean for Special Student Services (202 238 2420). If you need a special accommodation required by the ADA, please document and discuss your disability with me during the FIRST TWO WEEKS of classes.

Grading:

Each assignment must include the student's name, ID number, and the name of the assignment. Grades will be based on a total of two 50-point exams (one midterm, and one comprehensive final at the end of the semester during finals week); four (4) five paragraph 20-point essays (total of 80 points); one funeral 50-point project; one media 50-point project; and ten (10) 2-point journal entries (total of 20 points); and attendance and in-class activities worth 30 points. Meetings with grammarian, Mrs. Griffin, in the Academic Support Building B room 105, at least twice during the semester, once prior to midterms and once

prior to 15 April, will be worth 50 points each for a total of 100 points. There will be no make-up exams. Each of the quizzes will cover the material we have gone over since the beginning of the course or since the last exam and will be given as scheduled in the course outline.

The four (4) five paragraph 20-point essays (total of 80 points) will also be graded first by our grammarian, Mrs. Griffin, on a pass/fail basis. You will be graded on your grammar and writing style and must make an 80% or better on one essay in order to pass the grammatical aspect of this course. If you do not receive a passing grade for that essay, you will have only one opportunity to revise that essay. All revisions must have original graded papers attached. If you pass the grammatical dimension of that essay, you no longer have to submit your essays to Mrs. Griffin. If you pass the grammatical aspect on one of the first three essays, you are exempted from writing a fourth essay. If, for whatever reason, you do not receive a passing grade from Mrs. Griffin on the grammatical dimension of any of your first three essays, you must write a fourth essay. These essays, and their associated topics, are listed in the course outline.

There will be several written and in-class assignments during the semester. Papers and essays must be turned in on time, or you will lose half credit. If you have to be out of town, you can turn them in early. Again, I will not accept late papers for full credit. (The definition of “on time”: a paper that is turned at the beginning of the class period for which it is assigned.) Graduate students must do one research paper or annotated bibliography in addition to the smaller papers. (See hand-out.)

Film critiques must include the name (or topic) of the film and the date that you watched it. Write-ups for speakers must include their names and dates of visit. Unless otherwise stated, assignments are due for discussion on the last date of that chapter. You will then have one week to edit and proofread, and they are due one week after we see the film. For example, if we see a film **on 31 January, the summary is due 7 February**.

Mid-term grades will be calculated on the basis of those points earned by 28 February, including the midterm quiz. Any student who has earned less than 60% of the possible points will be given a mid-term status of "unsatisfactory."

There may be assignments added during the term that are not listed in the syllabus. The total number of points to be considered for the final grade will be 430, which includes all assignments. Watch Blackboard for grades. Keep all graded papers. If you have a question with a grade, or a posted grade on Blackboard is incorrect, you will need to show the original graded paper for a change to the posted grade to be considered. Modifications from this format are possible due to class interests, scheduling changes, added speakers, or other circumstances.

Grades will be assigned on the basis of percentage of total points earned:

90-100%, A; 80-89%, B; 70-79%, C; 60-69%, D; Below 60%, F, where the total number of points that can be earned is **430**.

Because this is a writing-intensive class, we will spend a great deal of time reading, writing, and editing. The **general** guidelines for all writing assignments are:

- Did you include title (name of the assignment) and your name?
- Did you complete all parts of the assignment?
- Are the specific subject and the thesis of the paper clear?
- Does each of your paragraphs relate to the specific subject of the paper; is there enough support in each paragraph?
- Does the paper flow smoothly and logically within and between paragraphs; is it logical?
- Do you use the vocabulary and information taught in the course?
- Have you used correct mechanics (i.e. grammar, spelling, punctuation) and word choice?
- Is the paper properly and carefully documented, if necessary?
- Did you address the proper audience in your writing?

See Appendix A for Brief Guide for Preparing Written Work.

CLASS OUTLINE: (to be modified as necessary)

Grammarian Mrs. Griffin will be conducting a review of composition errors as they arise from assessment of student essays. She will give quizzes, homework, and in-class lessons on a weekly basis.

10 Jan. Introduction and overview of syllabus

Assignment: Sign in to Blackboard. Change your e-mail address if necessary. Complete the life expectancy scales and journal entry number 1.

15, 17 Jan. Chapter 1, Studying Dying, Death, and Bereavement
We will complete a Death Anxiety scale at the end of class.

22 Jan. Chapter 2, The American Experience of Death

24, 29 Jan. Chapter 3, Growing Up with Death

Assignment: Complete journal entries 2 and 3.

31 Jan. Film. Near Death Experiences

Essay 1: Write a five paragraph essay in response to the film. One paragraph summarizes the film; two paragraphs integrate the film with the appropriate material in the text (pages 145-150); one paragraph summarizes your reaction to the film and text; one paragraph is a conclusion. You must include concrete references to the film and text; that means you must include a works cited section. This assignment is due on 7 February. Revisions for this essay will be due one week after they are returned.

Mrs. Griffin will be grading student essays and providing assessment and evaluation of the major errors.

5, 7 Feb. Chapter 5, The Dying Process

12, 14 Feb. Chapter 6, Living with Dying

Essay 2: Answer exercise question number 8 on page 236. You must include concrete references to the film and text; that means you must include a works cited section. This assignment is due on 21 February. Revisions for this essay will be due one week after they are returned.

Mrs. Griffin will be grading student essays and providing assessment and evaluation of the major errors.

19, 21 Feb. Chapter 7, Dying in the American Health-Care System
Also read p.439-445 from Chapter 12.

26 Feb. Catch up, and review for Midterm Exam
The first five (5) entries for your journal are due at the beginning of class.

28 Feb. **Midterm Exam**

4, 6 March Chapter 8, Biomedical Issues and Euthanasia, Film on Kevorkian

Essay 3: Write a five paragraph essay in response to the film. One paragraph summarizes the film; two paragraphs integrate the film with the appropriate material in the text (chapter 8); one paragraph summarizes your reaction to the film and text; one paragraph is a conclusion. You must include concrete references to the film and text; that means you must include a works cited section. This assignment is due on 13 March. Revisions for this essay will be due one week after they are returned.

Mrs. Griffin will be grading student essays and providing assessment and evaluation of the major errors.

11, 13 March Chapter 9, Suicide

18, 20 March **Spring Break (No class)**

25 March Film on Diversity in Death Rituals (Chapter 10)

Essay 4: Write a five paragraph essay in response to the film. One paragraph summarizes the film; two paragraphs integrate the film with the appropriate material in the text (chapter 8); one paragraph summarizes your reaction to the film and text; one paragraph is a conclusion. You must include concrete references to the film and text; that means you must include a works cited section. This assignment is due on 1 April. Revisions for this essay will be due one week after they are returned.

Mrs. Griffin will be grading student essays and providing assessment and evaluation of the major errors.

27 March Chapter 11, The Business of Dying

Funeral Project Due:

Plan a funeral. See hand-out.

Writing Assignment:

Journal your responses to planning your own funeral.

1, 3 Apr. Chapter 13, Coping with Loss

Journal entry: Violent death.

8, 10 Apr. Chapter 14, Grieving throughout the Life Cycle

15, 17 Apr. Catch up if needed, and Media Project Presentations (17 April)

Journals: Complete and turn in journal at the beginning of class on 17 April

22 Apr. Catch-up / Review for Final

24 Apr. Review for Final

7 May Final Exam (In classroom from 11:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m.)

Other Dates to Remember:

21 Jan. MLK Day (campus closed)

18 Feb. President's Day (campus closed)

7 Mar. Convocation (classes suspended 10:00am-1:00pm)

7 April Last day to withdraw

25 April Grades are due for graduating seniors

Grading Distribution: (to be modified as necessary)

Undergraduate Students

Essay 1	_____	/20	
Essay 2	_____	/20	
Essay 3	_____	/20	
Essay 4	_____	/20	
(subtract lowest essay score) -	_____	/20	
Midterm	_____	/50	
Final	_____	/50	
Journal Project	_____	/20	(ten 2-point journal entries)
Funeral Project	_____	/50	
Media Project	_____	/50	
Attendance/Participation	_____	/30	
Meet with Mrs. Griffin	_____	/100	(two 50-point meetings)
Total	_____	/430	

Graduate Students

Essay 1	_____	/20	
Essay 2	_____	/20	
Essay 3	_____	/20	
Essay 4	_____	/20	
(subtract lowest essay score) -	_____	/20	
Journal Project	_____	/20	(ten 2-point journal entries)
Funeral Project	_____	/50	
Media Project	_____	/50	
Attendance/Participation	_____	/30	
Annotated Bibliography			
Or research paper	_____	/100	
Total	_____	/330	

Appendix A:

BRIEF GUIDE FOR PREPARING WRITTEN WORK

1. Use black or blue ink and white paper about 8 ½ by 11 inches.
2. Write your name, your identification number, and the date in the upper right corner of your paper.
2. Center the title on the first line.
3. Skip a line after the title.
4. Write on every other line or double space if typing papers.
5. Leave a one-inch margin at the left and at the bottom of the page and about a half-inch margin at the right. Keep the margins straight.
6. Capitalize the first word of the title and all other words except articles (a, an, the), prepositions (in, on, with, to), and conjunctions (and, for, but, or).
7. Use no punctuation marks after the title unless a question mark or an exclamation point is needed.
8. Do not use quotation marks in the title unless the title is a quotation.
9. Indent the first word of every paragraph one inch from the left-hand margin.
10. At the end of a line, divide a word only between syllables. Place the hyphen at the end of the line.
11. Should you type, use font fourteen.

Mrs. Janét R. Griffin

Funeral Wishes

1. Describe how you want your body adorned (clothes, makeup, hair, etc).
2. What mortuary, crematorium, memorial society, or other do you wish to prepare your body?
3. Upon my death, I would like my body to be:
 - ✓ embalmed
 - ✓ not embalmed
 - ✓ viewed at home
 - ✓ viewed at a funeral home
 - ✓ cremated
 - ✓ buried
 - ✓ entombed
4. What type of casket or other carrier do you want to be placed in and transported in?
5. What should be the final disposition of your body or cremains?
6. My tombstone should read _____.
7. Describe observances, for example:
 - ✓ have a viewing of my body in an open casket
 - ✓ have no viewing of my body, but casket present
 - ✓ have no casket present
 - ✓ have a wake
 - ✓ have a memorial service
 - ✓ donate my body to medical school
8. Put together the program for the funeral, include type of service, music, readings, speakers, etc.
9. Provide a budget with at least 7 items for the funeral.

Your project should include pictures whenever possible. Be prepared to turn in a copy and to present your plans in class.

Death and Dying
Spring 2008

Journal Entries

1. Respond to the life expectancy questionnaire. Is it what you expected? How were the two scales different? How do you explain the difference?
2. Would you say that you have a fear of death? Describe your fears. What are your greatest fears around death and dying?
3. What is your earliest memory of death?
4. Have you ever been to a funeral? How old were you? Describe what you remember?
5. What are your feelings about physician-assisted suicide?
6. Choose one of the ethical dilemmas that we discussed in class. What is your personal reaction?
7. Reflect on the hospice exercise. How much would you be willing to do as a hospice caregiver?
8. How comfortable do you feel talking to someone who is grieving? Discuss comments that you have found helpful in this situation. Have you ever felt that you said the wrong thing? Describe that situation.
9. Discuss any experiences you have had with violent death.
10. Describe the differences you might feel in dealing with the survivor of a violent death and a survivor of a more expected death.
11. What were your reactions to planning your own funeral?
12. Write your obituary. You can be any age that you want when you "die".
13. Describe your preferred death scene.
14. If you learned you had six months to live, what would you do?

PROJECTS

Media Assignment

Choose one type of media (for example, music videos, songs, TV shows, movies, books, newspapers). Follow it for six weeks. Record at least 15 instances of death that you see/ read/ hear with dates. List these (with titles, artists, whatever you need to give credit; give the source in other words) and briefly describe what you found. Write a five paragraph essay summarizing your findings.

Death and Dying SOCI- 786-01

NAME: _____

Spring 2008

Media Project- Individual Assessment

GROUP NAME:

Each group member must individually complete and submit a hardcopy of this form that is typed. (Do not change the column widths for the tables, but you may type in as much as needed in order to complete this form. If you need more space, the boxes will get longer if you keep typing. Thank you.)

Individual Performance: Complete the table below for each group member. Rate performance in each category on a scale from one (1) to five (5), where 1 = unsatisfactory and 5 = exemplary.

Names of Group Members	Attended Group Meetings	Participated in discussions at meetings	Completed Assignment(s) on time	Completed Assignment(s) fully

Roles/ Responsibilities and Contribution: Identify the specific role and/or responsibilities of each group member. Record these in the column labeled Roles/ Responsibilities. Under the contribution column, if 100 points were to be distributed among group members based on each member's contribution to the group project, how would you assign them? Be specific about the roles and contributions of each member to the oral AND written reports!

Names of Group Members	Roles/ Responsibilities		Contribution (Share of points)
	Oral	Written	

Graduate Student Mentorship Abilities: Please be specific and concrete in your assessments of graduate student mentorship abilities in the columns labeled "Attendance at Meetings, Participation in Group Work,

and Roles and Responsibilities for the Oral and Written Reports.” In the column labeled Overall Mentorship, please grade your experience with your graduate student on a scale from one (1) to five (5), where 1 = unsatisfactory and 5 = exemplary.

Graduate Student Name	Attendance at Meetings	Participation in Group Work	Roles / Responsibilities		Overall Mentorship
			Oral	Written	