SYLLABUS
Death, Grief and Caring
SOCI 3804-1 (81019)
Fall 2014

Instructor: Dr. Paul Luken
Office: Pafford 205 B
Office hours: M 2-4:00; T and Th 10-noon & 3:30-5:00, and by appointment

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Class time and place: T & Th 2-3:20; Callaway Building Annex 146.

Required text:

Course description:
Social scientific study of aging, sickness, dying, death, funerals, caring and grief in non-Western and Western societies.

Course objectives for students:
1. Students will critique the major sociological, and social psychological theories and research findings in thanatology.
2. Students will demonstrate knowledge of the death-related practices and beliefs of various cultures and religions.
3. Students will formulate and articulate an understanding of the broad range of topics and issues related to the social scientific study of death and dying including
   - cross-cultural perspectives
   - historical perspectives
   - medicalization of dying
   - organization of grief
   - loss
   - funerals
   - legal aspects of dying
   - medical ethics
   - suicide
   - beliefs regarding after death experiences
   - near-death experiences
   - euthanasia/right to die
   - mass death

Link to the Common Course Syllabus:
http://www.westga.edu/assetsDept/vpaa/Common_Language_for_Course_Syllabi.pdf
Learning outcomes: The above objectives contribute to the following learning outcome:
  o understand the reciprocal relationships between the individual and society

Evaluation and Grading
Your semester grade will be based on the following:
- Eight quizzes 800
- Deathography/Lossography 200
- Individual and Society 200
- What I Have Learned 200
Total 1400

1400-1260 A
1259-1120 B
1119-980 C
979-840 D
839-0 F

Quizzes
There will be 10 unannounced quizzes. Each quiz will be based on assigned readings and material discussed in class since the previous quiz. Therefore, you must come to each class prepared for a quiz. You must read the assigned material and study it to do well on the quizzes. There are no make-up quizzes and any student who arrives in class after the quizzes have been handed out will not be allowed to take the quiz. Therefore, you should also come to class on time. Only the highest 8 quiz scores will be counted when determining the grade. You must have a Scantron sheet and a pencil for each quiz.

The Online Learning Center, especially the practice quizzes, should be a great help preparing for class. You can find the Online Learning Center at http://www.mhhe.com/despelder10e. This location provides lists of objectives for each chapter, along with brief summaries, multiple choice quizzes, and interesting web-based activities. If you do poorly on an online quiz, then you need to study more before attending class.

Written Assignments:
Students in this class are expected to take pride in their written assignments, and strict adherence to the instructions for the assignments is required. Papers that are very poorly written will be returned without a grade. They must be revised and resubmitted. When they are resubmitted, they will be graded as other late papers. Late papers will be reduced by one letter grade. Except for extreme circumstances, papers will not be accepted if they are over one week late. Faxes and e-mails are not acceptable.

1. Deathography/Lossography
After giving considerable thought to your own experiences with loss and death throughout your life, you are to write an essay describing these experiences and relating them to your current beliefs. The essays will be shared with other students in this class. Copies will be made available to your classmates in an electronic format through CourseDen. Therefore, do not write about any
very personal thoughts or feelings that you do not wish to share with others. Only information about yourself that you do not mind being available to other members of this class should be put in this essay. You may also want to "protect" the other people that you are writing about in your essay. Your experiences include your interactions with others, and those people may not wish to have some information made public. It may be necessary to give some false information and use pseudonyms in order to protect these people.

It will probably be helpful for you to think about the varieties of losses and deaths that you have experienced, both directly and indirectly. The losses may include the losses of contact with people or drastic changes in your relationships with them due to break-ups, divorce, growing up, moving, etc. The deaths that you reflect on may be of humans, non-humans, people close to you, those who are more remote, celebrities, and even anonymous individuals. Try to remember your encounters with dying and death from childhood through adulthood.

Your task is to try to relate your experiences with death and dying to your current attitudes and beliefs today. However, in your essay, do not begin with your current beliefs. Instead, you should begin by describing some real experiences and then connecting them to your understanding of death and dying.

You are encouraged not to begin writing this essay until after you have read the first three chapters of The Last Dance. During this time your orientation toward death and dying will probably be clarified. Nonetheless, now is a good time to begin jotting down notes on your experiences.

Submit one hard copy of this paper and post one through CourseDen by the due date.

Date due: September 18

Format: Typed, double-spaced, stapled, no cover sheet, and 1000 words long. Use font 12 Times New Roman, and 1 inch margins.

Evaluation: You will be graded on your ability to relate some of your beliefs to past experiences, organization of thought, clarity of expression, usage of standard English punctuation and grammar, and the degree to which you followed these instructions.

2. Individual and Society
After reading the deathographies of your classmates, you are to write an essay that answers this broad question: How is the manner in which individuals relate to actual deaths connected to the social context in which they live? From reading these deathographies, I would also like you to incorporate answers to the following questions in your essay:

1. Why did some death experiences seem to be more difficult to deal with than others?

2. What social influences might account for the differences that you saw when reading the papers?
3. Select at least two examples from the writing of your classmates that describe ways of thinking about a death that are different from your own thoughts.

4. What are the social influences on some of the death rituals described in the papers? Note: rituals are forms of behavior, not attitudes or ways of thinking.

When answering these questions you should not analyze or judge the individuals. You should begin with actual experiences that were described and see if you can find connections to aspects of the social context that might help you understand those experiences. You should make reference to specific papers as you answer these questions. Your essay will not be read by other students; however, you should be prepared to discuss it in class.

Date due: October 23

Format: Typed, double-spaced, stapled, 1000 words long plus a cover sheet. Use font 12 Times New Roman and 1-inch margins.

Evaluation: As was the case with the prior assignment, you will be graded on organization of thought, clarity of expression, usage of standard English punctuation and grammar, the degree to which you followed these instructions, and the thoroughness of your answers to the above questions.

3. What I Have Learned paper

Please review your classroom experiences including your readings, group activities, homework, assigned papers, films and video, and handouts. As you look over the materials from this course, please identify between six (6) and eight (8) areas that you will write about. This paper not only asks you for new knowledge but also for areas where in you have relearned something useful and important. Each instance of new learning should be supported by examples from readings, class discussions, activities, and videos,

One way to understand this assignment is to imagine that you were going to tell me or a friend some specific things you are taking away at the end of the course. Please be thorough and give examples of how you have or will use the information in the future. You must be more specific than this statement: “I learned so much, this course has changed my life.” That is a fine introduction but not specific enough for this assignment.

Obviously this is a paper that should be written in the first person. It is not necessary to reference your text or other materials that we used in class. Simply report on the ideas and give me specific examples of how they are or will be useful to you. The more detail the better.

Date due: December 9

Format: Typed, single-spaced, stapled, 1000 words long plus a cover sheet. Use font 12 Times New Roman and 1-inch margins.
**Evaluation:** As was the case with the prior assignment, you will be graded on organization of thought, clarity of expression, usage of standard English punctuation and grammar, the degree to which you followed these instructions, and the thoroughness of your answers to the above questions.

**Comprehensive Test**
This test covers all the material presented over the semester. You will not have a study guide (other than me). Attendance is mandatory. Bring a Scantron sheet and a pencil to the exam.

**Student’s responsibilities:**
1. Attend all classes. You should be prepared to discuss the assigned readings on the assigned date and to take a quiz on the material. In the event that you miss a class, you should obtain class notes from other students.

2. Complete assigned projects by the due dates.

3. Recognize if and when you are having difficulty with the course material and/or the topics and meet with me for assistance before it is too late.

4. Your conduct should be in accordance with principles of academic integrity and honesty. No forms of cheating, plagiarism or classroom disruption will be tolerated. Cheating and plagiarism will result in failing grades for the semester. I recommend that you familiarize yourself with the Sociology Department Policy on Academic Integrity: [http://www.westga.edu/sociology/index_4657.php](http://www.westga.edu/sociology/index_4657.php).

5. In class you are expected to behave as a serious adult and scholar. You are expected to take notes and address the class when you are recognized by the instructor. Class time is not the time for reading the assigned material and it will not be allowed. No laptops, cell phones, tablets, and other electronic devices are allowed to be used. Anyone spotted using these devices will be asked to leave the class and if there is a quiz that day the grade will be a zero. You must write your class notes by hand. **Turn them off and put them away.** Eating is not permitted in the class.

You are expected to arrive on time and to stay for the entire class. If you leave the classroom at any other time before the end of class, take all your belongings with you because you will not be allowed to re-enter the class.

6. It is your responsibility to notify me if you are not able to comply with the above expectations because of impairment or other significant circumstances. Accommodations will be made when appropriate. Such notification should not occur after a violation of the above rules.

7. You should expect to work approximately six hours per week outside of class for this course.

8. Do not email me through Course Den. Use pluken@westga.edu. I will respond within 48 hours Monday – Friday.
Consultations:
You are encouraged to schedule an appointment if you would like to discuss anything. You may also drop in during my office hours; however, students with scheduled appointments will be given priority.

Tentative reading, assignment and test schedule

8/26 Introduction
8/28 Chapter 1: Attitudes Toward Death: A Climate of Change
9/1 Labor Day holiday
9/4 Chapter 2: Learning About Death: Socialization
9/11 Chapter 3: Perspectives on Death: Historical and Cultural
9/18 First written assignment is due
    Chapter 5: Health Care: Patients, Staff, and Institutions
9/25 Chapter 7: Facing Death: Living with Life-Threatening Illness
10/2 Chapter 9: Survivors: Understanding the Experience of Loss
10/9 Chapter 8: Last Rights: Funerals and Body Disposition
10/21 Chapter 10: Death in the Lives of Children and Adolescents
10/23 Second written assignment is due
    Chapter 11: Death in the Lives of Adults
10/28 Chapter 4: Death Systems: Mortality and Society
11/4 Chapter 6: End-of-Life Issues and Decisions
11/11 Chapter 12: Suicide
11/18 Chapter 13: Risks, Perils, and Traumatic Death
11/24-29 Thanksgiving holiday
12/4 Chapter 14: Beyond Death/After Life
Dec. 9 Final class: 2-4:20
    Third written assignment due
Please notify me if this schedule conflicts with your religious observance.