

Death and Dying
Sociology 4091, Fall 2018

Michelle Barton
Office: 11 Stubbs Hall
Email: michellebarton@lsu.edu
Office Hours: Monday 10-11am and by appointment

SOCL 4091 DEATH AND DYING (3 credits)

Prereq.: SOCL 2001

COURSE DESCRIPTION AND OBJECTIVES

During this course, we will approach the topic of death and dying in the United States from a sociological perspective. That is, we will explore what death means for individuals and for society, how society impacts individual experiences of death, and vice versa. We will discuss: the history of death in the United States, how we learn about death, the medicalization of death, end of life issues and decisions, rituals of death, loss and grief and risks, perils and public deaths. At the end of class, you will be asked to write a book report on the book Being Mortal by acclaimed author and physician Atul Gawande.

Specific course objectives are to:

1. Students will develop an integrated and sociological understanding of death and dying in the United States, including:
 - a. Understanding demographic trends.
 - b. Exploring how death and processes of dying affect both individuals and society.
2. Students will be able to discuss issues related to contemporary processes of death and dying while acknowledging the historical context of this phenomena.

What should you expect to get out of this course?

1. Students will be able to discuss how processes related to death and dying in the United States have changed over time, as well as articulate some of the key issues associated with contemporary experiences of death and dying for individuals and society.
2. Students will be able to analyze and decipher academic research about death and dying.
3. Students will work to develop written communication skills.

REQUIRED TEXTS

- DeSpelder & Strickland, *The Last Dance* (10th edition). ISBN: 978-0-07-803546-3
- Gawande, *Being Mortal*. ISBN: 978-0-8050-9515-9

Additional readings will be posted on Moodle in the appropriate module.

MOODLE

This course runs fully on Moodle, which is accessed through your *myLSU* account. I will use Moodle to post announcements, course modules (including readings and multimedia) and assessments. Announcements will be my main form of communication to you and will include important information like: due date reminders, any schedule changes, any changes in my availability, important clarification and feedback. Announcements will be accessible in Moodle and emailed to your LSU email address.

GENERAL POINTERS

I expect students to regularly check into Moodle and/or their email in order to stay up to date on any announcements I send out. If you have a question or issue that is not resolved by information in the syllabus, in the course shell itself or in an announcement, please email me or stop by office hours! I am here to help you through this course and if anything is unclear I am always available to help. I will be available during office hours and by appointment, as well as by email and Skype.

My best advice for doing well in an online class is to manage your time appropriately. I suggest printing out a copy of the course schedule and checking things off as you complete them. I will send reminders about what is due when, but being well aware of the upcoming assignments will help you to do your best in this course. Make sure you give yourself ample time to complete assignments. Last, since this course is online and thus open book/open note, use that to your advantage! For example, look at quiz questions before you do the readings and prepare as you go.

COURSE LEARNING ACTIVITIES

Course Modules: Course Modules are designed to guide you through the material in order to prepare you for the course learning activities. Each module is two weeks long and will open on Sunday. You will have the full two weeks to complete the quiz. Original discussion posts will be due on the first Sunday of each module and reply posts will be due on the last day of the module. Course activities should be completed in the order that they are listed and by the due dates listed.

- Each module is two weeks. Modules open on Monday and close two Sundays later.
- During the first week, you will have access to all of the materials for the module. I advise you to complete the readings and work on your discussion posts. Your original discussion posts will be due on the first Sunday of the module.
- During week two, you should be working on your reply posts and completing the quiz. You can submit the quiz any time during the module as long as it is submitted before the due date, which is on the last day of the module.
- **Scheduling note: Because of Thanksgiving break, our last module is shortened. I will open up Module 7 on Nov. 19 but please note no work is due until November 28. You are welcome to submit work earlier than the due date.**

Quizzes: By the last day of the module, you will be required to complete an assessment in order to show how well you understood the required readings. Quizzes will be based on required readings. Quiz questions will be multiple choice and short answer questions. Quizzes will be made available to students when each new module opens.

Your answers **MUST** be in your own words and should illustrate a full understanding of the material that the question is asking about.

Discussion Boards: During each module, there will be at least one discussion board. Discussion boards will correspond to documentaries, TED talks, articles, or prompts. On each discussion board, you will be responsible for writing ONE original post and TWO reply posts. Thus, if there are two discussion boards in a module, you will be responsible for two original posts (one on each board) and four reply posts (two on each board). Original posts will be due on the first Sunday of each module and reply posts are due on the last day of the module (second Sunday).

Short Writing Assignment: You will read and write a response paper to *Being Mortal* by Atul Gawande for your culminating book report. This assignment will ask you to connect material in this book to course materials. More information, including a grading rubric, is available on Moodle.

Absence and Make-Up Policy: In order to make up missed work you will be required to provide written documentation of a valid reason for your absence within one week's time (see **LSU Policy Statement 22**, posted on the course website, for a list of valid reasons for student absences). No assignments (quizzes, etc.) can be made-up without such documentation.

HOW YOU WILL BE EVALUATED

1. Quizzes (52.5% of the final grade)

- There will be seven quizzes, each worth 7.5 points.
- Quizzes are NOT timed and will be available for the full length of the module (Monday at midnight- two Sundays later at 11:59pm CST). Quizzes are due at 11:59pm on the second Sunday of the module. You will have two weeks to complete the quiz with full access to readings, slides and films. I highly encourage you to READ THE QUIZ QUESTIONS BEFORE YOU BEGIN READING to help focus your reading.
- Quizzes will be in the form of multiple choice and short answer questions.
- Your answers MUST be in your own words (nothing word-for-word from slides, readings, Wikipedia or other students, etc. will be tolerated). You may NOT work with or communicate with other students while you are they are taking the quiz.
 - You should use in-text citations using ASA format where appropriate (i.e. if you quote material or paraphrase). See the Moodle homepage for information about ASA formatting.
- I also strongly encourage writing your quiz short answers in a word document and then copying and pasting them into Moodle at the end so you don't lose work if your connection goes out. Save often!

2. Discussion Board Posts (35% of the final grade)

- You will receive a score out of 5 points for discussion board. In order to receive 5 points for the discussion board component of a module, you will need to do the following:
 - Post an original post for EACH board in the module that summarizes and reflects upon questions posed in the board using materials from the current module and/or previous modules. You should also end your original post with a question to inspire further discussion. This is worth 3 points.
 - Post TWO reply posts for each board in the module. Reply posts should be thoughtful, use course materials to respond to another student's post. Each reply post is worth 1 point.
- All of your postings for the module should be QUALITY posts that are thoughtful and use information from readings, films, etc to synthesize and form your post.
- For specific grading information, please see the grading rubric.
- Your grades on all discussion boards will be equally weighted and averaged to comprise 35% of your final grade.

3. Short Writing Assignment (10% of your final grade)

- You will read and write a response paper to Being Mortal by Atul Gawande for your culminating book report. This assignment will ask you to connect material in this book to course materials. More information is above and on Moodle, including a grading rubric.

4. Syllabus Quiz (2.5% of your final grade)

- During the icrebreaker module, you will complete a short, 10 item Syllabus quiz to make sure that you are familiar with course requirements. This will be worth 2.5 points on your final grade.

GRADING

Your final grade will be determined as follows:

Quizzes	52.5%
Discussions	35%
Short Writing Assignment	10%
Syllabus Quiz	2.5%

Based on the cumulative score earned on these four components, letter grades will be assigned as follows:

97-100	A+
93-96	A
90-92	A-
87-89	B+
83-86	B
80-82	B-
77-79	C+
73-76	C
70-72	C-
67-69	D+
63-66	D
60-62	D-
59 & below	F

Note: Any extra credit assignments will be available to the entire class and will be based on the grade distribution of the course. No special extra credit assignments will be given to individual students.

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

All Louisiana State University students are responsible for observing the highest standards of academic and personal integrity. The penalties for academic misconduct are severe and ignorance is not an acceptable excuse. All cases of suspected academic misconduct will be referred to the Office of the Dean of Students.

When in doubt, CITE! You should use ASA citation formatting for this course and should always cite when drawing information from a source (this includes quotes and paraphrasing). If you have questions please let me know!

OUTSIDE MATERIALS

NO OUTSIDE MATERIALS SHOULD BE USED FOR QUIZZES. I have designed the course in such a way that you should not need to consult any materials other than what has been assigned. If concepts or questions are unclear, please ask me! If you use outside materials in your quiz answer, you will receive a 0 for that question.

SPECIAL NEEDS

Louisiana State University is committed to promoting an atmosphere to end discrimination against individuals with special needs, to bring persons with special needs into the social and economic mainstream, and to provide enforceable standards to address discrimination against individuals with special needs. In order to ensure reasonable accommodations, students with special needs should register with the Office of Disability Services. If you anticipate needing special accommodations in this course, please contact me early in the semester so that we can reach a mutual understanding on how to best set you up for success.

IMPORTANT NOTES

1) If you are concerned about your course performance, contact me as soon as possible.

Together we can identify why you are having problems and how you can better position yourself for success. If you wait until the end of the semester to contact me about your status in this course it will be too late! Please also note that new academic policies have been put in place that put serious restrictions on the ability of students to drop and retake classes. These changes make it more important than ever that you take personal responsibility for your course performance.

2) Be respectful of others. This course will require you to participate in class discussions. Your participation helps you and your classmates to learn, practice, and actively engage the class materials. We will sometimes be discussing controversial and sensitive topics. BE RESPECTFUL to your fellow students when posting original posts or reply posts. It is my job to make the classroom a learning environment where all viewpoints are respected and, thus, I will not tolerate racist, sexist, homophobic, or other insulting comments. Offensive posts will be taken down and the student will be contacted with a warning and will need to rewrite the post. Students who have been warned and make a SECOND offensive post will not receive credit for any of the discussion boards for the current module. In the event of a THIRD offensive posting, the student will receive a failing grade for the course.

3) Writing/Email Communication: Since this course is fully online, the only thing I have to go by is your written word. Do your absolute best to make sure you are being clear, concise and precise in your language. I always recommend finishing assignments a day early, taking a break, and then coming back to them and reading them out loud. You may feel funny proofreading this way, but it will help you to more easily catch grammatical errors and/or assess whether important information is missing.

Any work as well as email communications, whether to me or to other students, should use appropriate grammar. Use spell check and always proofread. Make sure you are being professional in your wording.

COURSE SCHEDULE

Topics/Activities	Start	End	Assignments Due
Icebreaker Module What is this class about? Who am I? Who are you?	August 20	August 23	Icebreaker Tasks Syllabus Quiz Due
Module 1 An Introduction to and History of Death in the United States	August 20	September 2	Readings: 1. LD Chapter 1 2. Blauner 3. Corr Discussion Boards: 1. Living Old Original Posts due (1): August 26 Reply Posts due (2): End of the Module Quiz Due on last day of module
Module 2 Learning about Death and Socialization	September 3	September 16	Readings: 1. LD Chapter 2 2. DeSpelder & Strickland (article) 3. Cox et al. Discussion Boards: 1. A Response to Cox et al. 2. First Experiences with Death Original Posts due (2): September 9 Reply Posts due (4): End of Module Quiz Due on last day of module

<p>Module 3</p> <p>Defining & The Medicalization of Death</p>	<p>September 17</p>	<p>September 30</p>	<p>Readings:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. LD p. 151-163 2. LD Ch. 5 3. Kellehear 4. Jeffrey <p>Discussion Boards:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Being Mortal 2. Defining Death <p>Original Posts due (2): September 23 Reply Posts due (4): End of Module</p> <p>Quiz Due on last day of module</p>
<p>Fall Break</p>	<p>October 1</p>	<p>October 7</p>	<p>No work due! ☺</p>
<p>Module 4</p> <p>End of Life Issues and Decisions</p>	<p>October 8</p>	<p>October 21</p>	<p>Readings:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. LD Chapter 6 2. LD p. 399-406, 587-591 3. VanWijngaarden et al. <p>Discussion Boards:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Dying Well 2. When Individuals Choose to End Their Own Lives <p>Original Posts due (2): October 14 Reply Posts due (4): End of module</p> <p>Quiz Due on last day of module</p>
<p>Module 5</p> <p>Rituals of Death</p>	<p>October 22</p>	<p>November 4</p>	<p>Readings:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. LD Ch. 8 2. Leming & Dickinson <p>Discussion Boards:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Jazz Funerals 2. The Undertaking <p>Original Posts due (2): October 28 Reply Posts due (4): End of Module</p> <p>Quiz Due on last day of module</p>

Module 6 Loss and Grief	November 5	November 18	<p>Readings:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. LD Ch. 9 2. Laing & Moules 3. DeGroot <p>Discussion Boards:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. A Response to Laing & Moules 2. A Response to DeGroot <p>Original Posts due (2): November 11 Reply Posts due (4): End of Module</p> <p>Quiz Due on last day of module</p>
Thanksgiving Break	November 19	November 25	No work due but Module 7 Open
Module 7 Risks, Perils and Public Deaths	November 19	December 1	<p>Readings:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. LD Ch. 13 2. LD p. 147-151 <p>Discussion Boards:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Public Beheadings 2. Death by Fire <p>Original Posts due (2): November 28 (Wed.) Reply Posts due (4): End of Module (Sat)</p> <p>Quiz Due on last day of module (Sat)</p> <p><i>*Note: because of Thanksgiving break, our last module is shortened. I will open up Module 7 on Nov. 19 but please note no work is due until November 28. You are welcome to submit work earlier than the due date.</i></p>
Culminating Book Report		December 3	Due: First Day of Finals