Sociology R327
Sociology of Death and Dying
Spring 2014
Friday 9:00-11:40
Dr. Lynn Pike
This course examines death and dying from a sociological perspective. While death is an inevitable and normal part of the human experience, people often do not take the time to think about death or dying. Yet, all societies have developed belief systems and cultural rituals to help humans understand death and dying and to cope with the emotional pain caused by the death of a loved one. Like most aspects of social life, the specific meanings and attitudes associated with death as well as the social rituals and practices vary across time and place. For this reason, the human experience of death and dying is varied and complex. Studying death and dying from a sociological perspective can help us better understand both our own society as well as other cultures. It also can help us understand our personal views about death and dying, appreciate the ways that our personal views reflect the social context that surround us, and empower us to prepare ourselves for our own deaths and live our lives more fully. Over the course of this semester, we will explore the many social dimensions of death and dying, including examining trends in human mortality, surveying social attitudes about death and dying, exploring the social processes of dying and grieving, and studying the ways societies manage the dying process and deal with those who have died. Because the events of September 11th and the wars around the world have made death and dying salient socio-political issues, we will examine how we are struggling, as a society, with these issues and how they are challenging and changing many of our social institutions.

**COURSE GOALS**

At the end of the semester, I hope you will:

1. understand the historical and contemporary attitudes about death and dying in the United States and around the world;
2. understand the dying process and the many social forces that influence how we die;
3. understand the social organization of death, death rituals, grief, and bereavement; and
4. develop your individual philosophy and feelings about death, dying and bereavement.

PRINCIPLES OF LEARNING

These goals are in accordance with the IUPUI Principles of Learning (abbreviated as PULs). Specifically, this course is designed to promote your intellectual depth and breadth {PUL 4} as well as your understanding of society and culture {PUL 5} (for a listing of all PULs, see http://www.iupui.edu/~history/principlesundergraduatelearning.htm).

SPECIAL NOTE

The subject of death and dying can be an extremely difficult and challenging topic to discuss, especially for those who have recently experienced a significant loss. In this class, we will discuss and view frank and sometimes graphic issues related to death and dying. Consequently, it is probably inevitable that our discussions will evoke emotion and challenge personal beliefs. Indeed, I believe this is part of the learning process. By exploring your personal beliefs and experiences, you will find it easier to understand the many ways society influences the way we manage death and dying. While discussing these topics can be "therapeutic" for many students, it is not possible nor would it be appropriate to take this class as therapy for the terminally ill or grieving. If you do not feel emotionally prepared to tackle this issue, I would recommend you withdraw from the course and re-enroll in a future semester when you feel more prepared. If issues come up over the semester that make it difficult for you to concentrate or manage your school work and/or you family or work responsibilities, I encourage you to contact me and a trained mental health professional to discuss your situation. I have provided some information on mental health resources available to students at the end of this syllabus.

COURSE INFORMATION

Required Readings

Reading assignments will be drawn from several core texts. The following required books are available for purchase through the IUPUI bookstore:


IMPORTANT NOTE: All reading assignments are due for the day assigned in the syllabus.

Course Requirements

Attendance and Class Participation. Students are expected to attend every formal class session and actively participate in class study groups and activities. Small group meetings may be necessary outside of class. Classroom study, class activities, and lectures are designed to help you understand key concepts and make connections among the ideas we will grapple with over the course of the semester.
Students will be assigned to small discussion groups and will evaluate their group members at the end of the semester. Attendance will only be counted if the student signs the attendance roster on the day of attendance. *Students will receive two points for each class attended. Even if absence was excused, points will not be given. If you miss a test, the next one counts double. However, test #3 is required.*

**OnCourse.** All lectures and movie study guides will be available on OnCourse at least one day ahead of time under the category of “Resources.” Students are required to print and bring these resources to class. **No hard copies will be distributed in class.**

**Group Work.** Each student will be assigned a small group. The groups are intended to give students an opportunity to review study guides and process feelings and thoughts after each movie. Each group member will evaluate the other individuals in the group at the end of the semester. The grade will be the average of the individual members’ evaluations.
Extra Credit

Students may also earn a total of 10 extra credit points during the semester for participating in an extra credit opportunity. No credit will be given if proposal or journal is late. This opportunity requires written approval from Dr. Pike.

Research Project: Journal on Grandparents

This is part of an ongoing research project being conducted by Dr. Pike. If you choose to participate, in the beginning you will be asked to complete a short survey, and sign a consent form agreeing to participate. At the end of the semester, each student will turn in a composition notebook that has been used as a journal to record feelings and thoughts about deceased or living grandparents. An entry is defined as at least five sentences. Each entry will be kept strictly confidential. I expect 20 entries spread over the course of the semester. I require 10 entries at midterm and 10 at the end of the semester. They will be returned at the end of the semester. No partial credit will be given. DO NOT USE PENCIL. Each journal entry heading must include:

Your name

Date and number of entry (1-20)

First name(s) of grandparent(s) being discussed

If each grandparent who is discussed is living or dead

Family connection (maternal or paternal, grandmother or grandfather)
Grades

Final course grades will be calculated based on the total number of points you earn based on 355 points:

Attendance 30 Points
3 Tests x 100 each: 300 Points
Group Participation 25 Points

Minimum %:

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<tr>
<td>93% (330)</td>
<td>A</td>
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<td>90% (319)</td>
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<td>73% (259)</td>
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<tr>
<td>70% (248)</td>
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<td>67% (237)</td>
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<tr>
<td>63% (223)</td>
<td>D</td>
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<tr>
<td>60% (213)</td>
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OFFICE HOURS AND LOCATION

My office is located in Cavanaugh Hall in room 303F Cavanaugh Hall. My regular office hours this semester will be Mondays and Wednesdays from 2:00-4:00. I am also happy to meet with students individually or in groups at other times by appointment.
IMPORTANT IN CLASS ETIQUETTE RULES

To make sure that all students feel comfortable, it is expected that all students will follow the following etiquette rules:

- be in your seat and ready to begin class promptly at the official start time;
- refrain from talking loudly to your neighbors while someone else is talking;
- turn off or put on "vibrate mode" all pagers and cellular phones

POLICIES ON ACADEMIC MISCONDUCT

As a student in this course, you are governed by the IU Code of Student Ethics which prohibits “Academic Misconduct.” According to this Code, which was adopted by the trustees of Indiana University in 1998 and set forth in the IUPUI Campus Bulletin (pp. 37-38):

“The university may discipline a student for academic misconduct, which is defined as any activity which tends to undermine the academic integrity of the institution. Academic misconduct includes, but is not limited to, the following:

1. Cheating

   - A student must not use external assistance on any "in-class" or "take-home" examination, unless the instructor specifically has authorized external assistance. This prohibition includes, but is not limited to the use of tutors, books, notes, and calculators.
   - A student must not use another person as a substitute in the taking of an examination or test.
   - A student must not steal examinations or other course materials.
   - A student must not allow others to conduct research or to prepare work for him or her without advance authorization from the instructor to whom the work is being submitted. Under this prohibition, a student must not make any unauthorized use of materials obtained from commercial term paper companies or from files of papers prepared by other persons.
   - A student must not collaborate with other persons on a particular project and submit a copy of a written report which is represented explicitly or implicitly as the student's individual work.
   - A student must not use any unauthorized assistance in a laboratory, at a computer terminal, or on field work.
   - A student must not submit substantial portions of the same academic work for credit or honors more than once without permission of the instructor to whom the work is being submitted.
   - A student must not alter a grade or score in any way.

2. Fabrication

   A student must not falsify or invent any information or data in an academic exercise including, but not limited to, records or reports, laboratory results, and citations to the sources of information.
3. Plagiarism

A student must not adopt or reproduce ideas, words, or statements of another person without appropriate acknowledgment. A student must give credit to the originality of others and acknowledge an indebtedness whenever he or she does any of the following:

- Quotes another person's actual words, either oral or written;
- Paraphrases another person's words, either oral or written;
- Uses another person's idea, opinion, or theory; or
- Borrows facts, statistics, or other illustrative material, unless the information is common knowledge.

4. Interference

- A student must not steal, change, destroy, or impede another student's work. Impeding another student's work includes, but is not limited to, the theft, defacement, or mutilation of resources so as to deprive others of the information they contain.
- A student must not give or offer a bribe, promise favors, or make threats with the intention of affecting a grade or the evaluation of academic performance.

5. Violation of Course Rules

A student must not violate course rules as contained in a course syllabus which are rationally related to the content of the course or to the enhancement of the learning process in the course.

6. Facilitating Academic Dishonesty

A student must not intentionally or knowingly help or attempt to help another student to commit an act of academic misconduct.

Violation of these policies represents a serious offense and will be severely punished in this class according to the procedures outlined in the Bulletin (pp. 37-38).

MENTAL HEALTH, LEARNING, AND PHYSICAL DISABILITY Issues. If you or your fellow classmates have a disability or are experiencing mental health problems while a student at IUPUI, there are a variety of resources available to help you. Please do not hesitate to call for assistance. These resources are provided by the university to help students succeed and get the most out of their education at IUPUI. You are also welcome to talk with me about any issues or needs you may have.

- Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS): (317) 274-2548; web: http://www.life.iupui.edu/caps/
- Adaptive Educational Services (AES): (317) 274-3241; web: http://www.life.iupui.edu/aes/
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Tentative Class Schedule - Sociology-R327</th>
<th>Required Readings and Assignments</th>
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| 1/17   | Course Overview; Studying Death, Dying and Bereavement  
  Attitudes Toward Death  
  *Living with Dying, Program 1 of On Our Own Terms: Moyers on Dying**  
  DeSpelder & Strickland, Chapter 1 |
| 1/24   | Learning about Death: The Influence of Sociocultural Factors  
  Perspectives on Death: Cultural and Historical  
  Video-Jazz Funerals**  
  DeSpelder & Strickland, Chapter 2-3 |
| 1/31   | Death Systems: Mortality and Society  
  In-class study of *Tuesdays With Morrie*  
  Video-Lessons on Living**  
  DeSpelder & Strickland, Chapter 4 |

ALL EXTRA CREDIT PROPOSALS DUE TO pikel@iupui.edu BY 5:00 PM

No Exceptions
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<th>Notes</th>
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<td><strong>Video- Taboo</strong> Test #1 (Chapters 1-4)</td>
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<td>Facing Death: Living with Life-Threatening Illness</td>
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<td>Survivors: Understanding the Experience of Loss</td>
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NO TEST DURING FINAL EXAM WEEK
Extra Credit Proposal Form

Name:     Class:    Date:

This form must be completed and approved by Dr. Pike before you begin journaling. Email this form to pikel@iupui.edu (not Oncourse) by 1/31/14.

1. Describe some ideas you have about journaling on the topic of GRANDPARENTHOOD.

2. What topics do you think you will journal about?

3. How easy will it be for you to have 10 journal entries by midterm and 20 by the end of the semester ON GRANDPARENTS?

4. What have you read in the text that has triggered an idea for a journal entry (be specific, page numbers) ON GRANDPARENTS?