

Bemidji State University
Bemidji, Minnesota

Psychology 3210 CEL

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Death and Culture

HS 211 -

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755- 2803

Text: DeSpelder, L.A. and Strickland, A.L. (2004). The last dance: Encountering death and dying. (Seventh edition). Mountainview California: Mayfield Publishing Company.

Content and Purpose of Course: The study of death focuses on one of the core experiences of human life. Students taking this course will be beginning their journey of exploration, increasing their knowledge of death and dying, and raising awareness of death attitudes and behaviors practiced in various cultures. The course is grounded in psychological theory and research, as well as applying concepts and strategies to life issues confronting people in today's society. The information will be especially useful to applied psychology majors in their work with individuals and families. However, please be advised that the course is not therapy. If you are struggling with a raw grief issue, or unresolved loss from a previous time in your life, you may experience increased discomfort from the material covered in this course. Please let me know if this is happening and whether it is affecting your ability to write your assignments.

Required Work:

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| 1. 4 Multiple Choice Exams (50 points each) | 200 |
| 2. Research Article (50 pts.) | 50 |
| 3. Movie Review: | 50 |
| 4. Funeral Home visit | 50 |
| Total Points | 350 |

Grading Scale:

315-350 = A

280-314 = B

245-279 = C

210-244 = D

Less than 210 = E

Written Work: All work must be proofread and checked for spelling and typos. Each error will remove one point from the report. It is helpful if you use a word processor with a spell checker.

1. Article Review: On the first page of your review, please include the following information:

Author last name, First initial., (date). Article title (first word caps, remaining lower case), Journal,v.#, pp.

Article summary: The article should be summarized in no more than 3 pages, followed by responses to the following questions:

- A. Legibility: was the article clearly written and understood? If not what could be done to improve?
- B. Hypothesis: was the hypothesis clearly stated and either refuted or supported? If not, was the research exploratory?
- C. Were the measures used to collect data reliable and valid? Did the authors verify this, or were you left to figure this on your own?
- D. Sample: was the sample randomly selected and large enough to analyze? If not, what was wrong with the sample?
- E. Statistical Analysis and Conclusions: were the statistics easy to understand? Did the conclusions naturally follow from them? If not, why? Has your preparation been weak? Or are they using very complicated analyses?

2. Movie Review – You will view one movie that addresses the topic of death. One example of this is "Harold and Maude" and others may include "Tuesdays with Morrie" and "One True Thing" or any other you like. Your task is to write a review of one of these films, including the following information: (No more than three pages)

- A. Summary of the story
- B. Identification of major characters and their attitudes towards death and their attitudes towards life.
- C. What did you learn from this film about your views on death

3. Visit to Funeral Home: You will interview a funeral home director in your home town about the funeral process, tour the home, including the "preparation room," casket room, etc. and write a three-page paper about the experience. Remember to name the funeral home and director. Be sure to ask about cremation and funerals for American Indians and consumers of different cultures.

Reading Assignments:

| <u>Topic</u> | <u>Reading</u> |
|--|----------------|
| Introduction - Death and Dying . | |
| Attitudes Toward Death | Ch 1 |
| Film: "Harold and Maude" | |
| Death/life attitudes | |
| Perspectives on Death | |
| Historical and Cross-Cultural | Ch. 2 |
| Learning About Death: Socio-cultural | |
| Forces | Ch. 3 |
| Health Care Systems | Ch. 4 |
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| Exam 1 - Chapters 1-4 | |
| Film Review paper should be sent in around the time of the first exam. | |
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| Facing Death: Living with Life-Threatening Illness | Ch. 5 |
| Medical Ethics | Ch. 6 |
| Grief and Survivors | Ch. 7 |
| Last Rites: Funerals and Body Disposition | Ch. 8 |
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| Exam 2- Chapters 5-8 | |
| The funeral home visit should be made around this time | |
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| The Law and Death | Ch. 9 |
| Death in the Lives of Children and Adolescents | Ch. 10 |
| Death in the lives of Adults | Ch. 11 |
| Suicide | Ch. 12 |
| | |
| Exam 3 - Chapters 9-12 | |
| The research article review should be turned in around this time. | |
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| Risks of Death in the Modern World | Ch. 13 |
| Life After Death | Ch. 14 |
| The Future | Ch. 15 |
| | |
| Exam 4 - Chapters 13-15 | |

Please observe the highest academic integrity during the course. This includes an honor test-taking standard and all papers should be written by you without plagiarizing other authors.