



PSY: 443.01E Psychology of Death & Dying

Course Syllabus: Spring 2025

INSTRUCTOR INFORMATION

Instructor: Leon King

Office Location: Collin County Higher Education Center

Office Hours: Tuesdays 2:00 – 4:30 pm at CHEC or 3:00 – 6:00 Mondays via Zoom
(please notify me in advance if you plan on meeting via Zoom so I can send a link)

University Email Address: leon.king@tamuc.edu

Preferred Form of Communication: E-mail or via Zoom

Communication Response Time: 24 hours Monday through Friday and 48 hours on
holidays and weekends

COURSE INFORMATION

Materials – Textbooks, Readings, Supplementary Readings

Corr, C., Corr, D., & Doka, K. (2025). *Death & Dying, Life & Living* (Ninth ed.). Cengage.
ISBN: 978-0-357-94692-3

Course Description

A study of the psychological, and psychosocial factors involved in the construction of different concepts of death, dying, and mourning. The course will prepare students to engage in the research literature within the applied contexts of death and dying. Topics will cover four major areas of thanatology: 1. History and development of thanatology 2. Psychological and behavioral consequences of mortality, 3. Applied understandings of clinical approaches to mourning and grief treatment 4. Cultural and sociological approaches towards death and the dead.

The syllabus/schedule are subject to change.

Student Learning Outcomes:

1. Students will demonstrate their understanding of thanatology in terms of its historical development, psychological implications, treatment of grief and mourning, and the cultural and social issues around the topic by maintaining class attendance and participating in class discussion.
2. Students will demonstrate understanding and elaboration through engagement with the primary text by participating in weekly discussion posts, which will require students to synthesize multidisciplinary works within the field.
3. Students will pick and analyze a psychological theory within the field of thanatology to explain and evaluate the supporting research, as well as explain future directions for said theory.
4. Students will apply their skills in research literacy to demonstrate their ability to analyze a social, cultural, or political circumstance in terms of our current understandings of death and dying.
5. Students will demonstrate their ability to transform the theoretical knowledge of thanatology into a proposal that addresses a social, cultural, or political concern by developing a solution and presenting it to an audience.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

This class will meet once a week on Wednesdays from 3:00 – 5:00 pm via Zoom. You are enrolled in a Web based class, so there will be no in-person meeting at any of the ETAMU campuses, however it is expected that the student will meet each week via Zoom in a quiet location with their webcams turned on providing instructor, classmates and guest speakers their undivided attention.

Research Participation:

One of the goals of this class is to help you become familiar with psychological research. One way to obtain this goal is to have you participate in research studies. Participating in research studies contributes to students and faculty at East Texas A&M University, your understanding of how research is conducted, and human knowledge in general. All students in this class will be required to participate in the psychology department's participant pool or complete alternative assignments (see me for more information on alternative assignments).

Students must complete a total of 6 experiment credits. However, if you complete your first 4 experiment credits without any "no-shows" you will receive 2 free *punctual participant credits*. In other words, if you show up to your experiments on time you will only need to complete 4 experiment credits. When you first sign into the experiment management system (EMS) you will be asked to take a prescreen. The prescreen takes about 20 minutes to complete. If you complete the prescreen in the first two weeks of the semester you will receive ½ free

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experiment credit. This can be combined with later experiments that are worth ½ credit.

If you fail to complete this portion of the class your grade will be lowered by one full grade. In effect, if you have an 'A' in the class but fail to complete your research participation (either through participating in research studies, alternative assignments, or a mixture of both) your final grade in the class will be a 'B.' More information about participating in research, such as how to log in to the EMS, is given at the end of this syllabus.

Minimal Technical Skills Needed

Learning Management System D2L, Using Microsoft Word, PDF, and Power Point, Zoom capabilities with webcam.

Instructional Methods

Because the discussion of death and dying comes with a lot of emotion, deep thought/reflections and interpersonal skills, this class lends itself to a platform in which members of the class will interact with the instructor, classmates, and guest speakers. Since this is a web-based course, students will meet with the instructor, classmates, and guest speakers virtually via Zoom on Wednesdays from 3:00 – 5:00 pm.

Student Responsibilities or Tips for Success in the Course

All graded work must be submitted to the appropriate drop box in D2L on time. There will be NO LATE SUBMISSIONS ACCEPTED! If the student is experiencing a true emergency and needs an extension, the student must contact the instructor BEFORE the deadline. THERE WILL BE NO AFTER THE FACT LATE SUBMISSIONS ACCEPTED!

GRADING

Final grades in this course will be based on the following scale:

- A = 90%-100%
- B = 80%-89%
- C = 70%-79%
- D = 60%-69%
- F = 59% or Below

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Course Reflection Paper	10%
Career Reflections	10%
Self-Care Project	20%
Reflective Journal	30%
Legacy Project	30%
Total	100%

Assessments

Course Reflection Paper – At the end of this course, each student will write a 3 – 5-page paper reflecting on what they learned throughout the course. Within the reflection paper, each student must include at least two evidence-based journal articles supporting the student’s view or supporting the need for further study in the field of psychology of death and dying. For example, a student might come out of class feeling that they are not able to work within the area of supportive care to individuals with terminal illnesses, or with families who recently lost a loved one, due to feelings of being burned out. If the student states in their reflection paper, a fear of burn-out, then the student will locate at least two journal articles that support trends in burn-out among workers in this field.

Career Reflections – Throughout this course, there will be guest speakers who will join us to discuss their role in supporting terminally ill patients and their families, or families who recently lost a family member due to death. After each presentation, each student will be required to write a 2 – 3-page paper reflecting on their thoughts from the presentation and if the career discussed is one in which the student may be interested in pursuing. The student will also be required to include at least one creditable resource about the profession discussed by the guest speaker. For example, if a music therapist gives a presentation, the student will discuss their thoughts about music therapy. If interested in becoming a music therapist, they might seek out a music therapy program and discuss the qualifications and salary of a music therapist.

Self-Care Project – Because working with people at times of near death and immediately following death, wears on workers within this field over time, self-care become essential. Self-care in this sense is finding a way to emotionally recharge and take a break. Self-care is going to look very different from person-to-person. For this project, the student must first write a 5 – 7-page report that includes at least 3 references about self-care activities that people who work in this field may find helpful. The students must then try at least one of the activities discussed in their research paper, present their activity to the class and close the report out on a reflection about if

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the student feels the activity they selected, might be helpful to them. For example, if a student learns about poetry being an avenue for self-care, the student will first write a report about how poetry is used for self-care and then write a poem that he/she will present to the class. The students will then need to close out their written report, sharing how writing a poem was helpful or not helpful to them.

Reflective Journal – One of the major components of this course, and any time a person is working with terminally ill patients, the patient’s families, or families who recently experienced death, is that there needs to be self-reflection and identifying with one’s personal feelings, which will change from day-to-day, as well as the length of time in which a person works within this field. For this reason, a major component of this course is learning how to reflect on our thoughts and feelings as we discuss the variety of topics revolving around death and dying. Each week, the student will be required to write in a reflective journal within D2L where only the student and myself will be able to review each week’s journal entry. Each journal entry must be a minimum of 200 words, address the prompt, (if a journal prompt is given), and on some weeks there may only be a time for “free writing” to demonstrate that the student gave careful thought and reflection on the material covered in both the textbook and within the class discussion of that week. If a student is unable to attend a particular class, the student will need to reflect on the textbook chapter alone, however if a student is consistently not attending class and unable to reflect on in-class discussions/activities, the student will be unable to earn full credit on his/her journal entries.

Legacy Project – Throughout this course, students will learn about “legacy projects” which serves as a tool for terminally ill patients to reminisce, as well as create a final memorial for their loved ones. On the other hand, some families after the passing of their loved one will complete a legacy project to remember their loved one who recently passed away. As the final project of this course, each student must complete an evidence-based research paper on legacy work. The research paper must fall between 5 -10 pages with at least 3 – 5 references. Each student will find a craft or activity that is used for legacy projects and discuss how the craft or activity is used. The student will then be required to complete a legacy project and conclude their report with self-reflection on how they felt about the legacy project. Finally, each student will present their legacy project to the class. For example, if a student’s hobby is photography, the student will write an evidence-based report on how photography has been used in legacy projects. The student will then complete a photography based legacy project, reflect their thoughts on using photography as a media for a legacy project, and finally present their legacy project to the class.

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TECHNOLOGY REQUIREMENTS

LMS

All course sections offered by East Texas A&M University have a corresponding course shell in the myLeo Online Learning Management System (LMS). Below are technical requirements

LMS Requirements:

<https://community.brightspace.com/s/article/Brightspace-Platform-Requirements>

LMS Browser Support:

https://documentation.brightspace.com/EN/brightspace/requirements/all/browser_support.htm

Zoom Video Conferencing Tool

https://inside.tamuc.edu/campuslife/CampusServices/CITESupportCenter/Zoom_Account.aspx?source=universalmenu

ACCESS AND NAVIGATION

You will need your campus-wide ID (CWID) and password to log into the course. If you do not know your CWID or have forgotten your password, contact the Center for IT Excellence (CITE) at 903.468.6000 or helpdesk@tamuc.edu.

Note: Personal computer and internet connection problems do not excuse the requirement to complete all course work in a timely and satisfactory manner. Each student needs to have a backup method to deal with these inevitable problems. These methods might include the availability of a backup PC at home or work, the temporary use of a computer at a friend's home, the local library, office service companies, Starbucks, a East Texas A&M University campus open computer lab, etc.

Technical Support

If you are having technical difficulty with any part of Brightspace, please contact Brightspace Technical Support at 1-877-325-7778. Other support options can be found here:

<https://community.brightspace.com/support/s/contactsupport>

COMMUNICATION AND SUPPORT

If you have any questions or are having difficulties with the course material, please contact your instructor.

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Interaction with Instructor Statement

Students in this course may contact the instructor either face-to-face prior to PSY 305 on Tuesday afternoons, through E-mail or through Zoom.

COURSE AND UNIVERSITY PROCEDURES/POLICIES

Course Specific Procedures/Policies

No late work will be accepted without prior written permission from the instructor.

Syllabus Change Policy

The syllabus is a guide. Circumstances and events, such as student progress, may make it necessary for the instructor to modify the syllabus during the semester. Any changes made to the syllabus will be announced in advance.

University Specific Procedures

Student Conduct

All students enrolled at the University shall follow the tenets of common decency and acceptable behavior conducive to a positive learning environment. The Code of Student Conduct can be found at <https://www.tamuc.edu/student-code-of-conduct/>.

If you believe someone has engaged in behaviors that do not align with the Code of Student Conduct or you have other concerns, please visit the File a Report page at <https://www.tamuc.edu/office-of-student-rights-and-responsibilities/concerns-incident-reporting/>

Students should also consult the Rules of Netiquette for more information regarding how to interact with students in an online forum:
<https://www.britannica.com/topic/netiquette>

Academic Integrity

Students at East Texas A&M University are expected to maintain high standards of integrity and honesty in all of their scholastic work. For more details and the definition of academic dishonesty see the following procedures:

Undergraduate student academic dishonesty policy
[Undergraduate Academic Dishonesty 13.99.99.R0.03](#)

Undergraduate student academic dishonesty policy

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[Undergraduate Student Academic Dishonesty Form](#)

Graduate student academic dishonesty policy:

<https://inside.tamuc.edu/aboutus/policiesproceduresstandardsstatements/rulesProcedures/13students/graduate/13.99.99.R0.10.pdf>

Graduate student academic dishonesty form:

<https://inside.tamuc.edu/academics/graduateSchool/faculty/GraduateStudentAcademicDishonestyForm.pdf>

East Texas A&M University Attendance

For more information about the attendance policy please visit the [Attendance](#) webpage.

Artificial Intelligence

East Texas A&M University acknowledges that there are legitimate uses of Artificial Intelligence, Chatbots, or other software that has the capacity to generate text, or suggest replacements for text beyond individual words, as determined by the instructor of the course.

Any use of such software must be documented. Any undocumented use of such software constitutes an instance of academic dishonesty (plagiarism).

Individual instructors may disallow entirely the use of such software for individual assignments or for the entire course. Students should be aware of such requirements and follow their instructors' guidelines. If no instructions are provided the student should assume that the use of such software is disallowed.

In any case, students are fully responsible for the content of any assignment they submit, regardless of whether they used an AI, in any way. This specifically includes cases in which the AI plagiarized another text or misrepresented sources.

Students with Disabilities-- ADA Statement

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) is a federal anti-discrimination statute that provides comprehensive civil rights protection for persons with disabilities. Among other things, this legislation requires that all students with disabilities be guaranteed a learning environment that provides reasonable accommodation of their disabilities. If you have a disability requiring accommodation, please contact:

Office of Student Disability Services
Velma K. Waters Library- Room 162
Phone (903) 886-5930

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Fax (903) 468-8148

Email: StudentDisabilityServices@tamuc.edu

Website: <http://inside.tamuc.edu/campuslife/campusServices/StudentDisabilityServices/default.aspx>

Mental Health and Well-Being

The university aims to provide students with essential knowledge and tools to understand and support mental health. As part of our commitment to your well-being, we offer access to Telus Health, a service available 24/7/365 via chat, phone, or webinar. Scan the QR code to download the app and explore the resources available to you for guidance and support whenever you need it.



East Texas A&M University Supports Students' Mental Health

The Counseling Center at East Texas A&M University, located in the Halladay Building, Room 203, offers counseling services, educational programming, and connection to community resources for students. Students have 24/7 access to the Counseling Center's crisis assessment services by calling 903-886-5145. For more information regarding Counseling Center events and confidential services, please visit www.tamuc.edu/counsel

Nondiscrimination Notice

East Texas A&M University will comply in the classroom, and in online courses, with all federal and state laws prohibiting discrimination and related retaliation based on race, color, religion, sex, national origin, disability, age, genetic information or veteran status.

Further, an environment free from discrimination based on sexual orientation, gender identity, or gender expression will be maintained.

Campus Concealed Carry Statement

Texas Senate Bill - 11 (Government Code 411.2031, et al.) authorizes the carrying of a concealed handgun in East Texas A&M University buildings only by persons who have been issued and are in possession of a Texas License to Carry a Handgun. Qualified law enforcement officers or those who are otherwise authorized to carry a concealed

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handgun in the State of Texas are also permitted to do so. Pursuant to Penal Code (PC) 46.035 and East Texas A&M University Rule 34.06.02.R1, license holders may not carry a concealed handgun in restricted locations.

For a list of locations, please refer to the [Carrying Concealed Handguns On Campus](#) document and/or consult your event organizer.

Web url:

<http://www.tamuc.edu/aboutUs/policiesProceduresStandardsStatements/rulesProcedures/34SafetyOfEmployeesAndStudents/34.06.02.R1.pdf>

Pursuant to PC 46.035, the open carrying of handguns is prohibited on all East Texas A&M University campuses. Report violations to the University Police Department at 903-886-5868 or 9-1-1.

COURSE OUTLINE / CALENDAR

Week:	Date:	Topics:	Assignments:
1	1/12 - 1/18	Ch 1 Education about Death & Dying, Ch. 2 Changing Encounters with Death	Reflective Journal
2	1/19 - 1/25	Ch 3 Changing Attitudes towards Death	Reflective Journal
3	1/26 - 2/1	Ch 5 Cultural Patterns and death	Reflective Journal
4	2/2 - 2/8	Ch 4 Death -Related Practices	Guest Speaker: Hospice Care, Career Reflection Paper 1 Due
5	2/9 - 2/15	Ch 6 Coping with Dying	Reflective Journal
6	2/16 - 2/22	Ch. 7 Coping with Dying: How Individuals Help	Reflective Journal
7	2/23 - 3/1	Ch. 8 Coping with Dying: How Communities Can Help	Guest Speaker: Music Therapy, Career Reflection Paper 2 Due

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8	3/2 - 3/8	Ch. 9 Coping with Loss and Grief, Ch. 10 Coping with Loss and Grief: How Individuals Help	Self-care report and project due
9	3/9 - 3/15	Spring Break	
10	3/16 - 3/22	Ch 11 Coping with Loss and Grief How Communities Can Help	Guest Speaker: Green Funerals, Career Reflection Report 3 Due
11	3/23 - 3/29	Ch 14 Young and Middle-aged Adults, Chapter 15 Older Adults	Reflective Journal
12	3/30 - 3/5	Chapter 12 Children, Chapter 13 Adolescents	Guest Speaker: Child Life, Career Reflection Report 4 Due
13	3/6 - 3/12	Ch 16 Legal Issues, Ch 17 Aided Death	Guest Speaker: Organ Donation, Career Reflection Report 5 Due
14	3/13 - 3/19	Ch 18 Aided Death	Reflective Journal
15	3/20 - 3/26	Ch 19 The meaning & Place of death, Ch 20 Alzheimer's Disease	Reflective Journal
16	3/27 - 5/3	Work on Legacy Project/Report	Course Reflection Paper Due
17	5/4 - 5/9	Legacy Report/Projects Due	Present Legacy Projects

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