THE DEPARTMENT OF SOCIOLOGY and
SUBSTANCE ABUSE STUDIES

Presents

THE SOCIOLOGY OF DEATH AND DYING

INSTRUCTOR       Gary Steward, Jr., Ph.D.          TERM       Spring 2013
OFFICE           LA 104B                            DAYS       M – F and M - S
OFFICE HOURS     10:00-11:00p                        DATES      12/17 – 12/21 & 1/7 - 1/12
PH. NUMBER       (405) 974-5528                      PREFIX/#   SOC 4910
E-MAIL           gsteward@uco.edu                  CRN        27874
CLASSROOM        LAR 225                           HOURS      5:30 - 10:00p
CLASS SUPPLIES   Scanforms (2) and Bluebook        PREREQS   ENG 1213

REQUIRED TEXT
Kastenbaum, Robert J.
Education, Inc.

ABOUT THE INSTRUCTOR

B.A. Sociology, M.A. Criminal Justice Administration and Management, Ph.D.
Sociology. Academic interests include; social deviance, collective behavior and social
movements, sociology of religion, social psychology, and sociology of death and dying.

COURSES TAUGHT AT UCO

Sociology (SOC 2103), Social Problems (SOC 2203), Cultural Anthropology (SOC
2413), Cults and Followings (4963/5963), Deviant Religious Movements (SOC 4910/
5910), Social Deviance (SOC 4243/5243), Sociology of Death and Dying (SOC
4910/5910), Sociology of Evil (SOC 4960/5960), Brotherhoods and Conspiracies (SOC
4910/5910), Sociological Research (SOC 4773/5773), Innovations in Corrections and
Penology (CJ 4063/5063), Administration of Correctional Institutions (CJ 4703),
Correctional Systems Mngmt and Adm. (CJ 5133), Critical Issues in Corrections (CJ
4723/5723), Community-Based Corrections (CJ 4713/5713).

ABOUT THE COURSE

It is conceivable that historians 100 years from now will refer to this present age as the
Age of Death. It is difficult to imagine any period in human history in which death and
dying has rivaled our own in terms of documentation, exploration, exploitation, and
discourse among the masses.
About The Course con’t.

Sociologists have an interest in the social dimensions and ramifications of death and dying. While the topic to most students is macabre, sociologists have posited numerous theoretical orientations which are intriguing. We will discuss death and dying within the context of sociological theory. Although this course is not designed to provide a catharsis for those involved in grief work or in a state of bereavement, it does, however, provide a venue for discussion. Anecdotally, students have informed me that the information in this course aided them in addressing this issue.

The development of this course was prompted, in part, by personal research coupled with an interest in the topic. The course is divided into two parts. Part one confronts the issue of death in our society. The second part examines the topic of dying. Dying, sociologically, is a relatively new phenomenon (certainly less than 80 years old). Our objective in this course is to uncover sociological frameworks that illuminate the meaning and aspects of dying in the modern world.

You should anticipate an enjoyable learning experience as we explore this intriguing subject. Please feel comfortable sharing your thoughts, experiences, and feelings relevant to the course material.

CENTRAL SIX OBJECTIVES

This course satisfies the following University level objectives known as the CENTRAL SIX.

Discipline Knowledge—This course meets the Central Six discipline knowledge objective by engaging students to acquire basic knowledge of the cultural contexts of death and dying. Students are encouraged to be active in their acquisition of knowledge related to the content of this course.

Research—This course meets the Central Six research objective by engaging students in research. Although this is not primary research, a number of research skills related to literature review, etc. are employed in this course.

Health and Wellness—This course meets the Central Six health and wellness objectives by engaging students in the examination of community health issues inextricably related to the process of dying. In addition, the manner in which people die in advance modern societies are confronted with a host of issues related to health and wellness. This course unbundles these issues.

COURSE OBJECTIVES

After successfully completing this course, you will:

1) have the facts, ideas, and principles related to the development of sociological research and theory related to death and dying.
Course Objectives Con’t.

2) be able to evaluate and dissect common definitions of death and the sociological significance of such definitions.

3) be able to summarize the shift in attitudes from a religious to secular framework of death and dying.

4) be able to articulate the death system.

5) be able to detail the ideas of grief-work, bereavement, and the significance of institutions related to death and dying.

6) be able to assess the intrigue and anxiety that Americans share on death and dying.

7) understand the framework of dying in the modern world.

8) add to your vocabulary academic terms germane to the discipline of sociology and specifically, the sociology of death and dying.

COURSE ORGANIZATION

The course objectives will be achieved through the following methods.

Reading  Prior to the conclusion of the fall semester, you should come to my office and pick up a reading list. This will give you some time to begin the reading assignments. Although the book is a side-show, it supplements the course. I suggest that you keep this book for future reference.

Lectures Lecture material will parallel your reading in the text. It is imperative that you attend class for information which transcends the text.

Class Particip Class participation is very important in the dynamics of learning and extrapolating the information to contemporary phenomenon.

Term Paper The writing component will aid you in understanding the ideas embedded in the course. A minimum of 8 to 10 pages on a relevant topic is required. Your topic must be approved before you begin your research. The paper is worth 100 points. It is due on Saturday (1-12-13).

Exams There are two (3) scheduled exams in this course worth 100 pts each. The exams cover lecture, film, class discussions, and reading material. Exams consist of essays, identifications, and objective questions.
OTHER POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

Make-up Exams  All make-up exams must be arranged with the professor.

Grading  The total points in this course is 400. The grade categories are the typical 90-80-70 etc. and are as follows:

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\begin{align*}
A &= 360 - 400; \\
B &= 320 - 359; \\
C &= 280 - 319; \\
D &= 240 - 279; \\
F &= \text{below } 239
\end{align*}
\]

Attendance  I believe attendance to be very important. There are no deductions for absences unless you exceed 15% of the class. Each absence which exceeds the 15% threshold is subject to a five point deduction. In addition, poor attendance places you at significant risk for catastrophic failure on the exams. Each class is divided into quarters by three scheduled breaks. Each quarter is counted as a meeting period (class). Therefore, each evening that we meet comprises four periods. Roll will be called or a sign-up sheet provided at the conclusion of each period.

Instructor Availability  If you are not able to make appointments before or after class, contact me to arrange a time that is more convenient.

Accommodations  The University of Central Oklahoma complies with Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the American with Disabilities Act of 1990. Students with disabilities who need accommodations must make their requests by contacting Disability Support Services, at (405) 974-2516. The DSS Office is located in the Nigh University Center, Room 309. Students should also notify the instructor of accommodation needs by the second class period.

Phones/Pagers  Please turn off mobile phones and pagers. Both forms of technology can be remarkably annoying and disruptive to the class.

Child Care  On occasion child care is difficult to secure. Although I am sympathetic to such problems, it is nevertheless inappropriate to bring children to class. If this matter does arise, please seek the classroom notes from another student.

Class Civility  Civility to one another is required. This includes respect to one another during class discussions as well as classroom etiquette. Talking, excessive exits/entrances, note-passing, pestering fellow students, etc. will not be tolerated. I will reason with you in private for the first violation. You will be chided in public upon a second violation. You will be expelled from the class on the third violation.
*The Official Policy of Academic Affairs on a number of important issues can be found at http://www.uco.edu/academic-affairs/files/studentinfosheetfal12.pdf

Simply scroll to the link that says “student information sheet.” Carefully read the official policy at your earliest convenience. If you have any questions, please consult me immediately. The following categories include: Academic Integrity Statement, Uconnect Statement, Incomplete Grade, Withdrawing From All Classes, Emergency Individual Class Drop or Complete Withdrawal, Important Dates, Semester Holidays, Library Hours, Weather Related Information, Emergencies During Finals Statement, Final Exam Daily Limits, How to Contact a Faculty Member, Class Attendance, Turnitin.com, and Helpful Numbers.

ABOUT THE WRITING COMPONENT

**Length:** Eight to ten page minimum.

**Topic:** You may choose any approved topic on death/dying, provided that it is consistent with our definition. Prior approval is required.

**Format:** I would suggest using the format offered in the Sociology Student Writer's Manual (UCO bookstore). It provides detailed information regarding all facets of research format for a college level paper.

- 1" margin (top, right, left, and bottom)
- Pagination- bottom center
- 12 pt. font (Times New Roman or Courier)
- Right Justified optional
- Title page (see example)
- Headings (three levels)
- Reference Page
- All other requirements cogent to this paper will be discussed in class.

**Grades** The paper is worth 100 points. The majority of the evaluation will relate to your coverage of the topic (80%). A narrow focus is preferred to a summary or overview of a topic. Integrating class ideas (if appropriate) is also important. Grammar, writing style, and format will constitute roughly 20% of the evaluation.

**Due** The paper is due on Saturday 1-12-13

TENTATIVE READING AND EXAM SCHEDULE

**Week 1**

**Topics:**
- Introduction to the course
- Sociological Perspective
- The Social Construction of Death

Chapters 1, 2, 3
Tentative Reading and Exam Schedule con’t.

The Precarious Nature of Defining Death
From a Religious to Secular Framework of Death
America: The Land Where Nobody Dies
The Pornography of Death
Institutionalized Death
The Social Significance of Bereavement and Grief
Public and Private Dimensions of Mourning
The Professionalization of Death Work
Funerals as Ritualization
The De-ritualization of the Funerary
The Death of Pets
The Death of Children
Near Death Experiences

Exam #1- - Most likely the final session on December 21 or first session on Jan 7, 2013.

Exam #2- - Most likely the first session on Thursday Jan 10, 2013. Covers Chapters 11-13

Week 2

Chapters 4, 5, 14

Topics: Introduction to Dying
The Medicalization of Dying
A Historical Perspective on Dying
Dying: A New Phenomenon of the 20th Century
Dying as a Social Role
The Health Care Profession and the Management of Dying
Places of Dying: Hospitals and Hospices
The Inequality of Dying
Awareness Context and the Dying

Exam #3- - The Final session on Saturday (1-12-13). Chapters 4, 5, 14.