THE DEPARTMENT OF SOCIOLOGY and
SUBSTANCE ABUSE STUDIES

Presents

THE SOCIOLOGY OF DEATH AND DYING

INSTRUCTOR: Gary Steward, Jr., Ph.D.
OFFICE: LA 104B
OFFICE HOURS: 10:00-11:00p
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CLASSROOM: LAR 225
CLASS SUPPLIES: Scanforms (2) and Bluebook

TERM: Spring 2013
DAYS: M – F and M - S
DATES: 12/17 – 12/21 & 1/7 - 1/12/13
PREFIX/#: SOC 5910
CRN: 27875
HOURS: 5:30 - 10:00p

REQUIRED TEXT

Kastenbaum, Robert J.

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 (4910/5910), Deviant Religious Movements (SOC 4910/5910), Social Deviance (SOC 4243/5243), Sociology of Death and Dying (SOC 4910/5910), Sociology of Evil (SOC 4910/5910), 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 Mgmt 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 hard to imagine any period in human history in which the subject of 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 simply fascinating. 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 aided them in addressing the issue.

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

Each part of the course will be preceded by a full-length movie drawn from popular culture. The films provide discussion topics as well as setting the stage for each part. In addition to the major motion pictures, a series of shorter films will be shown regularly throughout the semester.

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. A number of research skills related to literature review, etc. are employed in this course in addition to primary data collection.

**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.

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. 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 for graduate credit is 8–10 pages (total points equal 100) for the first topic, and an additional 5-6 page (40 pts.) paper on a second topic.
Course Organization con’t.

Your topic must be approved before you begin your research. It is due on Saturday (1-12-13).

Oral Presentation

A formal presentation based on either the 8-10 page or the 5 page paper is required for all graduates. The presentation is worth 10 points.

Exams

There are three (3) scheduled exams in this course worth 100 pts each. The exams cover lecture, film, class discussions, and reading material. Exams consist of essays, short answers, and objective questions.

Total Points

Total points in this course is 450 points. The following grade categories apply: A = 414 - 450; B = 378 - 413; C = 342 - 377; D = 306 - 341; F = Below 306.

OTHER POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

Make-up Exams

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

Grade Categories

As stated, the total points in this course are 350. The grade categories apply (A= 92-100, B= 84-91, C= 76-83, D= 68 - 75, F= below 68%):

Attendance

I believe attendance to be very important. There are no deductions for absences unless you exceed 12% of the class. Each absence which exceeds the 12% 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 passed 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 special 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 special accommodation needs by the end of the first week of class.
Other Policies and Procedures Con’t.

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. The second violation will prompt a public chiding. You will be expelled from the class on the third violation.

Graduate Credit
Graduates are differentiated from undergraduate in several ways. First, graduates must perform at a higher level than undergraduates. This is reflected in the more stringent evaluation mode (i.e., grade categories). Second, graduates must write an additional paper related to death or dying. Third, graduates are required to deliver a presentation related to their research. Fourth, graduates have stricter guidelines for attendance. These four components justify graduate credit.

*The Official Policy of Academic Affairs related to important issues can be found: http://www.uco.edu/academic-affairs/files/studentinfosheetfal12.pdf

Please 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, and Helpful Numbers.

ABOUT THE WRITING COMPONENT

Length
The first topic must be 8-10 pages (100 points). The second topic requires a five page paper (40 points).

Topic
You may choose any approved topic on death/dying, provided that it is consistent with our definition. Prior approval is REQUIRED. You will be working with me about collecting primary data for the research.
About the Writing Component con’t.

Format
I would suggest using the format offered in the Sociology Student Writer's Manual. It provides detailed information regarding all facets of research format for a college level paper. If you do not have a copy of this text, the following details may be adhered to for these papers.

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

Grades
The papers are worth 100 and 40 points respectively. 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). A ten point deduction will be assessed to any late papers.

TENTATIVE READING AND EXAM SCHEDULE

Week 1
Chapters 1, 2, 3

Topics:
Introduction to the course
Sociological Perspective
The Social Construction of Death
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
Tentative Reading and Exam Schedule con’t.

Exam #1- - Most likely the last session on Dec 21 or the first session on 1-7-13.

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.