

**Chaminade University of Honolulu  
PSY 463 Psychology of Death and Dying  
Fall 2016  
(10 Week Semester)**

Instructor: Katrina Moss, Psy D, MFT  
Email: katrina.moss@chaminade.edu

**Office Hours: *by appointment***

Class Time: Tuesday 530

Location: Schofield Barracks

Required Text:

Kastenbaum, R. (2012), Death, Society, and Human Experience (11<sup>th</sup> Ed.). New York: Routledge  
Taylor & Francis Group

**Catalog Course Description**

The scope of this course is an exploration into the domain of death and dying. The focus of the course will be a psychological, philosophical, theological, ethical, biological, social and scientific inquiry to the nature of death. Topics to be examined include nature of death, life after death, assisted suicide, right to die, suicide, bereavement, death system, death counseling, death in society, Eastern approaches to death, and issues of death and dying within the context of nursing. Our focus on death will be guided by concepts derived from evolutionary theory, the stress response and stress management. Fulfills interdisciplinary course requirement. Cross-listed as PH/RE 463.

**Program Linking Statement – Psychology**

This course develops and assesses the skills and competencies for the program student learning outcome of Specific Focuses in Psychology. In addition, this course also addresses the program student learning outcomes of 1) Scientific Method and its Application in the Field of Psychology and 2) Cross-Cultural Psychology.

**Program Linking Statement – Religion**

This course develops and assesses the skills and competencies for Religious Studies: Intellectual Tradition - world religions; Moral and Spiritual - engagement for personal growth, application to real world situations, fundamental questions of ultimate meaning, meaning of morality and moral decision making; and Religion and Culture - awareness of uniqueness of Hawaii and Pacific Rim, religions and cultures interaction affecting values.

## **Student Learning Outcomes**

Student will demonstrate an understanding of

1. how evolutionary theory, the stress response and stress management provide an integrated approach to the issue of death and dying.
2. an interdisciplinary approach (psychology, religion, philosophy, science, etc.) to death and dying.
3. cross-cultural approaches to death and dying.
4. children's experiences and perceptions regarding death.
5. how society addresses death/the death system.
6. death and dying within the context of nursing.
7. developmental/biological aspects of death.
8. counseling, spirituality and death.
9. the relationship between ethics, the medical profession, technology and death and dying.
10. how this course can be addressed from each of the 5 Marianist educational values.

## **Questions to Ponder During the Course of the Semester**

1. Does our society deny death?
2. Is there life after death?
3. Does culture impact on how we view death?
4. Why do we die?
5. If there were no death, how would society be affected?
6. Who decides who lives and who dies?
7. What is the function of religion relative to the concept of death?
8. How are evolutionary theory and the stress response relevant to the concept of death?

## **Assessment**

### **Assignments:**

Final Examination  
Mid-Term Examination  
Video Presentation  
Discussion Question Responses

### **Points:**

200 points  
100 points  
100 points  
225 points (15 pts x 15)

**Total Possible Points**

**625 points**

## **Grading Scale**

A = 625 - 563  
B = 562 - 500  
C = 499 - 438  
D = 437 - 375  
F = 374 and below

The instructor will determine the final grade for all students based on the above Grading Scale. The instructor will enforce the following class policies:

- All assignments will be due by the beginning of class.
- No late assignments will be accepted unless a special arrangement was made prior to the due date or test date.
- All assignments must be completed within the time frame of this class. No work will be accepted after the last class of the term. No Incomplete grades will be issued.
- No examinations will be administered after its due date has passed (please refer to the course calendar below).

### **Attendance**

Student is expected to actively participate in discussions. Student should notify their instructor when illness or circumstances prevents them from actively participating in class for periods longer than one week.

Federal regulations require continued attendance for continuing payment of financial aid. If attendance is not continuous, financial aid may be terminated. When illness or personal reasons necessitate continued absence, the student should officially withdraw from all affected courses. Anyone who stops attending a course without official withdrawal may receive a failing grade.

### **Academic Honesty**

Academic honesty is an essential aspect of all learning, scholarship, and research. It is one of the values regarded most highly by academic communities throughout the world. Violations of the principle of academic honesty are extremely serious and will not be tolerated.

Student is responsible for promoting academic honesty at Chaminade by not participating in any act of dishonesty and by reporting any incidence of academic dishonesty to an instructor or to a University official. Academic dishonesty may include theft of records or examinations, alteration of grades, and plagiarism.

Questions of academic dishonesty in a particular class are first reviewed by the instructor, who must make a report with recommendations to the Dean of the Academic Division. Punishment for academic dishonesty will be determined by the instructor and the Dean of the Academic Division and may range from an 'F' grade for the work in question to an 'F' for the course to suspension or dismissal from the University.

### **Students with Disabilities**

Chaminade will provide assistance for any student with documented disabilities. Any student who believes he/she may need accommodations in this class must contact **Dr. June Yasuhara, 735-4845**, at the Counseling Center (office next to Security) in order to determine if the student meets the requirements for documented disability in accordance with the Americans with

Disabilities Act. It is important to contact them as soon as possible so that accommodations are implemented in a timely fashion.

### **Title IX Statement**

Chaminade University of Honolulu (CUH) recognizes the inherent dignity of all individuals and promotes respect for all people. Sexual misconduct, physical and/or psychological abuse will NOT be tolerated at CUH. If you have been the victim of sexual misconduct, physical and/or psychological abuse, we encourage you to report this matter promptly. As a faculty member, I am interested in promoting a safe and healthy environment, and should I learn of any sexual misconduct, physical and/or psychological abuse, I must report the matter to the Title IX Coordinator. Should you want to speak to a confidential source you may contact the following:

- Chaminade Counseling Center| [808 735-4845](tel:8087354845).
- Any priest serving as a sacramental confessor or any ordained religious leader serving in the sacred confidence role.

### **Description of the Assessments:**

#### **Examinations**

You will be given 1 mid-term and a final examination. The final examination will be a comprehensive examination covering the entire text.

#### **Video Presentation**

The purpose of this assignment is to add knowledge about the psychology of death and dying for the general public to consume. You will create a video that will be between 5-8 minutes in length. You will present your video in class. Your video must include, but not limited to the following:

- A title that accurately describes your presentation topic.
- A description (e.g., history, prevalence, and social-emotional impact, if applicable) of a topic introduced to you in your textbook.
- A description of empirically supported best practice treatment approaches (psychopharmaceutical-based and non-psychopharmaceutical-based approaches, if applicable) and or community interventions.
- As a non-professional, how can we support an individual experiencing your topic of choice?
- An APA-formatted reference page embedded at the end of the video.

NO COPYRIGHTED MATERIAL CAN BE USED FOR THIS PRESENTATION.

Technologies like StopMotion, VideoScribe, and the like are acceptable.

#### **Discussion Question Responses**

Each week you will be assigned to read through chapters from the text. Based on your readings you will be asked to respond to discussion questions/scenarios. Each discussion question response should be approximately **250 words** in length. **Reference to your textbook is required** to achieve full points. **APA formatting is required. List your sources at the bottom of your post.**

Week 1 Discussion Question: How would you describe the prevailing attitudes toward life and death among people of your age?

Week 2 Discussion Question 1: Argue against one of the main themes of this chapter. Under what conditions might we be better off if we did not think about death?

Week 2 Discussion Question 2: Argue for and against the death penalty.

Week 3 Discussion Question 1: Sociologist Allan Kellehear (2009) contends that negative value judgments on dying alone are off base. “Dying alone is viewed either as an outcome or anti-social behavior or the result of family, neighborhood or social services neglect. The idea that people may be exercising agency resistance or dissent at the end of life and that they do not want attention from services or the wider community receives little or no consideration” (p. 5). Is this a valid point, or itself off base? What do your experience and judgment tell you?

Week 3 Discussion Question 2: The modern hospice movement was incubated by caregivers with a strong religious orientation, largely Christian. What should be the role of religion in palliative care today? In thinking about this question, take into account people with a terminal illness whose religious orientation differ from mainstream Christianity, have no religious affiliations, or belong to ethnic and racial groups that have not expressed much interest or comfort with the idea of hospice care. Can hospice care fulfill its promise without a strong religious orientation? Is “spirituality” identical with or significantly different from association with an established religion?

Week 3 Discussion Question 3: Either through conversations with family and friends or based on your own thoughts and feelings on this, who would donate an organ? Why or why not? Who has already signed a directive to make organs available? Why or why not? What ideas, experiences, or feelings have encouraged you or those you spoke with, to either accept or reject the option of organ donation?

Week 4 Discussion Question 1: There are times when people are at particular risk for suicide. At least two of these danger zones have been identified: 1) soon after learning that one has a progressive and life-threatening illness; and 2) soon after the death (especially if unexpected) of a close family member. Most people who do not turn to suicide while in these danger zones find other ways to cope with their situations. Here is the challenge: How can people be helped or protected during these times without having their lives invaded or restricted by well-meaning family, friends, or professional caregivers? What should be the guiding principles? How should we go about it – or should we not go about it at all?

Week 4 Discussion Question 2: In order for healing to occur, many religious faiths believe that one must forgive. What are your thoughts on the concepts of acceptance and forgiveness from the perspective of the grief and bereavement process?

Week 6 Discussion Question 1: Many people experience mixed feelings when euthanasia or assisted death situations arise. One strong impulse is to approve a course of action that will prevent or relieve suffering. Another strong impulse is to refrain from actions that are likely to foreshorten a person's life. The principle of double effect is sometimes seen as a way of resolving this conflict. A distinction is made between intent and consequence. One intends to relieve suffering; this justifies the action. If the patient's death is hastened by this action, it is an unfortunate, but not an ethically negligent consequence. Suppose you find yourself as part of the decision-making process. Would you accept the double-effect principle? Why or why not? Is this a sound, logical, and ethical way of making the decision or an unconvincing way to cope with an uncomfortable situation? If you reject the double-effect principle, what alternative would you choose, and why?

Week 6 Discussion Question 2: Based on your belief system, how would you assist a child through the grieving and bereavement process? How would you comfort a grieving child in an age appropriate manner? How would your approach differ based on the child's age?

Week 7 Discussion Question 1: Throughout much of human history people lived patterned lives: a continuity of kin, places, activities, beliefs. The United States and many other societies are now much more mobile, with discontinuities and fragmentation of life patterns partially disguised by mass media illusions of unity and belonging. What is becoming of grieving and mourning as people less often die from a coherent, patterned way of life that will mean what to whom? And what of the challenge to faith, justice, and meaning in a world where many become victims to devastation and violence? How and again, who will grieve and mourn?

Week 7 Discussion Question 2: They are three of your best friends. One is a contractor who finally has the opportunity to build an upscale residential development on choice land that has recently become available. Another is that brainiac who, to nobody's surprise, has become a rising star in science. The other person has the most interesting background, a Native American who has introduced you to a world you would not have otherwise known. What's the problem, then? The burial ground. The building project came to a halt. Lawyers now are the only people able to do anything. The developer wants to dig and build. The scientist wants to patiently excavate all the remains and artifacts as a contribution to knowledge. The Native American wants the remains to be respected and undisturbed. It happens that you are the person in the position to make the call. What do you decide and on what basis? How can the rival claims be fairly evaluated? What is the best, and what is the worst, possible outcome?

Week 8 Discussion Question 1: History, right up to the present time, suggests that people have found it easier to imagine Hell. Detailed ideas about an enjoyable afterlife are found mostly in societies that conceive of the next life as being mostly similar to the life one is leaving. In the United States, most people express a belief in survival of death, but most also are vague about Heaven and what one does there all day. Perhaps Heaven is simply beyond imagining. Let's

give it a try. 1) What is your best idea of what Heaven really is? What makes Heaven Heaven? Be as absolutely clear and detailed as you can. 2) What would Heaven be if you could design your own and have it come true? Again, challenge yourself to be as clear and detailed as you can. Do your friends and family have similar, or perhaps quite different, visions of Heaven? If you can get them to talk about them, proceed to the next question. 3) What Heaven can you, your family, and friends construct together? What might this exercise tell you about what you are looking for in your life right here and now?

Week 8 Discussion Question 2: In recent years, more people have been helping more people cope with dying and grief. However, there are still large numbers of people whose distress is often neglected. These include people residing in nursing homes and geriatric facilities, and persons with mental retardation, especially if they are institutionalized. It is commonly thought that cognitive impairment or limitations will shield a person from anxiety and grief. This assumption is seldom tested and therefore becomes self-perpetuating. Assume that you will be a human services professional, how might you address this challenge? How might you go about bringing more awareness to this challenge?

Week 8 Discussion Question 3: Characters die on television and in movies all the time. What comes to mind as the “most good” and “most not good” death you have seen in either format? And what made them so good or so not good? Perhaps this reflection will tell you a little more about your own hopes, fears, and priorities. Please elaborate on that reflection.

### **Scientific Method Definitions**

The **METHODS OF SCIENCE** are only tools, tools that we use to obtain knowledge about phenomena.

The **SCIENTIFIC METHOD** is a set of assumptions and rules about collecting and evaluating data. The explicitly stated assumptions and rules enable a standard, systematic method of investigation that is designed to reduce bias as much as possible. Central to the scientific method is the collection of data, which allows investigators to put their ideas to an empirical test, outside of or apart from their personal biases. In essence, stripped of all its glamour, scientific inquiry is nothing more **THAN A WAY OF LIMITING FALSE CONCLUSIONS ABOUT NATURAL EVENTS.**

Knowledge of which the credibility of a profession is based must be objective and verifiable (testable) rather than subjective and untestable.

**SCIENCE** is a mode of controlled inquiry to develop an objective, effective, and credible way of knowing.

The assumptions one makes regarding the basic qualities of human nature (that is, cognitive, affective, behavioral, and physiological processes) affect how one conceptualizes human behavior.

The two basic functions of scientific approach are 1) advance knowledge, to make discoveries, and to learn facts in order to improve some aspect of the world, and 2) to establish relations among events, develop theories, and this helps professionals to make predictions of future events.

Research Design in Counseling  
Heppner, Kivlighan, and Wampold

A **THEORY** is a large body of interconnected propositions about how some portion of the world operates; a **HYPOTHESIS** is a smaller body of propositions. **HYPOTHESES** are smaller versions of theories. Some are derived or born from theories. Others begin as researchers' hunches and develop into theories.

The **PHILOSOPHY OF SCIENCE** decrees we can only falsify, not verify (prove), theories because we can never be sure that any given theory provides the best explanation for a set of observations.

Research Method In Social Relations  
Kidder

**THEORIES** are not themselves directly proved or disproved by research. Even **HYPOTHESES** cannot be proved or disproved directly. Rather, research may either support or fail to support a particular hypothesis derived from a theory.

Scientific research has four general goals: (1) to describe behavior, (2) to predict behavior, (3) to determine the causes of behavior, and (4) to understand or explain behavior.

Methods In Behavioral Research; Cozby

In order to verify the reliability and validity of scientific research it is important to replicate the results. It is the preponderance of evidence that establishes/supports the theory.

<http://allpsych.com/researchmethods/replication.html>

**Marianist Educational Values**

*Chaminade University is a Catholic, Marianist University. The five characteristics of a Marianist education are:*

**1. Educate for Formation in Faith**

Catholic Universities affirm an intricate relationship between reason and faith. As important as discursive and logical formulations and critical thinking are, they are not able to capture all that can be and ought to be learned. Intellectual rigor coupled with respectful humility provide a more profound preparation for both career and life. Intellectual rigor characterizes the pursuit of all that can be learned. Respectful humility reminds people of faith that they need to learn from those who are of other faiths and cultures, as well as from those who may have no religious faith at all.

**2. Provide an Excellent Education**

In the Marianist approach to education, "excellence" includes the whole person, not just the technician or rhetorician. Marianist universities educate whole persons, developing their physical, psychological, intellectual, moral, spiritual and social qualities. Faculty and students attend to fundamental moral attitudes, develop their personal talents and acquire skills that will help them learn all their lives. The Marianist approach to education links theory and practice, liberal and professional education. Our age has been deeply shaped by science and technology. Most

recently, information and educational technologies have changed the way faculty and students research and teach. At Marianist Universities, two goals are pursued simultaneously: an appropriate use of information technology for learning, and the enhancement of interaction between students and teachers. As Catholic, Marianist Universities seek to embrace diverse peoples and understand diverse cultures, convinced that ultimately, when such people come together, one of the highest purposes of education is realized: a human community that respects every individual within it.

**3. Educate in Family Spirit**

Known for their strong sense of community, Marianists have traditionally spoken of this sense as “family spirit.” Marianist educational experience fosters the development of a community characterized by a sense of family spirit that accepts each person with loving respect, and draws everyone in the university into the challenge of community building. Family spirit also enables Marianist universities to challenge their students, faculty and staff to excellence and maturity, because the acceptance and love of a community gives its members the courage to risk failure and the joy of sharing success.

**4. Educate for Service, Justice, and Peace**

The Marianist approach to higher education is deeply committed to the common good. The intellectual life itself is undertaken as a form of service in the interest of justice and peace, and the university curriculum is designed to connect the classroom with the wider world. In addition, Marianist universities extend a special concern for the poor and marginalized and promote the dignity, rights and responsibilities of all people.

**5. Educate for Adaptation to Change**

In the midst of rapid social and technological change, Marianist universities readily adapt and change their methods and structures so that the wisdom of their educational philosophy and spirituality may be transmitted even more fully. “New times call for new methods,” Father Chaminade often repeated. The Marianist university faces the future confidently, on the one hand knowing that it draws on a rich educational philosophy, and on the other fully aware for that philosophy to remain vibrant in changing times, adaptations need to be made.

*Selected from Characteristics of Marianist Universities: A Resource Paper,  
Published in 1999 by Chaminade University of Honolulu, St. Mary's University and  
University of Dayton*

Each of these characteristics is integrated, to varying degrees, in this course.

## Tentative Course Schedule

| <b>Date</b> | <b>Class Activity</b>                                                                                                  | <b>Readings Due:</b>                 | <b>Assignments Due:</b>                                                                 |
|-------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Week 1      | Welcome<br><br>Review Syllabus<br><br>Chapter 1 As We Think About Death                                                | Chapter 1                            | <b>Week 1 Discussion Question</b>                                                       |
| Week 2      | Chapter 2 What Is Death?<br><br>Chapter 3 The Death System                                                             | Chapter 2 &<br>Chapter 3             | <b>Week 2 Discussion Question</b><br><br>(Recommended – begin research for video)       |
| Week 3      | Chapter 4 Dying<br><br>Chapter 5 Hospice and Palliative Care<br><br>Chapter 6 End-of-Life Issues and Decisions         | Chapter 4, Chapter 5, &<br>Chapter 6 | <b>Week 3 Discussion Question</b><br><br>(Recommended – conduct research for video)     |
| Week 4      | Chapter 7 Suicide<br><br>Chapter 8 Violent Death: Murder, Terrorism, Genocide, Disaster, and Accident                  | Chapter 7 &<br>Chapter 8             | <b>Week 4 Discussion Question</b><br><br>(Recommended – develop story board)            |
| Week 5      | Review Chapters 1-8                                                                                                    |                                      | <b>Mid-Term Examination</b><br><br>(Recommended – continue to develop story board)      |
| Week 6      | Chapter 9 Euthanasia, Assisted Death, Abortion, and the Right to Die<br><br>Chapter 10 Death in the World of Childhood | Chapter 9 &<br>Chapter 10            | <b>Week 6 Discussion Question</b><br><br>(Recommended – finalize story board for video) |

|         |                                                                                                             |                                      |                                                                                  |
|---------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Week 7  | Chapter 11 Bereavement, Grief, and Mourning<br><br>Chapter 12 The Funeral Process                           | Chapter 11 & Chapter 12              | <b>Week 7 Discussion Question</b><br><br>(Recommended – film video)              |
| Week 8  | Chapter 13 Do We Survive Death?<br><br>Chapter 14 How Can We Help?<br><br>Chapter 15 Good Life, Good Death? | Chapter 13, Chapter 14, & Chapter 15 | <b>Week 8 Discussion Question</b><br><br>(Recommended – edit and finalize video) |
| Week 9  | Review for Final Examination (Chapters 1 – 15)<br><br>Finalize Video Presentation                           |                                      | <b>Video Presentation is Due</b>                                                 |
| Week 10 | Final Examination (Chapters 1 through 15)                                                                   |                                      | <b>Final Examination</b>                                                         |