

CHAMINADE UNIVERSITY OF HONOLULU

PSY/RE/PH 463 Psychology of Death and Dying

Summer Session I 2023

Class Time: Online

Location: Online

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Office Hours: Mon, Wed, and Fri 11:30 am – 12:30 pm and by appointment

Required Text:

Kastenbaum, R. & Moreman, C. M. (2018). *Death, Society, and Human Experience* (12th Ed.). New York: Routledge Taylor & Francis Group

Recommended Text:

Norlander, L. (2019). *To comfort always* (2nd ed). Indianapolis, IN: Sigma Theta Tau International

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.

Psychology Minor Program Learning Outcomes (PLO)

1. **Identify some of the key concepts, principles, and overarching themes in psychology.**
2. **Apply the scientific method and critical thinking to evaluate psychological research.**
3. **Exhibit effective writing skills within the context of the field of psychology.**

Program Linking Statement – Psychology

This course develops and assesses the skills and competencies for the Psychology minor program learning outcome of 1) Identify some of the key concepts, principles, and overarching themes in psychology (PLO 1).

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.

Articulation of Characteristics and Values

PSY/RE/PH 463 Psychology of Death and Dying is guided by the Marianist Educational Value of Educate for Adaptation and Change. Father Chaminade said, “never has change been done and never will it be done without difficulty.” As Chaminade University prepares all students for life, service, and successful careers, change is inevitable and for many, the passing of our loved ones can be the most difficult change of them all. This class will help us get a deeper understanding of life’s unavoidable transition, death and dying, through the lens of a family member, friend, and service provider. In addition, this value guides this course through its focus on the development of:

1. Flexible thinking;
2. Being respectful of differences;
3. Critical thinking; and
4. Open-mindedness.

This will be found in our discussions and in our projects.

Student Learning Outcomes

Upon completion of this course, students will:

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

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?

Course Approach:

We will be utilizing an online seminar approach; thus, we will be incorporating class discussions via our online format in Canvas and/or Zoom. Students must complete the readings prior to posting any discussion material; otherwise, the discussions will not be informed ones. Due to the nature of the material we are discussing, there is likely to be some lively discussion and some disagreement on issues. In addition, some people may feel uncomfortable or upset by some of the material. As such, we want to make sure to follow these ground rules:

- Acknowledge that people in our culture have different experiences based on race, ethnicity, class, sex, age, and sexuality.
- Think psychologically about the issues we tackle and be prepared to critically analyze your own opinions and beliefs.
- Agree that this course should be a place where no one is made to feel embarrassed or ashamed. Disrespectful behavior will not be tolerated. No attacks that might be deemed personal should be made on the discussion boards. However, healthy discussion and debate is welcome and encouraged. We do not have to agree with one another, but we must be able to discuss our differences in a respectful manner.

In terms of general participation, students are responsible for all material posted each week. This course will require a fair amount of reading and video viewing, so do make sure to plan your study time wisely. Prior to any class discussions, students are expected to have engaged the material such that they are prepared with questions and reflections. This allows for more coherent participation in the course discussions. Although specific readings and videos will be assigned for each week, students are encouraged to consider and discuss comparisons and disparities among the readings and videos.

Course Website Address (Canvas): <https://chaminade.instructure.com/>

Hardware Requirements: Canvas is accessible from both PC and Mac computers with a reliable internet connection. You will also need to be able to access audio and video files. Subsequently, you should have access to speakers or headphones that allow you to hear the audio.

Software Requirements: You will need to have some ability to listen to audio in an mp3 format, watch videos in mp4 format, stream online videos, and read .pdf files. There are a number of free software online that can be downloaded for free. If you need assistance with locating software please feel free to contact me or Chaminade Help Desk at helpdesk@chaminade.edu or (808) 735-4855.

Assessment

Assignments:

Final Examination (SLO 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9)
Mid-Term Examination (SLO 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8)
Your Last Lecture Essay (SLO, 1, 2, 3, 5, 7)
Capstone Paper (SLO 1, 2, 4)
Discussion Question Responses (SLO 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8)

Total Possible Points

Points:

200 points
100 points
25 points
75 points
210 points (14 x 15 pts)
610 points

Grading Scale

A = 90% - 100%
B = 80% - 89%
C = 70% - 79%
D = 60% - 69%
F = 59% 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 in Canvas by 11:59 pm on the due date as specified in this syllabus.

Discussion responses will be allowed to be submitted up to one week late with a 50% point deduction. Discussion Participation will not be accepted after the due date specified in Canvas. The reason is because Responses and Participation assignments are designed to engage the class with your thoughts and feelings about the topics being covered for that week. Once the class has moved on to the next topic, late submissions will not be read by your peers. **The Responses and Participation adds value and depth to the class discussion during its respective week and that is why no exceptions, regardless of the reason provided, will be accepted.**

The Capstone paper will be accepted late up until the last day of class. If submitted late, regardless of reason and/or how late it is submitted, will be given a 50% point deduction.

No extensions past 11:59 pm on the respective due date specified in Canvas, regardless of reason, will be given for the Mid-Term and Final Exam.

Attendance

Student is expected to actively participate in course room 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.

Disability Access

If you need individual accommodations to meet course outcomes because of a documented disability, please speak with me to discuss your needs as soon as possible so that we can ensure your full participation in class and fair assessment of your work. Students with special needs who meet criteria for the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) provisions must provide written documentation of the need for accommodations from Kōkua 'Ike: Center for Student Learning by the end of week three of the class, in order for instructors to plan accordingly. If a student would like to determine if they meet the criteria for accommodations, they should contact the Kōkua 'Ike Coordinator at (808) 739-8305 for further information (ada@chaminade.edu).

Title IX Compliance

Chaminade University of Honolulu 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. If you or someone you know has been harassed or assaulted, you can find the appropriate resources by visiting Campus Ministry, the Dean of Students Office, the Counseling Center, or the Office for Compliance and Personnel Services.

Credit Hour Policy

The unit of semester credit is defined as university-level credit that is awarded for the completion of coursework. One credit hour reflects the amount of work represented in the intended learning outcomes and verified by evidence of student achievement for those learning outcomes. Each credit hour earned at Chaminade University should result in 37.5 hours of engagement. For example, in a one credit hour traditional face to face course, students spend 50 minutes in class per week for 15 weeks, resulting in a minimum of 12.5 instructional hours for the semester. Students are expected to engage in reading and other assignments outside of class for at least 2 additional hours per week, which equals an additional 25 hours. These two sums result in total student engagement time of 37.5 hours for the course, the total engagement time expected for each one credit course at Chaminade.

The minimum 37.5 hours of engagement per credit hour can be satisfied in fully online, internship, or other specialized courses through several means, including (a) regular online instruction or interaction with the faculty member and fellow students and (b) academic engagement through extensive reading, research, online discussion, online quizzes or exams; instruction, collaborative group work, internships, laboratory work, practica, studio work, and preparation of papers, presentations, or other forms of assessment. This policy is in accordance with federal regulations and regional accrediting agencies.

Description of the Assessments:

Exams

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

The Final Exam will include questions pertaining to the Marianist Educational Values.

Please note that Canvas will shut down the Mid-Term and Final Exam at 11:59 pm on the due date as specified in Canvas, regardless of how far you are into the exam. Subsequently, please plan ahead and give yourself ample time so this does not become an issue for you.

Your Last Lecture Essay (SLO 1, 2, 3, 5, 7) (25 pts)

What would you say if you had the opportunity to deliver a final lecture to the people who meant the most to you, especially if you knew that you had only months to live? Randy Pausch, former Carnegie Mellon University professor, gave such a talk titled, "Really Achieving Your Childhood Dreams" because he wanted to leave this legacy for his young children. While you may never have to face such a situation as Randy Pausch did, the numerous themes (life lessons) throughout the lecture (and book) are overarching and universal.

For this essay, you will compose your own "last lecture" that imparts at least three (3) life lessons that you have learned and the ones you want to "leave" to those that you care most about. This essay will focus on the life lessons that you have learned so far and how you have demonstrated resiliency, determination, and empathy despite the obstacles you may have encountered. If you have not encountered any obstacles and/or hardships, think about the ones you may potentially face moving forward in your educational and professional journey. Make sure you are comfortable with sharing about the issues that you write about. Use Randy Pausch's lecture as a model of what words of wisdom you could leave for others.

To help you get started, here are four (4) life lessons that Randy Pausch highlighted in his lecture (you are NOT restricted to these):

- Carpe diem – seize the day, live in and for the moment.
- Remember, when going through life, never to lose the wonder of childhood.
- Never let brick walls or obstacles enclose or confine you.
- Reach beyond the known and stretch out of the comfort zone.

This is not a formal paper, so writing in first person is fine. If you use any resources, you should cite them using APA style. Your “last lecture” should be a minimum of 3 full pages using 12 pt font with 1” margins. You must include a title page and a reference page, if applicable. Your title page and reference page do not count towards the minimum 3 full pages requirement.

Capstone Paper

This capstone project will integrate concepts and beliefs from the disciplines of Philosophy, Psychology, and Religion, and apply it to a project-based paper.

Scenario: You are a health care provider (e.g., nurse, counselor) and you were asked by the family of a grieving individual to assist with their emotional struggle resulting from the death.

Your paper will consist of the following components.

1. Introduction
 - a. You will select an individual from a movie, book (fiction or non-fiction), or television series, that has experienced a death of someone that person was very close too.
 - i. Introduce the individual who is grieving
 - ii. Provide the “backstory” of the individual that is grieving
 - iii. Explain the relationship the grieving individual had with the person who died.
 - iv. Explain how that person died – Was it sudden? Was it anticipated?
 - v. Explain what the individual is experiencing as a result of the death (e.g., their thoughts, feelings, emotions, and behaviors).
2. Philosophical perspective on death and dying
 - a. Summarize western philosophical perspectives on death and dying
 - b. Summarize eastern philosophical perspectives on death and dying
3. Cultural/Religious perspective on death and dying
 - a. Summarize western cultural/religious perspectives on death and dying
 - b. Summarize eastern cultural/religious perspectives on death and dying
 - c. Summarize atheists’ perspective on death and dying
4. Psychological perspective on death and dying
 - a. Summarize Existential Psychology’s perspective on death and dying
 - b. Summarize the Kubler-Ross Model on the 5-stages of grief
5. Intervention
 - a. Develop an interdisciplinary approach (philosophical, religious, and psychological) to support the individual who is having difficulty with the grieving and bereavement process.
 - b. Your approach will be unique to that individual’s situation, context, and background.
 - c. How would you support that individual’s thoughts, feelings & emotions, and behaviors?
 - i. Use the information you gathered about philosophy, religion, and psychology to support your approach.

This paper will be at least 5 pages of content (excluding title page and reference page) in paragraph form (no outlines or bullet points), double-spaced, 1” margins, utilize headers (Introduction, Philosophical Perspective, Cultural/Religious Perspective, Psychological Perspective, and Intervention), and should have a cover page.

Your paper will use a minimum of 8 credible sources (e.g., peer-reviewed journal articles, credible Internet websites, etc...)

APA formatting is preferred, but I will also accept MLA.

Your paper will be uploaded to Canvas as a .doc, .docx, or .pdf format. I will accept Google Docs, but if you share it with me, ensure that the security on that Google Doc allows me to access it. My email address is diwamoto@chaminade.edu.

Assignment Characteristics:

Pedagogical Method - Project-based learning: Students will be placed in the context of a health care provider (Nurse or Counselor) needing to support an individual suffering emotionally because of the death of another individual.

X Factor Element - Cultural Diversity & Inclusivity: Students will incorporate cultural and religious perspectives, based on their assessment of the individual they are supporting, into their approach that addresses the project-based scenario.

Student Ideas - Interdisciplinary Project: Students will integrate the concepts, theories, and perspectives from three disciplines, Philosophy, Psychology, and Religion to develop their approach that addresses the project-based scenario.

Discussion Question Responses

Discussion Question Response - Based on the video, your readings, and your thoughts on the subject, please respond to the discussion question in no less than **200 words** in length. Post your discussion response directly to Canvas. **Do not post as an attachment.** This will make it easier for everyone to see your response. List your sources at the bottom of your post using APA formatting.

Participation Requirement - Participation (responses to your peers) is very important as it contributes positively to the overall learning of the class. Participation is reviewed for both quantity and quality. For example, "I agree" or "I don't agree" without elaboration or explanation does not constitute participation because it does not add new information to the discussion. In order to earn full participation points, your responses must be related to the discussion question and include new ideas or personal perspectives. For full participation credit you are required to contribute a total of two substantive responses each week.

Following are guidelines for weekly discussion grades:

- *Excellent* = The posting and comments are accurate, original, relevant, well supported, teaches us something new or offers a new perspective, and is **well written**. Grade of 5 indicate substantial learning presence to the course and the stimulation of additional thought about the issue under discussion.
- *Above Average* = The posting and comments lack at least one of the above qualities but is above average in quality. Grade of 4 here indicate that the comments make reasonable contributions to our understanding of the issue being discussed.
- *Average* = The posting and comments lack 2 or 3 of the required qualities. Comments which are based upon personal opinion or personal experience often fall within this category. These comments typically receive a grade of 3. (Note: some discussion postings will specifically ask for personal opinion or experience and, thus, do not fall into this category). These postings may not fully address the discussion question at hand.
- *Minimal* = The posting and comments present little or no new information or does not contribute to the overall discussion board. Postings may not be complete and/or are poorly written. However, grade of 2 here indicate that the comments may provide some social presence to a collegial atmosphere.
- *Unacceptable* = The posting or comments add no value or meaningless value to the discussion, are poorly written, or do not address the question at hand. Grade of 1 will be provided.

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.

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

Date	Class Activity	Readings Due:	Assignments Due in Canvas:
Week 1 5/15 – 5/21	Welcome Review Syllabus Chapter 1 As We Think About Death Chapter 2 What Is Death? Chapter 3 The Death System Chapter 4 Dying	Chapters 1 - 4	Module 1 Discussion Response for Chapter 1, 3, & 4
Week 2 5/22 – 5/28	Chapter 5 Hospice and Palliative Care Chapter 6 End-of-Life Issues and Decisions Chapter 7 Suicide Chapter 8 Violent Death: Murder, Terrorism, Genocide, Disaster, and Accident	Chapters 5 – 8	Module 1 Discussion Participation for Chapter 1, 3, & 4 Module 2 Discussion Responses for Chapters 5, 6, 7, & 8
Week 3 5/29 – 6/4	Your Last Lecture Essay Mid-Term Exam (Chapters 1 – 8)		Module 2 Discussion Participation for Chapters 5, 6, 7, & 8 Your Last Lecture Essay Mid-Term Exam
Week 4 6/5 – 6/11	Chapter 9 Euthanasia, Assisted Death, Abortion, and the Right to Die Chapter 10 Death in the World of Childhood Chapter 11 Bereavement, Grief, and Mourning Chapter 12 The Funeral Process	Chapters 9 – 12	Module 3 Discussion Responses for Chapters 9, 10, 11, & 12
Week 5 6/12 – 6/18	Chapter 13 Do We Survive Death? Chapter 14 How Can We Help? Chapter 15 Good Life, Good Death?	Chapters 13 – 15	Module 3 Discussion Participation for Chapters 9, 10, 11, & 12 Module 4 Discussion Response for Chapter 13, 14, & 15
Week 6 6/19 – 6/25	Final Exam (Chapters 1 – 15) Capstone Paper		Module 4 Discussion Participation for Chapters 13, 14, & 15 Capstone Paper Final Exam due 11:59pm