



School of Education and Behavioral Sciences

## **PSY 463 Psychology of Death & Dying**

Asynchronous; Online

Credits: 3      Section: 90-1 & 91-1      Term: Spring DUG 2026

### **Instructor Information**

**Instructor:** Kandis Amimoto, MSCP

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**Phone:** 8084404223

**Office Location:** BS 105C

**Office Hours:** By appointment

**Virtual Office Hours:** By appointment

### **Communication**

The primary form of communication for this course will be through **Canvas Inbox**. I encourage you to reach out with any questions, clarifications, or concerns. I typically respond to emails and messages within 24 hours. Messages sent over the weekend or holidays may take longer, but I try my best to respond as soon as possible.

### **School & Department Information**

#### **School of Education and Behavioral Sciences**

Office Location: Behavioral Sciences 105

Phone: (808) 735-4751

### **Course Description & Materials**

#### **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, and Eastern approaches to death. Focus on death will be guided by concepts derived from evolutionary theory, the stress response and stress management. Fulfills interdisciplinary course requirement. Cross-listed with PH/RE 463. Offered annually. Prerequisites: PSY 101.

## Time Allocation

This is a three-credit hour course requiring 135 clock hours of student engagement, per the official CUH Credit Hour Policy (as shown above). Students enrolled in this course are anticipated to spend on average of 9 hours per week engaged in this course. This includes 24 hours studying for your mid-term and final exams, 1 hour and 15 minutes to complete your midterm exam, 2 hours to complete your final exam, 8 hours to complete your essay assignment, 28 hours to research and complete your capstone paper, 14 hours researching and writing your discussion responses, 7.5 hours responding to your peers, and approximately 50.25+ hours of additional class engagement (e.g., assigned readings and videos).

## Required Materials

Kastenbaum, R. & Moreman, C. M. (2024). *Death, Society, and Human Experience* (13th Ed.). New York: Routledge Taylor & Francis Group

**Canvas** (<https://chaminade.instructure.com>)

The Canvas classroom will contain your gradebook, course assignments, exams, and resources.

## Learning Outcomes

### General Education Learning Outcomes (GLO)

- **Apply Marianist values and integrate a global awareness through a project-based learning approach.**

### Program Learning Outcomes (PLOs)

- 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.**

### Course Learning Outcomes (CLOs)

Upon completion of PSY 463, the student will be able to:

1. Identify key concepts, principles, and overarching themes pertaining to death and dying. (PSY - PLO1)
2. Design an interdisciplinary approach (psychology, religion, philosophy, science, etc.) to death and dying in the context of a helping profession (e.g., Nursing, Counseling). (PSY - PLO 1)
3. Recognize the cross-cultural approaches to death and dying. (PSY - PLO 1).
4. Identify the differences between perceptions and experiences regarding death, dying, grief, and bereavement, from the context of life span development. (PSY - PLO 1).

## **Marianist Values**

This class represents one component of your education at Chaminade University of Honolulu. An education in the Marianist Tradition is marked by five principles and you should take every opportunity possible to reflect upon the role of these characteristics in your education and development:

1. Education for formation in faith.
2. Provide an integral, quality education.
3. Educate in family spirit.
4. Educate for service, justice and peace, and integrity of creation.
5. Educate for adaptation and change.

PSY 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 weekly discussions

## **Native Hawaiian Values**

Education is an integral value in both Marianist and Native Hawaiian culture. Both recognize the transformative effect of a well-rounded, value-centered education on society, particularly in seeking justice for the marginalized, the forgotten, and the oppressed, always with an eye toward God (Ke Akua). This is reflected in the ‘Olelo No’eau (Hawaiian proverbs) and Marianist core beliefs:

1. Educate for Formation in Faith (Mana) E ola au i ke akua (‘Olelo No’eau 364) May I live by God.
2. Provide an Integral, Quality Education (Na’auao) Lawe i ka ma’alea a kū’ono’ono (‘Olelo No’eau 1957) Acquire skill and make it deep.
3. Educate in Family Spirit (‘Ohana) ‘Ike aku, ‘ike mai, kōkua aku kōkua mai; pela iho la ka nohana ‘ohana (‘Olelo No’eau 1200) Recognize others, be recognized, help others, be helped; such is a family relationship.

4. Educate for Service, Justice and Peace (Aloha) Ka lama kū o ka no‘eau (‘Ōlelo No‘eau 1430) Education is the standing torch of wisdom.
5. Educate for Adaptation and Change (Aina) ‘A‘ohe pau ka ‘ike i ka hālau ho‘okahi (‘Ōlelo No‘eau 203) All knowledge is not taught in the same school

## Course Activities

### Discussions

**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 10 indicate substantial learning presence to the course and the stimulation of additional thought about the issue under discussion. At least one (1) question was written for your peers to respond to.
- Above Average = The posting and comments lack at least one of the above qualities but is above average in quality. Grade of 8 here indicate that the comments make reasonable contributions to our understanding of the issue being discussed. At least one (1) question was written for your peers to respond to.
- 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 5. (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. No question was submitted for your peers to respond to.

- 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 3 here indicate that the comments may provide some social presence to a collegial atmosphere. No question was submitted for your peers to respond to.
- 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. No question was submitted for your peers to respond to.

## Assignments

### "If I had one more year..." -A Reflective Legacy Letter.

This assignment asks you to reflect on your own life, your values, relationships, and what you would prioritize if you knew you were going to die tomorrow.

This assignment is not a bucket list. It's a deeply personal reflection and articulation of meaning. Through this letter, you will explore what it means for you to live purposefully, and how your awareness of morality can shape the way that you love, dream, and act...

#### Assignment Instructions:

Write a letter titled:

"If I had One More Year..."

In this letter (4 pages double-spaced, 12 pt font with 1" margins,) write from the perspective of a person who has just learned they will die tomorrow. With the sentiment of "*if I just had one more year*" at the forefront of your heart and mind, address the following:

- Relationships & Repair
  - Who would you want to spend time with, make amends with, or express love to? Why? Are there people you'd like to thank, forgive, or find closure with? How would you do that if you "had one more year"?
- Dreams & Meaning
  - What unfinished dream or purpose would you have wanted to complete, or pursue, if you had "one more year"? What does this say about what gives your life meaning?
- Legacy & Impact
  - What messages, values, or contributions would you have wanted to leave behind? Who or what would you want to influence?
- Final Words/Funeral & Memorialization Preferences
  - What "last words" do you have as you close up this letter? Any final words of wisdom, advice, lessons, messages, etc. you may have for the people you will be leaving behind, or a message for the younger you? You can also include sharing your funeral/memorialization preferences. E.g. What kind of funeral or memorial would you want? Consider letting loved ones know elements like setting, the people involved, messages shared, music, pictures, rituals, etc. that are meaningful to you. (The way someone wants to be memorialized often reflects who they are as an individual).

Please include a title page (title of assignment, class, and your name) and a conclusion page (no page limit) that includes reflections/thoughts of how this assignment changed the way you see yourself, your life, death, and/or your relationships. How did contemplating death- and imagining what you would have done with one more year- reshape how you view your life now? What emotions or insight did this bring up for you?

Your assignment's format should look a little something like this:

- Page 1: Title Page
- Page 2-5: Contents of letter
- Page 6: Conclusion

This assignment assesses students' ability to:

- **Identify key themes related to death, dying, and mortality**, including meaning-making, legacy, and memorialization (CLO 1)
- **Apply interdisciplinary perspectives** (psychological, philosophical, spiritual, and cultural) to personal understandings of death and purpose (CLO 2)
- **Recognize cultural and individual differences** in approaches to death, remembrance, and end-of-life values (CLO 3)
- **Examine perceptions of death within one's own life stage**, reflecting how awareness of mortality shapes values, priorities, and relationships (CLO 4)

## Final Project

### Conversations on Death – Interview, Reflection Paper, and Video Presentation

This final project centers on a real, thoughtful dialogue about death. You will interview someone at least 15–20 years older than yourself to explore their views, beliefs, and experiences related to death, dying, funerals, grief, and the afterlife. This interview allows you to examine these perspectives through a development lens, considering how age, life stage, and accumulated life experiences may shape attitudes toward death.

Your final submission will include:

- A summary and analysis paper (4–6 pages)
- A short reflective video presentation (5 minutes)

This project allows you to:

- Apply course concepts to real-world beliefs and lived experiences
- Examine generational or cultural perspectives on death and grief
- Practice compassionate and ethical listening
- Reflect on your own evolving understanding of death and loss

The goal is not only to document their perspective but also reflect on how hearing their story informs your own understanding of life, loss, and legacy.

### **Conducting the Interview**

Choose someone 15–20+ years older than you, such as a relative, mentor, friend, or community member. Ask for their voluntary consent and make it clear that their responses will remain anonymous unless they agree otherwise.

You may conduct the interview in person, via phone, or on video call. Approach the conversation with respect, curiosity, and empathy. Be sure to take detailed notes or record (with permission). Focus on listening and asking questions - allow the conversation to flow naturally!

Suggested Topics:

- What are your beliefs about death and what happens after we die?
- Have you ever had a meaningful experience with grief? How did it affect you?
- What was your first experience with death?
- What are your thoughts or plans for your own funeral or end-of-life care?
- How do you think views on death have changed over your lifetime?
- What do you wish younger people understood about grief?
- How have experiences with loss shaped your life?
- Are there cultural or spiritual traditions around death that are important to you?
- What would a “good death” look like to you?

### **Summary & Reflection Paper (4–6 pages)**

Your paper should include:

- Interview Summary (approx. 2–3 pages):
  - Key points from the conversation
  - Direct quotes (anonymized if needed)
  - Themes that stood out
- Analysis & Connection to Course Content (approx. 1–2 pages):
  - Compare/contrast their views with your own or what you’ve learned in class
  - Connect interview to at least two concepts, theories, or readings from the course
  - Explore generational, cultural, or spiritual influences
- Personal Reflection (approx. 1 page):
  - What surprised or moved you?
  - Did anything challenge your own beliefs?
  - How did it change your understanding of death, grief, or memorialization?

### **Video Presentation (5 minutes)**

Record a short video that summarizes your experience and reflections. This isn't meant to be formal—think of it as a final presentation or video journal.

In your video, please:

- Briefly introduce your interviewee (anonymously if needed)
- Highlight meaningful moments from your interview
- Share how this experience shaped or deepened your understanding of death
- You may use visuals, voiceovers, snippets of your recording (with interviewee permission), music, or keep it simple!

This assignment assesses students' ability to:

- **Identify key concepts and themes** related to death and dying through real-world dialogue (CLO 1)
- **Apply interdisciplinary perspectives** (psychological, cultural, spiritual, ethical) relevant to helping professions (CLO 2)
- **Recognize cross-cultural influences** on beliefs and practices surrounding death and grief (CLO 3)
- **Analyze differences in perceptions of death across the lifespan**, emphasizing age, life stage, and lived experience (CLO 4)

### **Exams**

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

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.

## **Course Policies**

### **Attendance**

Active participation and weekly engagement are essential for your success in this course. Attendance will be tracked through participation in discussions, assignments, and other course

activities. Please let your instructor know in advance if you will be inactive in Canvas for longer than 7 days due to health and safety concerns.

### **Late Work**

No late work will be accepted including discussion posts and replies, regardless of reason.

### **Extra Credit**

No extra credit will be assigned in this course.

### **Changes to the Syllabus**

While the provisions of this syllabus are as accurate and complete as possible, your instructor reserves the right to change any provision herein at any time. Every effort will be made to keep you advised of such changes, and information about such changes will be available from your instructor.

### **Grades of Incomplete**

No incomplete grades will be issued at the end of this course, regardless of reason.

### **Final Grades**

Final grades are submitted to Self-Service:

#### **Assessment:**

Final Examination (CLO 1) 200 points

Mid-Term Examination (CLO 1) 100 points

Legacy Letter Assignment (CLO 1) 25 points

Conversations on Death Final Assignment (CLO 1, 4) 75 points

Discussion Question Responses & Participation (CLO 1, 2, 3, 4) 280 points (14 x 20 pts)

#### **Total Possible Points 680 points**

Grading Scale A = 612 (90%) – 680 (100%) B = 544 (80%) - 611 (89%) C = 476 (70%) - 543 (79%) D = 408 (60%) - 475 (69%) F = 407 (59%) and below

## **Important Information**

### **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.

Students are 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, in addition to more obvious dishonesty.

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 Academic Division and may include an “F” grade for the work in question, an “F” grade for the course, suspension, or dismissal from the University.

For the most up to date information, please refer to the [Academic Honesty Policy](#) on the Chaminade University Catalog website.

### **Title IX and Nondiscrimination Statement**

Chaminade University of Honolulu is committed to providing a learning, working and living environment that promotes the dignity of all people, inclusivity and mutual respect and is free of all forms of sex discrimination and gender-based violence, including sexual assault, sexual harassment, gender-based harassment, domestic violence, dating violence, and stalking. As a member of the University faculty, I am required to immediately report any incident of sex discrimination or gender-based violence to the campus Title IX Coordinator.

### **Nondiscrimination Policy & Notice of Nondiscrimination**

Chaminade University of Honolulu does not discriminate on the basis of sex and prohibits sex discrimination in any education program or activity that it operates, as required by Title IX and its regulations, including in admission and employment. Inquiries about Title IX may be referred to the University’s Title IX Coordinator, the U.S. Department of Education’s Office for Civil Rights, or both and contact information may be found at the [Chaminade University Title IX Office Contact Information and Confidential Resources website](#). On-campus Confidential Resources may also be found here at [CAMPUS CONFIDENTIAL RESOURCES](#).

The University’s Nondiscrimination Policy and Grievance Procedures can be located on the University webpage at:

<https://chaminade.edu/compliance/title-ix-nondiscrimination-policies-procedures/>.

To report information about conduct that may constitute sex discrimination or make a complaint of sex discrimination under Title IX, please refer to the [Campus Incident Report form](#).

Chaminade University of Honolulu prohibits sex discrimination in any education program or

activity that it operates. The NOTICE of NONDISCRIMINATION can be found here: [Notice of Nondiscrimination](#).

### **CUH Alert Emergency Notification**

To get the latest emergency communication from Chaminade University, students' cell numbers will be connected to Chaminade's emergency notification text system. When you log in to the Chaminade portal, you will be asked to provide some emergency contact information. If you provide a cellphone number, you will receive a text from our emergency notification system asking you to confirm your number. You must respond to that message to complete your registration and get emergency notifications on your phone.

### **Assessment for Student Work**

With the goal of continuing to improve the quality of educational services offered to students, Chaminade University conducts assessments of student achievement of course, program, and institutional learning outcomes. Student work is used anonymously as the basis of these assessments, and the work you do in this course may be used in these assessment efforts.

### **Student with Disabilities Statement**

Chaminade University of Honolulu offers accommodations for all actively enrolled students with disabilities in compliance with Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) of 1990, and the ADA Amendments Act (2008).

Students are responsible for contacting Kokua Ike: Center for Student Learning to schedule an appointment. Verification of their disability will be requested through appropriate documentation and once received it will take up to approximately 2–3 weeks to review them. Appropriate paperwork will be completed by the student before notification will be sent out to their instructors. Accommodation paperwork will not be automatically sent out to instructors each semester, as the student is responsible to notify Kokua Ike via email at [ada@chaminade.edu](mailto:ada@chaminade.edu) each semester if changes or notifications are needed.

### **Kōkua 'Ike: Tutoring & Learning Services**

Chaminade is proud to offer free, one-on-one tutoring and writing assistance to all students. Tutoring and writing help is available on campus at Kōkua 'Ike: Center for Student Learning in a variety of subjects (including, but are not limited to biology, chemistry, math, nursing, English, etc.) from trained Peer and Professional Tutors. Please check [Kōkua 'Ike's](#) website for the latest times, list of drop-in hours, and information on scheduling an appointment. Free online tutoring is also available via TutorMe. Tutor Me can be accessed 24/7 from your Canvas account. Simply click on Account > TutorMe. For more information, please contact Kōkua 'Ike at [tutoring@chaminade.edu](mailto:tutoring@chaminade.edu) or 808-739-8305.

## Course Schedule

Date	Class Activity	Readings Due:	Assignments Due in Canvas:
Week 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Welcome</li> <li>• Review Syllabus</li> <li>• Chapter 1 As We Think About Death</li> </ul>	Chapter 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Welcome; Student Introduction</li> <li>• Discussion Response for Chapter 1</li> </ul>
Week 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Chapter 2 What Is Death?</li> <li>• Chapter 3 The Death System</li> </ul>	Chapters 2 & 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Discussion Participation for Chapter 1</li> <li>• Discussion Response for Chapter 2 &amp; 3</li> </ul>
Week 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Chapter 4 Dying</li> </ul>	Chapter 4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Discussion Participation for Chapter 3</li> <li>• Discussion Response for Chapter 4</li> </ul>
Week 4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Chapter 5 Hospice and Palliative Care</li> <li>• Chapter 6 End-of-Life Issues and Decisions</li> </ul>	Chapters 5 & 6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Discussion Participation for Chapter 4</li> <li>• Discussion Responses for Chapters 5 &amp; 6</li> </ul>
Week 5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Chapter 7 Suicide</li> <li>• Chapter 8 Violent Death: Murder, Terrorism,</li> </ul>	Chapter 7 & 8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Discussion Participation for Chapters 5 &amp; 6</li> <li>• Discussion</li> </ul>

	Genocide, Disaster, and Accident		Responses for Chapters 7 & 8
Week 6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Review for Mid-Term Exam (Chapters 1 – 8)</li> <li>Work on “If I had one more year” essay</li> </ul>	Chapters 1 – 8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Discussion Participation for Chapters 7 &amp; 8</li> </ul>
Week 7	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Review for Mid-Term Exam (Chapters 1 – 8) Work on</li> <li>Finalize “If I had one more year” essay</li> </ul>	Chapters 1 – 8	“If I had one more year” essay
Week 8	Mid-Term Exam (Chapters 1 – 8)		Mid-Term Exam
Week 9	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Chapter 9 Euthanasia, Assisted Death, Abortion, and the Right to Die</li> <li>Chapter 10 Death in the World of Childhood</li> </ul>	Chapter 9 & 10	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Discussion Responses for Chapters 9 &amp; 10</li> </ul>
Week 10	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Chapter 11 Bereavement, Grief, and Mourning</li> <li>Chapter 12 The Funeral Process</li> </ul>	Chapters 11 & 12	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Discussion Participation for Chapters 9 &amp; 10</li> <li>Discussion Responses for Chapter 11 &amp; 12</li> </ul>
Week 11	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Chapter 13 Do We Survive Death?</li> </ul>	Chapter 13	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Discussion Participation for</li> </ul>

			<p>Chapters 11 &amp; 12</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Discussion Response for Chapter 13</li> </ul>
Week 12	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Chapter 14 How Can We Help?</li> </ul>	Chapter 14	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Discussion Participation for Chapter 13</li> <li>• Discussion Response for Chapter 14</li> </ul>
Week 13	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Chapter 15 Good Life, Good Death?</li> </ul>	Chapter 15	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Discussion Participation for Chapter 14</li> <li>• Discussion Response for Chapter 15</li> </ul>
Week 14	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Work on “Conversations on Death” final project</li> </ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Discussion Participation for Chapter 15</li> </ul>
Week 15	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “Conversations on Death” final project</li> <li>• Review for Final Exam (Chapters 1 – 15)</li> </ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “Conversations on Death” interview, paper, and video presentation.</li> </ul>
Finals Week	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Final Exam (Chapters 1 through 15)</li> </ul>		<p><b>Final Exam</b></p> <p><b>(No assignments and exams will be accepted after last day of semester regardless of reason)</b></p>