

COURSE SYLLABUS

(revised 8/24/01)

DEATH AND DYING
GEY 4641-001 Department of Gerontology
GEY 4641-002 School of Social Work
GEY 4641-003 Department of Sociology

Fall Semester
2001: Monday and Wednesday 2:00 p.m. to 3:15 p.m.

Classroom: MHA 126E, Westside Conference Center, Room E,
Louis de la Parte Florida Mental Health Institute (FMHI)

Instructor: Michael Knox, Ph.D.
Distinguished Professor

Office: MHC 1422, FMHI

Telephone: 974-4632
(If Dr. Knox is not available, ask for his voice mail.)

E-Mail: knox@fmhi.usf.edu
Always include the course number as the subject for
any e-mail to Professor Knox.

Office Hours: 3:15 p.m. to 4:00 p.m. Monday and Wednesday and by
appointment. Students are encouraged to meet with
Professor Knox when they have questions or concerns
about this course.

Summary: This course will provide students with an interdisciplinary
understanding of death and dying, focusing primarily on
psychosocial, mental health, behavioral, and ethical issues.

Some specific topics to be covered include; Epidemiology; Prevention; Attitudes
Towards Death; Living with a Life Threatening Illness; End-of-Life Care; Hospice;
Historical and Cultural Perspectives; Ethical Issues; Legal Issues; Pain Management; The
Relationship between Stress and Health; Healthcare and Mental Health Interventions;
Final Planning; Grief and Mourning; Funeral Rituals; and Suicide.

Michael Knox earned his Ph.D. in Community Psychology in 1974 from The University
of Michigan. He is a Distinguished Professor at USF in the Mental Health Law and
Policy Department at the Louis de la Parte Florida Mental Health Institute. He also holds
the titles of Professor of Medicine in the Department of Internal Medicine; Professor of
Community & Family Health in the College of Public Health; Courtesy Distinguished

Professor of Psychology; and Director of the USF Center for HIV Education and Research. Dr. Knox, a licensed clinical psychologist, is a Fellow of the American Psychological Association and the American Psychological Society.

Objectives: Upon completion of this course the student should be able to:

1. Explain how death is defined and describe the process of death.
2. Discuss the epidemiology of death, leading causes of death, and prevention strategies.
3. Communicate about end-of-life issues with dying persons.
4. Identify populations in need of mental health care related to end-of-life.
5. Identify the ethical issues related to death and dying and analyze ethical dilemmas in a systematic manner.
6. Define the legal issues related to death and dying.
7. Specify mechanisms for coping with a life threatening illness.
8. Describe end-of-life care provided by various settings and organizations.
9. Discuss the course of a life threatening disease.
10. Identify psychological stressors and mental health problems associated with death and dying.
11. Demonstrate an understanding of the effects of stress on immune functioning.
12. Discuss appropriate health and mental health interventions related to death and dying.
13. Demonstrate an understanding of the therapeutic goals and steps necessary to prepare for death.
14. Identify the resources available in the community, state, and nation related to end-of-life.
15. Discuss the components of final planning

16. Demonstrate an understanding of the role of grief and mourning.

Texts: Despelder, L. A. and Strickland, A. L. (1998). The Last Dance Encountering Death and Dying. Mountain View, CA: Mayfield Publishing Company.

Knox, L. P. and Knox, M. D. (1995). Last Wishes. Berkeley, CA: Ulysses Press. (see Pro Copy).

Reading List: Reading assignments will be made for most classes. It is important that students read assigned articles and chapters prior to scheduled class discussion. Questions and concerns regarding the readings should be brought up in class.

Students will be expected to know the assigned material. Class discussion, however, will usually focus on additional topics or material not adequately covered in the text. Professor Knox will not spend valuable class time reviewing or summarizing assigned readings.

Class Participation: Participation in class is an important component of this course and of the student's final grade. Every student will be responsible for bringing a journal article, "current events" article, or editorial at least twice each month regarding some aspect of death and dying. Be prepared to discuss this current information in class with special attention to mental health, behavioral, legal, and/or ethical implications.

All assignments and discussions are intended to lead the student towards an educated understanding of death and dying. Students are encouraged to develop a focus early in the semester centering, for example, on a special population or on caregiver concerns, law, ethics, culture, etc. The student then becomes the class expert on the topic chosen.

Initially students will share and discuss their death-related experiences and beliefs. As the class progresses, it is expected that student comments and discussion will also include material they have learned in the class. Each student is expected to analyze the issues discussed based on their readings and research.

Class Papers: Class assignments are due in class or by e-mail at 2:00 p.m. on the due date. Papers should be double-spaced and typed using a 12 point font. Late papers will not be graded. Class assignments must not summarize articles and chapters reviewed, but instead should discuss, analyze, critique, and react to issues presented. There is no need for a literature review.

The appropriate length for each paper will be discussed in class. Papers longer than the assigned length may not be read. Please choose your words carefully and thoughtfully and consider each paper as an opportunity for improving your writing skills. Avoid redundancy. Students must keep a hard copy of e-mailed assignments to show transmission time and date.

The first paper is due on September 5th. Write a brief commentary on your own background and experiences related to the course topic. List your specific educational goals related to death and dying. You may designate this paper as "confidential" by placing that word in the upper right hand corner of each sheet of your paper.

The second paper is due September 19th. Develop an idea for a social or behavioral science research project related to death and dying. Write a "method" section explaining how you would conduct the research and analyze the data.

The third paper is due October 17th. Write a commentary or elaboration on any discussion(s), lecture(s), presentation(s), or reading(s) related to this class. Focus on your own analysis and conclusions regarding the issues considered. Go beyond the class discussion, lectures, reading, etc.

The final paper is due on November 26th. Write a commentary on what (or something) you have learned in this course and how it relates to you personally, to society, and/or to your career development. The content should be a presentation of your own logical thought based on the readings and materials discussed in class. You must go beyond the class content in terms of your analysis and conclusions. There is no need for a literature review.

Class Presentations: Pick a death and dying related topic of special interest to you (other than HIV/AIDS). Research the topic and develop a 10 minute presentation that goes beyond the level or scope of class readings, discussion and the textbook. Focus on behavioral, social science or mental health issues. Students may collaborate on a topic and share the presentation (adjust time appropriately).

The first presentations will begin on September 24th. An overhead and slide projector will be available for student use. Topics must be approved in advance by Professor Knox.

The second presentations will begin November 21nd. Each student must interview someone who is involved in work related to death and dying regarding the psychosocial needs of their clients/customers and the ethical issues involved in their practice. A summary of this "community experience" with analysis and conclusions must be delivered in a 10 minute presentation in class. Be sure to consider behavioral, mental health, legal, and/or ethical implications of what you have learned.

An alternative assignment is to select and critique a book [approved in advance by Dr. Knox] focusing on death and dying-related issues. The book review will be delivered as

a presentation in class and should summarize major points of the work and critique its contribution to scientific and/or clinical literature especially as it relates to the topic of the course.

Attendance: A written excuse from a psychologist, physician, physician assistant, dentist, or nurse practitioner will be accepted for absences and late papers. Attending the funeral of a loved one may qualify as an excused absence if the student writes a paper about the experience. Unexcused absences from class may result in a reduction in letter grade. There will be a sign-up sheet to record attendance. It is each student's responsibility to sign the sheet during every class.

Students who anticipate the necessity of being absent from class due to the observation of a non-religious or religious event/holiday must provide notice of the date(s) to the instructor, in writing, by the second class meeting.

Special Circumstances: If any member of the class has a disability, please advise Professor Knox of the disability and desired accommodation by the first week of class or as soon as you have written documentation. He will work with you to provide reasonable accommodations to assure that you have a fair opportunity to perform in this class.

Grade: The first paper is worth up to 5 points. The second and third class papers, exam, and presentations are worth up to 10 points each. Class participation is worth up to 30 points and the final paper is worth up to 15 points. Total points possible is 100. Grades will be allocated as follows:

A+	>97		C	77-79
A	95-97		C-	74-76
A-	92-94		D+	71-73
B+	89-91		D	68-70
B	86-88		D-	65-67
B-	83-85		F	<65
C+	80-82			

“Death and Dying” is designed to challenge you intellectually, to broaden your knowledge, and to teach you to think in new ways. Clear and concise writing and public speaking are part of this challenge. The course is not designed to overwhelm you. If you feel overwhelmed by the assignments, please contact Dr. Knox.

Please be aware that students are not permitted to take notes in class for remuneration or for the purpose of sale to any person or entity.

To do well in this class it is necessary to:

1. Read pages 3 through 5 of the syllabus every week and keep focused on what is expected.
2. Attend and participate in class.
3. Take a chance at providing answers to questions, even if you are not sure.
4. Have a good sense of humor and an open mind. Some of this material can be tough to talk about.
5. Share your personal experiences and opinions.
6. Do the reading assignments.
7. Look for articles related to the class topic and share them with the class with special attention to mental health, behavioral, legal, and/or ethical implications.
8. Complete all assignments on time and to the best of your ability.
9. Contact Professor Knox if you are having any difficulty.
10. Review and adhere to the University's policy on academic dishonesty included in the most current edition of the USF Undergraduate Catalog.

Schedule: From time to time the following schedule will be adjusted by the instructor. Changes and reading assignments will be announced during classes.

<u>Date</u>	<u>Topic</u>
(M) Aug. 27	Epidemiology, Prevention, & Attitudes Toward Death
(W) Aug. 29	Planning for your own Death
(M) Sep. 3	(Labor Day Holiday) NO CLASS TODAY
(W) Sept. 5	Final Planning and Funeral Rituals (First paper due)
(M) Sept. 10	Death and the Process of Dying
(W) Sept. 12	Living with a Life Threatening Illness
(M) Sept. 17	Stress and Immune Functioning
(W) Sept. 19	Personal Perspective (Second paper due)
(M) Sept. 24	Paper Presentations
(W) Sept. 26	Paper Presentations
(M) Oct. 1	Paper Presentations
(W) Oct. 3	Paper Presentations
(M) Oct. 8	Care of the Dying
(W) Oct. 10	Depression at the End-of-Life and other Mental Health Issues
(M) Oct. 15	Ethical Principles and Dilemmas
(W) Oct. 17	Legal Issues (Third paper due)

(M) Oct. 22	Grief and Mourning
(W) Oct. 24	Healthcare and Management of Pain
(M) Oct. 29	HIV/AIDS-case studies
(W) Oct. 31	Historical and Cultural Issues
(M) Nov. 5	Exam
(W) Nov. 7	Hospice Care and other Community Resources
(M) Nov. 12	(Veterans Day) NO CLASS TODAY
(W) Nov. 14	Additional Psychosocial Issues
(M) Nov. 19	Right to Die
(W) Nov. 21	Paper Presentations
(M) Nov. 26	Paper Presentations (Final Paper Due)
(W) Nov. 28	Paper Presentations
(M) Dec. 3	Paper Presentations
(W) Dec. 5	Paper Presentations and Review
(W) Dec. 10	Final Exam (3:30-5:30p.m.)