

DEATH & DYING: THE WESTERN EXPERIENCE

2020 Fall – Preliminary Course Outline, subject to revisions

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Lecture: Online

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Course Description

Drawing on theoretical perspectives and evidence from anthropology and sociology, this course examines death and dying in Western context, focusing on biomedical, social and cultural themes.

Course Objectives

By the end of the course students should be able to:

- Examine and understand how death is managed, symbolized, and experienced by different groups and individuals
- Gain an awareness of all the different factors that shape death and dying in the modern world
- Investigate modern dying and grieving and the distinctive ways it interacts with culture, environment, economic (in)security, and national history
- Identify national differences in death practices
- Critically evaluate how key factors (ex. money, technology, family, etc.) operate in their own country or society and to understand how their own society manages death
- Engage in debates and discussions about death and dying

Required Materials and Texts

- Tony Walter, *Death in the Modern World* (Sage Publications, 2020)
- Additional readings will be made available by the instructor

Class Format

Online

Course Evaluation – Overview

1. Discussion Forums - 30%
2. Quizzes – 30%
3. Final Exam – 40%

Course Evaluation – Details

Discussion Forums (30%)

Students will be graded based on their participation on the Avenue discussion boards. You will find one (1) discussion question every week. These questions relate to course readings, lectures, and current events. Each week, you are expected to contribute an initial post to the discussion question and then comment on the answers of other students in your group. In addition to your initial post, you are required to respond at least twice to group members. That means you should be posting a minimum of three

(3) times each week.

You are expected to post thoughtful answers to each question. Your answers should be insightful and include reference to the course material. Your language should be conversational yet professional. You are welcome to agree or disagree with other students, but you must elaborate on your view and your comments to others should be constructive

Initial posts are due on Wednesdays by 11:59pm. Responses are due on Fridays by 11:59pm

Quizzes (30%)

Four online quizzes will be posted on Avenue. You will be quizzed on material from the required readings, the instructor lecture videos, and slide shows. All quizzes are 30 minutes with various types of questions including multiple choice, fill-in-the blank, true or false, multi-select, matching, and short answer.

Quiz #1: Available Sep 24 until Sep 27 (must be completed by 11:59pm on Sep 27)

Quiz #2: Available Oct 8 until Oct 11 (must be completed by 11:59pm on Oct 11)

Quiz #3: Available Nov 5 until Nov 8 (must be completed by 11:59pm on Nov 8)

Quiz #4: Available Nov 26 until Nov 29 (must be completed by 11:59pm on Nov 29)

Final Exam (40%)

Students will complete a final exam (cumulative) in the form of a take-home exam. The instructor will provide a list of topics on December 7. You will select one topic and write an essay. More specific essay guidelines/rubric will be provided, but in general, you will be expected to create a specific argument, to provide supporting points backed by academic sources (more than just the required textbook), and to present the argument convincingly and coherently in a formal essay format. The essay should be 1500-2000 words (6-8 pages double-spaced), typed Word document (PDF and Pages not accepted), formatted using an acceptable citation style (ex. Chicago, MLA, APA), and must include a bibliography, or works cited (depending on selected citation style).

Submit to the Assignment dropbox on Avenue by Friday December 11 @ 11:59pm

Weekly Course Schedule and Required Readings

Week 1 (September 8 - 13)

Module 1: Modernity

Introduction and Longevity

Readings: Walter, "Introduction: Death's Jigsaw" & Chapter 1

Kellehear, "The Exponential Rise of Modernity," 191-212

Riley, "Introduction: A Global Revolution in Life Expectancy," 1-31

Notes: Discussion Forums, initial post due Sep 9, replies due Sep 11

Week 2 (September 14 - 20)

Module 1: Modernity

Medicine and Commodification

Readings: Walter, Chapters 2 & 3
Kellehear, "The Third Challenge: Taming Death," 169-187
Berns, "Framing Grief beyond Closure," 163-165

Notes: Discussion Forums, initial post due Sep 16, replies due Sep 18

Week 3 (September 21 - 27)

Module 1: Modernity

Communication and Death Denial

Readings: Walter, Chapters 4 & 5
Keil, "Keeping Communications Alive When You're Dead"
Mellor and Shilling, "Modernity, Self-Identity and the Sequestration of Death,"
411-431

Notes: Discussion Forums, initial post due Sep 23, replies due Sep 25

Quiz #1 Sep 24-27

Week 4 (September 28 – October 4)

Module 2: Risk

Security and Insecurity

Readings: Walter, Chapter 6
Garces-Foley and Holcomb, "Contemporary American Funerals: Personalizing
Tradition," 207-227
Payne, "Paradox of Medical Advances and Inequalities in Health Care: The
African-American Experience," 73-87

Notes: Discussion Forums, initial post due Sep 30, replies due Oct 2

Week 5 (October 5 - 11)

Module 2: Risk

The Physical World

Readings: Walter, Chapter 7
Beliefs Podcast, "The Ritual of Remains"
Plate, "Green Remains"

Notes: Discussion Forums, initial post due Oct 7, replies due Oct 9

Quiz #2 Oct 8-11

Week 6 (October 12 - 18)

Mid-term Recess

Readings: n/a

Notes: n/a

Week 7 (October 19 - 25)

Module 3: Culture

Individual and Group

Readings: Walter, Chapter 8

Notes: Discussion Forums, initial post due Oct 21, replies due Oct 23

Week 8 (October 26 – November 1)

Module 3: Culture

Family

Readings: Walter, Chapter 9

Northcott and Wilson, "Dying and Death in the Context of Canadian Social Institutions," 57-79

Notes: Discussion Forums, initial post due Oct 28, replies due Oct 30

Week 9 (November 2 - 8)

Module 3: Culture

Religion

Readings: Walter, Chapter 10

Parkes, Laungani, and Young, "Culture and Religion," 9-20

Walter, "How the dead survive: Ancestors, immortality, memory," 19-39

Notes: Discussion Forums, initial post due Nov 4, replies due Nov 6

Quiz #3 Nov 5-8

Week 10 (November 9 - 15)

Module 4: Nation

Modernizing the Nation

Readings: Walter, Chapter 11

Walter, "Three ways to arrange a funeral: mortuary variation in the modern West," 173-192

Lefler and Wiethaus, "The Eastern Band of Cherokee: Cultural Revitalization and Demedicalized Death," 213-227

Notes: Discussion Forums, initial post due Nov 11, replies due Nov 13

Week 11 (November 16 - 22)

Module 4: Nation

War

Readings: Walter, Chapter 12

Schwartz, "Mourning and the Making of Sacred Symbol: Durkheim and the Lincoln Assassination," 343-364

Steffen, "Warfare Deaths: Ethical and Religious Understanding in the American Context," 183-207

Notes: Discussion Forums, initial post due Nov 18, replies due Nov 20

Week 12 (November 23 - 29)

Module 4: Nation

Policy and Politics

Readings: Walter, Chapter 13

Hawkins, "Constructing Death: Three Pathographies about Dying," 301-317

McAdams, "Religion and the Death Penalty in America," 159-182

Notes: Discussion Forums, initial post due Nov 25, replies due Nov 27

Quiz #4 Nov 26-29

Week 13 (November 30 – December 6)

Module 5: Globalization

Global Flows and Death's Futures

Readings: Walter, Chapters 14 & 15

Hooper, "Introduction," 1-11

Zaman, et al., "Common or multiple futures for end of life care around the world? Ideas from the 'waiting room of history,'" 72-79

Notes: Discussion Forums, initial post due Dec 2, replies due Dec 4

Week 14 (December 7 - 13)

Final Exam

Readings: n/a

Notes: Final Exam due Friday December 11 @ 11:59pm

Course Policies

Submission of Assignments

All assignment will be submitted through Avenue to Learn.

Grades

Grades will be based on the McMaster University grading scale:

MARK	GRADE
90-100	A+
85-90	A
80-84	A-
77-79	B+
73-76	B
70-72	B-
67-69	C+
63-66	C
60-62	C-
57-59	D+
53-56	D
50-52	D-
0-49	F

Late Assignments

Late assignment will be penalized 3% a day (weekends will count as one day).

Avenue to Learn

In this course we will be using Avenue to Learn. Students should be aware that, when they access the electronic components of this course, private information such as first and last names, user names for the McMaster e-mail accounts, and program affiliation may become apparent to all other students in the same course. The available information is dependent on the technology used. Continuation in this course will be deemed consent to this disclosure. If you have any questions or concerns about such disclosure please discuss this with the course instructor.

Turnitin.com

In this course we will be using a web-based service (Turnitin.com) to reveal plagiarism. Students will be expected to submit their work electronically to Turnitin.com and in hard copy so that it can be checked for academic dishonesty. Students who do not wish to submit their work to Turnitin.com must still submit a copy to the instructor. No penalty will be assigned to a student who does not submit work to Turnitin.com. All submitted work is subject to normal verification that standards of academic integrity have been upheld (e.g., on-line search, etc.). To see the Turnitin.com Policy, please to go www.mcmaster.ca/academicintegrity.

University Policies

Academic Integrity Statement

You are expected to exhibit honesty and use ethical behavior in all aspects of the learning process. Academic credentials you earn are rooted in principles of honesty and academic integrity. **It is your responsibility to understand what constitutes academic dishonesty.**

Academic dishonesty is to knowingly act or fail to act in a way that results or could result in unearned academic credit or advantage. This behavior can result in serious consequences, e.g. the grade of zero on an assignment, loss of credit with a notation on the transcript (notation reads: "Grade of F assigned for academic dishonesty"), and/or suspension or expulsion from the university. For information on the various types of academic dishonesty please refer to the [Academic Integrity Policy](https://secretariat.mcmaster.ca/university-policies-procedures-guidelines/), located at <https://secretariat.mcmaster.ca/university-policies-procedures-guidelines/>

The following illustrates only three forms of academic dishonesty:

1. Plagiarism, e.g. the submission of work that is not one's own or for which credit has been obtained.
2. Improper collaboration in group work.
3. Copying or using unauthorized aids in tests and examinations.

Authenticity/Plagiarism Detection

Some courses may use a web-based service (Turnitin.com) to reveal authenticity and ownership of student submitted work. For courses using such software, students will be expected to submit their work electronically either directly to Turnitin.com or via an online learning platform (e.g. A2L, etc.) using plagiarism detection (a service supported by Turnitin.com) so it can be checked for academic dishonesty

Students who do not wish their work to be submitted through the plagiarism detection software must inform the Instructor before the assignment is due. No penalty will be assigned to a student who does not submit work to the plagiarism detection software.

All submitted work is subject to normal verification that standards of academic integrity have been upheld (e.g., on-line search, other software, etc.). For more details about McMaster's use of Turnitin.com please go to www.mcmaster.ca/academicintegrity.

Courses with an On-Line Element

Some courses may use on-line elements (e.g. e-mail, Avenue to Learn (A2L), LearnLink, web pages, capa, Moodle, ThinkingCap, etc.). Students should be aware that, when they access the electronic components of a course using these elements, private information such as first and last names, user names for the McMaster e-mail accounts, and program affiliation may become apparent to all other students in the same course. The

available information is dependent on the technology used. Continuation in a course that uses on-line elements will be deemed consent to this disclosure. If you have any questions or concerns about such disclosure please discuss this with the course instructor.

Online Proctoring

Some courses may use online proctoring software for tests and exams. This software may require students to turn on their video camera, present identification, monitor and record their computer activities, and/or lock/restrict their browser or other applications/software during tests or exams. This software may be required to be installed before the test/exam begins.

Conduct Expectations

As a McMaster student, you have the right to experience, and the responsibility to demonstrate, respectful and dignified interactions within all of our living, learning and working communities. These expectations are described in the [Code of Student Rights & Responsibilities](#) (the “Code”). All students share the responsibility of maintaining a positive environment for the academic and personal growth of all McMaster community members, **whether in person or online**.

It is essential that students be mindful of their interactions online, as the Code remains in effect in virtual learning environments. The Code applies to any interactions that adversely affect, disrupt, or interfere with reasonable participation in University activities. Student disruptions or behaviours that interfere with university functions on online platforms (e.g. use of Avenue 2 Learn, WebEx or Zoom for delivery), will be taken very seriously and will be investigated. Outcomes may include restriction or removal of the involved students’ access to these platforms.

Academic Accommodation of Students with Disabilities

Students with disabilities who require academic accommodation must contact [Student Accessibility Services](#) (SAS) at 905-525-9140 ext. 28652 or sas@mcmaster.ca to make arrangements with a Program Coordinator. For further information, consult McMaster University’s [Academic Accommodation of Students with Disabilities](#) policy.

Requests for Relief for Missed Academic Term Work

McMaster Student Absence Form (MSAF): In the event of an absence for medical or other reasons, students should review and follow the Academic Regulation in the Undergraduate Calendar “Requests for Relief for Missed Academic Term Work”.

Academic Accommodation for Religious, Indigenous or Spiritual Observances (RISO)

Students requiring academic accommodation based on religious, indigenous or spiritual observances should follow the procedures set out in the [RISO](#) policy. Students should submit their request to their Faculty Office **normally within 10 working days** of the beginning of term in which they anticipate a need for accommodation or to the Registrar's Office prior to their examinations. Students should also contact their instructors as soon as possible to make alternative arrangements for classes, assignments, and tests.

Copyright and Recording

Students are advised that lectures, demonstrations, performances, and any other course material provided by an instructor include copyright protected works. The Copyright Act and copyright law protect every original literary, dramatic, musical and artistic work, **including lectures** by University instructors

The recording of lectures, tutorials, or other methods of instruction may occur during a course. Recording may be done by either the instructor for the purpose of authorized distribution, or by a student for the purpose of personal study. Students should be aware that their voice and/or image may be recorded by others during the class. Please speak with the instructor if this is a concern for you.

Extreme Circumstances

The University reserves the right to change the dates and deadlines for any or all courses in extreme circumstances (e.g., severe weather, labour disruptions, etc.). Changes will be communicated through regular McMaster communication channels, such as McMaster Daily News, A2L and/or McMaster email.