



## Fall 2024 Syllabus

<b>Instructor:</b> Tracy Schluter, M.A.	<b>Start Date:</b> Aug 26, 2024
<b>Cell:</b> 210-415-1155	<b>End Date:</b> Dec 13, 2024
<b>E-mail:</b> Tschluter@tamusa.edu	<b>Office hours:</b> Contact me anytime

### Course Description:

This course provides a basic background on historical and contemporary perspectives on death and dying. Attention will be given to current American practices regarding death, as well as cross-cultural interpretation.

### Prerequisites or Requirements:

SOCI 1301 or ENG 1301

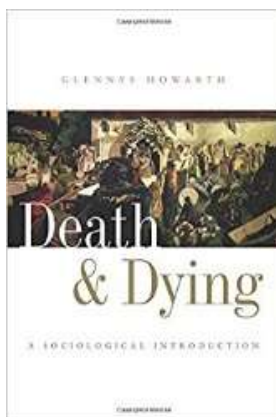
### Course Objectives:

By the end of the course, you should be able to:

- Understand the importance of sociology in understanding death and dying
- Be able to examine the core sociological processes associated with dying, death, and bereavement
- Become familiar with the medical, legal, financial, and cross-cultural issues related to death and dying
- Relate the social and cultural context of death and dying to wider social structures
- Develop research and analytical skills in writing academic essays and social analysis

### Required Text and Course Materials or Equipment

Howarth, Glennys, *Death and Dying, A Sociological Introduction*



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### Weekly Procedures

We will be covering approximately 1 chapter in the text per week. Videos also may be included in some weeks to augment the text and Class Notes.

Each week you will participate in one discussion forum. During the 3 weeks that you will have papers due, there will be no forum discussions. Unless otherwise noted, you will be required to also post responses to at least two postings of other students. Your responses should be between 100-200 words.

The last week is designated for your final project.

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### Technology

#### Basic Skill Requirements:

To succeed in online courses, you will need basic computer skills that include how to use email, attach a document to an email message, navigate web pages, and download and upload files. You must participate in discussion forums and use the Internet to research information. Additionally, you will need a computer with regular access to a reliable Internet connection, a current web browser (such as Chrome or Firefox), a technology “backup” plan in case your primary computer is unavailable during a test-taking timeframe.

#### Technical Help:

If you need help logging in to Blackboard, or in finding information, just call the IT Help Desk at (830)784-4357. Office hours are 8-5 M-F. Additionally, you can email them with your questions at [helpdesk@tamusa.edu](mailto:helpdesk@tamusa.edu)

#### Netiquette:

Written communication in the online environment is crucial to success. To avoid misunderstandings the following guidelines are provided:

- **Follow the Golden Rule.** Treat others, as you would like to be treated. Be encouraging, helpful, aware, and respectful of others.
  - **Avoid using all caps.** Text written in all capital letters is difficult to read and is often interpreted as shouting, which is not appropriate for an academic environment. Additionally, the use of all caps nullifies the use of proper capitalization.
  - **Respect copyright.** Ask permission or cite sources for the work of others.
  - **Choose your words carefully.** Careful word choice ensures that you have expressed yourself clearly. Review your writing before you post. Using one word over another can have a dramatic effect on the meaning and tone.
  - **Use proper grammar and spelling.** Using e-speak as you would in text messaging is not appropriate in an academic environment, such as the discussion forums. Additionally, it can confuse some unfamiliar with the abbreviated spellings.
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### Student Participation

To be successful in this course you should log in at least five days a week even if you don't post each day.

### Instructor Presence and Response Time

The instructor will respond to emails within 24 hours on weekdays and within 48 hours on weekends. The instructor will provide feedback and grades within a week for written assignments and three days after the weekends for the discussion forums.

I often use email to notify you of any changes or notices. Please check your email. Email is also the best way to get a hold of me and I will respond generally within 24 hours. If you're having an emergency, text or call me.

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### Assessments and Grading

#### Grading Scale

#### Late Assignments or Incompletes

Late papers and assignments will be docked one letter grade for each day they are late (with the lowest grade received for late work being a "C") unless we have agreed on prior arrangements. Make-ups of major exams may only be completed when the instructor grants an excuse for a specific absence.

A	94 - 100%
A-	90 - 93%
B+	87 - 89%
B	84 - 86%
B-	80 - 83%
C+	77 - 79%
C	74 - 76%
C-	70 - 73%
D+	67 - 69%
D	64-66%
D-	60-63%
F	59% and lower

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### Assignments

Assignments	Point Total	% of Grade
Forum Discussions	25	25%
Three Written Papers	30	30%
Midterm Exam	20	20%
Final Exam	25	25%
Total Points Possible	100	100%

### Rules for Forum Posting

The forum postings will all be due on Thursday at 11:59 pm of each week unless we have a short week or a holiday. Unless otherwise noted, you will be required to also post responses to at least two postings of other students. Both the original post and responses should be intelligently written using correct spelling, punctuation, and grammar. Responses must also utilize course material (unless otherwise specified in the question/prompt). These criteria will factor into discussion post grades.

For the responses, please choose 2 of your classmate’s postings. Each of your replies should include at least 1 relevant comment and further exploration that supports or refutes your classmate’s content. Each reply should be 100-200 words. Your forum post grade will also reflect how thoughtful your responses are.

### Papers

There are 3 papers this semester. The paper topics and due dates can be found on the syllabus and on Blackboard. The papers should be between 2-5 pages in length. Please use ASA style. You can refer to the ASA Style guide or the link above for guidance.

## Sociology 4372 Syllabus

Title of Assessment/Instructions	Category Name	Point Value	Assessment Due Date/Time
<b>Week 1</b>			
Read: Ch 1 Death, Denial and Diversity	Reading		
Watch the video on Blackboard	Video		
Discussion: Take 1 minute and write down all the words you associate with the word “death.” Now assign a + or – or / (neutral) connotation for each word. Share your list with us and tell us how your distribution of positive, negative, or neutral came out. Respond to 2 classmates. All responses are due by 11:59 on Sundays	Discussion	2.5	8/29 11:59 p.m.
<b>Week 2</b>			
Read: Ch 2 When and How People Die	Reading		
Watch the video on Blackboard	Video		
Paper 1 – Experiences with Death and Dying. Please see Blackboard for full assignment details.	Paper	10	9/6 11:59 p.m.
<b>Week 3</b>			
Read Ch 3 Life and Death in “Risk Society”	Reading		
Watch the video on Blackboard	Video		

Discussion: Do governments have an obligation to reduce the risk of death? As social systems become increasingly more adept at eliminating premature death, death becomes more predictable. How does this benefit society? Would you encourage our government to continue to allocate funds for programs meant to reduce death risk such as warning of cigarette smoking, warning of drinking and driving? What about working to reduce asthma among inner-city youth? Are there other risks that you believe should be addressed at a societal level? Respond to 2 classmates. All responses are due by 11:59 on Sundays	Discussion	2.5	9/12 11:59 p.m.
<b>Week 4</b>			
Read: Ch 4 Death, Religion and Spirituality	Reading		
Watch the video on Blackboard	Video		
Discussion: Would life be worth living if people did not have to die? Should the death of death be a cultural goal? Respond to 2 classmates. All responses are due by 11:59 on Sundays	Discussion	2.5	9/19 11:59 p.m.
<b>Week 5</b>			
<b>Read: Ch 5 <i>Death and the Media</i></b>	Reading		
<i>Watch the video on Blackboard</i>	Video		
Discussion: Watch an episode of any television show you're interested in or are already watching. I'd like for you to use content analysis and record the number of times death is mentioned, alluded to, or happens in the show. Is it necessary to the plot line? Is it gratuitous? How is it handled? What kind of emotions did it elicit? Respond to 2 classmates. All responses are due by 11:59 on Sundays	Discussion	2.5	9/26 11:59 p.m.
<b>Week 6</b>			
<b>Read: Ch 6 <i>Dying: Institutionalization and Medicalization</i></b>	Reading		
<i>Watch the video on Blackboard</i>	Video		
Discussion: Research the movement toward dying at home and discuss with us how comfortable you would be with your loved ones dying at home. Respond to 2 classmates. All responses are due by 11:59 on Sundays	Discussion	2.5	10/3 11:59 p.m.
<b>Week 7</b>			
The Midterm Exam will be available for download			10/6 8:00 am
Midterm Exam Due	Exam	20	10/11 11:59 pm
<b>Week 8</b>			
<b>Read: Ch 7 <i>The Good Death</i></b>	Reading		

Read the article: <a href="http://all-that-is-interesting.com/double-euthanasia-nic-trees-elderhorst">http://all-that-is-interesting.com/double-euthanasia-nic-trees-elderhorst</a>	Reading		
Discussion: Tell me your idea of a good death. For example, if you could orchestrate your death, what would it look like. What do you think are the odds are that you will die a “good death.” Assuming you die in old age, where do you think it is most likely that you will die? In other words, how much control do we each have over our own deaths? Does the article above meet your criteria for a good death? What about the video? Why or why not? Respond to 2 classmates. All responses are due by 11:59 on Sundays	Discussion	2.5	10/17 11:59 pm
<b>Week 9</b>			
Read: Ch 8 The Social Organization of Sudden Death	Reading		
Watch the video on Blackboard	Video		
Discussion: Many famous people have died suddenly and unexpectedly. Which one(s) stand out to you and how do society and the media react? How do people cope with sudden loss? Respond to 2 classmates. All responses are due by 11:59 on Sundays	Discussion	2.5	10/24 11:59 pm
<b>Week 10</b>			
Read: Ch 9 The Dying and the Dead Body	Reading		
Watch the video on Blackboard	Watch Video		
Discussion: What do you wish to happen to your body after you die? Why? What would your ideal funeral look like? Examine one of the new trends in the business of dying such as drive-by funeral viewing, do-it-yourself funerals, etc. Is that something you’d be interested in? Respond to 2 classmates. All responses are due by 11:59 on Sundays		2.5	10/31 11:59 p.m.
<b>Week 11</b>			
Read: Ch 10 Grief and Loss	Reading		
<i>Watch the video on Blackboard</i>	Video		
Read: <a href="https://www.npr.org/sections/health-shots/2014/01/10/261391130/why-hospitals-and-families-still-struggle-to-define-death">https://www.npr.org/sections/health-shots/2014/01/10/261391130/why-hospitals-and-families-still-struggle-to-define-death</a> <i>Why Hospitals and Families Still Struggle to Define Death</i>	Reading		
Paper 2 – Sociologist from the Future. Please see Blackboard for full assignment details.	Paper	10	11/8 11:59 p.m.
<b>Week 12</b>			
Read: Ch 11 Relationships Between the Living and the Dead			
Watch the video on Blackboard			

Discussion: Ask three friends the following question and write down their answers: •What are your after-death beliefs? In other words, what do you believe happens to people after they die?  Respond to 2 classmates. All responses are due by 11:59 on Sundays	Discussion	2.5	11/14 11:59 p.m.
<b>Week 13</b>			
Read: Ch 12 Mortuary Rituals	Reading		
<i>Watch the video on Blackboard</i>	Video		
Paper 3 – Mortuary Science. See Blackboard for full details	Paper	10	11/21 11:59 pm
<b>Week 14 - Thanksgiving Break</b>			
<b>Week 15</b>			
Read: Conclusion: Resurrecting Death			
Watch the video on Blackboard	Reading		
Read: <a href="https://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=5637687">https://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=5637687</a> Origins of Exhibited Cadavers Questioned	Video		
Forum Discussion: Currently, there are Body World exhibitions all over. Is this substantially different than what was done to Julia Pastrana? What about other deceased people are on display around the world? What is the significance of keeping a body on display? Respond to 2 classmates. All responses are due by 11:59 on Sundays	Read	2.5	12/5 11:59 pm
Last Day for all late work to be turned in for a diminished grade (Better than a 0)			12/6 11:59 pm
<b>Week 16</b>			
Final Project due 12/10 by 11:59 pm		25	12/10 11:59 pm
		100	

### **Discomfort Statement**

As a professor, it is my job to challenge you to think critically about the assumptions you have regarding yourself and others, as well as to learn and analyze a lot of materials we will come across. Sometimes the materials and the discussions will make you uncomfortable, and that's okay. When you feel uncomfortable, you are developing critical thinking skills because you're looking at things in a way you might never have before. This is a great opportunity to contact me and have a deeper conversation if needed. We will discuss some of the negative sides of life in this class, which means you will have to sit with ideas such as inequality, mortality, illness, and access to power. Understanding that there may not be one right answer for everyone and being able to problem solve for groups of people is a valuable skill

in all walks of life. I'm asking you to get comfortable being uncomfortable. (Many thanks to Dr. Theresa MacPhail)

## IMPORTANT POLICIES AND RESOURCES

**Academic Accommodations for Persons with Disabilities:** The Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, as amended, and the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 are federal anti-discrimination statutes that provide comprehensive civil rights protection for individuals with disabilities. Title II of the ADA and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act require that students with disabilities be guaranteed equal access to the learning environment through the provision of reasonable and appropriate accommodations of their disability. If you have a disability that may require an accommodation, please contact Disability Support Services (DSS) for the coordination of services. The phone number for DSS is (210) 784-1335 and email is [dss@tamusa.edu](mailto:dss@tamusa.edu).

**Academic Learning Center:** All currently enrolled students at Texas A&M University-San Antonio can utilize the Academic Learning Center for subject-area tutoring. The Academic Learning Center is an appointment based center where appointments are made through the Navigate platform. Students access Navigate through Jagwire in the Student Services tab. The Center is active on campus outreaching to students to highlight services offered. You can contact the Academic Learning Center by emailing [tutoring@tamusa.edu](mailto:tutoring@tamusa.edu) or calling (210)-784-1332. Appointments can also be made through JagWire under the services tab.

**Counseling Resources:** As a college student, there may be times when personal stressors interfere with your academic performance and/or negatively impact your daily functioning. If you or someone you know is experiencing life stressors, emotional difficulties, or mental health concerns at Texas A&M University – San Antonio, please contact the Student Counseling Center (SCC) located in Modular C, Room 166 (Rear entrance) or call 210-784-1331 between the hours of 8 a.m. and 5 p.m., Monday – Friday. After-hours crisis support is available by calling 210-784-1331. Please contact UPD at 911 if harm to self or harm to others is imminent.

All mental health services provided by the SCC are free, confidential (to the extent permitted by law), and are not part of a student's academic or university record. SCC provides brief individual and group therapy, crisis intervention, consultation, case management, and prevention services. For more information, please visit [www.tamusa.edu/studentcounseling](http://www.tamusa.edu/studentcounseling)

**Emergency Preparedness:** JagE Alert is Texas A&M University-San Antonio's mass notification system. In the event of an emergency, such as inclement weather, students, staff, and faculty who are registered in JagE Alert, will have the option to receive a text message, email, and/or phone call with instructions and updates. To register or update your information visit: <https://tamusa.bbcportal.com/>. More information about Emergency Preparedness and the Emergency Response Guide can be found here: <https://www.tamusa.edu/upd/index.html>.

**Financial Aid and Verification of Attendance:** According to the following federal regulation, 34 CFR 668.21: U.S. Department of Education (DoE) Title IV regulation, a student can only receive Title IV funds based on Title IV eligibility criteria which include class attendance. If Title IV funds are disbursed to ineligible students (including students who fail to begin attendance), the institution must return these funds to the U.S. DoE within 30 days of becoming aware that the student will not or has not begun attendance. Faculty will provide the Office of Financial Aid with an electronic notification if a student has not attended the first week of class. Any student receiving federal financial aid who does not attend the first week of class will have their aid terminated and returned to the DoE. Please note that any student who stops attending at any time during the semester may also need to return a portion of their federal aid.

**Jaguar Writing Center:** The Jaguar Writing Center provides writing support to graduate and undergraduate students in all three colleges. Writing tutors work with students to develop reading skills, prepare oral presentations, and plan, draft, and revise their written assignments. Students can schedule appointments with the Writing Center in JagWire under the student services tab. More information about



what services we offer, how to make an appointment, and how to access your appointment can be found on our website at [www.tamusa.edu/Writing-Center](http://www.tamusa.edu/Writing-Center). The Writing Center can also be reached by emailing [writingcenter@tamusa.edu](mailto:writingcenter@tamusa.edu).

**Meeting Basic Needs:** Any student who has difficulty affording groceries or accessing sufficient food to eat every day, or who lacks a safe and stable place to live, and believes this may affect their performance in the course, is urged to contact the Dean of Students ([DOS@tamusa.edu](mailto:DOS@tamusa.edu)) for support. In addition, you may notify the instructor if you are comfortable doing so.

**Military Affairs:** Veterans and active-duty military personnel are welcomed and encouraged to communicate, in advance if possible, about special circumstances (e.g., upcoming deployment, drill requirements, disability accommodations). You are also encouraged to visit the Patriots' Casa in-person, Room 202, or to contact the Office of Military Affairs with any questions at [military@tamusa.edu](mailto:military@tamusa.edu) or (210)784-1397.

**Religious Observances:** Texas A&M University-San Antonio recognizes the diversity of faiths represented among the campus community and protects the rights of students, faculty, and staff to observe religious holidays according to their tradition. Under A&M System policy, students are provided an opportunity to make up any examination, study, or work requirements that may be missed due to a religious observance provided they notify their instructors before the end of the second week of classes for regular session classes.

**Respect for Diversity:** We understand that our students represent diverse backgrounds and perspectives. When we are equity-minded, we are aware of differences and inequalities and are willing to discuss them so we can act to resolve them. The University is committed to building cultural competencies, or the attitudes, skills, and knowledge that enable individuals and organizations to acknowledge cultural differences and incorporate these differences in working with people from diverse cultures. Respecting and accepting people different than you is vital to your success in the classroom, on campus, and as a future professional in the global community. While working together to build this community we ask all members to:

- Share their unique experiences, values, and beliefs.
- Be open to the views of others.
- Honor the uniqueness of their colleagues.
- Value each other's opinions and communicate respectfully.
- Use this opportunity together to discuss ways in which we can create an inclusive environment in this course and across the A&M-San Antonio community.

**The Six-Drop Rule:** Students are subject to the requirements of Senate Bill (SB) 1231 passed by the Texas Legislature in 2007. SB 1231 limits students to a maximum of six (6) non-punitive course drops (i.e., courses a student chooses to drop) during their undergraduate careers. A non-punitive drop does not affect the student's GPA. However, course drops that exceed the maximum allowed by SB 1231 will be treated as "F" grades and will impact the student's GPA.

**Statement of Harassment and Discrimination:** Texas A&M University-San Antonio is committed to the fundamental principles of academic freedom, equality of opportunity, and human dignity. To fulfill its multiple missions as an institution of higher learning, A&M-San Antonio encourages a climate that values and nurtures collegiality, diversity, pluralism, and the uniqueness of the individual within our state, nation, and world. All decisions and actions involving students and employees should be based on applicable law and individual merit. Texas A&M University-San Antonio, in accordance with applicable federal and state law, prohibits discrimination, including harassment, on the basis of race, color, sex, religion, national origin, age, disability, genetic information, veteran status, sexual orientation, gender identity, or gender expression. Individuals who believe they have experienced harassment or discrimination prohibited by this statement are encouraged to contact the appropriate offices within their respective units.

Texas A&M University-San Antonio faculty are committed to helping create a safe learning environment for all students and for the university as a whole. If you have experienced any form of sex- or gender-based discrimination or harassment, including sexual assault, sexual harassment, domestic or dating violence, or stalking, know that help and support are available. A&M-San Antonio has staff members

trained to support survivors in navigating campus life, accessing health and counseling services, providing academic and housing accommodations, and more. The university strongly encourages all students to report any such incidents to the university. Please be aware that all A&M-San Antonio employees (other than those designated as confidential resources such as counselors and other healthcare providers) are required to report information about such discrimination and harassment to the university. This means that if you tell a faculty member about an incident of sexual harassment or sexual violence, or other related misconduct, the faculty member must share that information with the university's Title IX Coordinator. If you wish to speak to a confidential employee who does not have this reporting responsibility, you can contact the Student Counseling Center at (210) 784-1331, Modular C.

**Students' Rights and Responsibilities:** The purpose of the following statement is to enumerate the essential provisions of students' freedoms and responsibilities to learn at Texas A&M University-San Antonio. All students are required to follow all policies and regulations as set forth by The Texas A&M University System, including the A&M-San Antonio Student Code of Conduct.

#### *Students' Rights*

1. A student shall have the right to participate in a free exchange of ideas, and there shall be no university rule or procedure that in any way abridges the rights of freedom of speech, expression, petition, and peaceful assembly as set forth in the U.S. Constitution.
2. Each student shall have the right to participate in all areas and activities of the university, free from any form of discrimination, including harassment, on the basis of race, color, national or ethnic origin, religion, sex, disability, age, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, genetic information, or veteran status in accordance with applicable federal and state laws.
3. A student has the right to personal privacy except as otherwise provided by law, and this will be observed by students and University authorities alike.
4. Each student subject to disciplinary action arising from violations of university student rules shall be assured a fundamentally fair process.

#### *Students' Responsibilities*

1. A student has the responsibility to respect the rights and property of others, including other students, the faculty and staff, and the administration.
2. A student has the responsibility to be fully acquainted and compliant with the University Student Rules found in the Student Handbook, Student Code of Conduct, on our website, and in the University Catalog.
3. A student has the responsibility to recognize that student actions reflect upon the individuals involved and upon the entire University community.
4. A student has the responsibility to recognize the University's obligation to provide a safe environment for learning.
5. A student has the responsibility to check their University email for any updates or official University notifications.

We expect that students will behave in a manner that is dignified, respectful, and courteous to all people, regardless of sex, ethnic/racial origin, religious background, sexual orientation, or disability. Behaviors that infringe on the rights of another individual will not be tolerated.

#### **What about AI**

In all academic work, the ideas and contributions of others must be appropriately acknowledged and work that is presented as original must be, in fact, original. Using an AI-content generator (such as ChatGPT) to complete coursework without proper attribution or authorization is a form of academic dishonesty. If you are unsure about whether something may be plagiarism or academic dishonesty, please contact your instructor to discuss the issue. Faculty, students, and administrative staff all share the responsibility of ensuring the honesty and fairness of the intellectual environment.

Smart is something you *learn*.  
not something you are!