

**SYLLABUS\***  
**PSYCHOLOGY 518-DL**  
**Death, Dying, & Grieving/Bereavement**

Instructor: Rebecca Morse, Ph.D. (rmorse@gmu.edu)

Class Hours & Location: This is an asynchronous distance learning education class via Blackboard.

Office Hours: Fridays via skype @ dr.morsereb or Zoom  
Also available by appointment.

Office Location: Offsite -Office hours via Skype or Zoom  
Office Phone during hours: 240-446-1022

**REQUIRED TEXTS:**

1) Death & Dying; Life & Living  
8<sup>th</sup> edition Cengage Learning Publishing  
By Charles and Donna Corr (\*Unfortunately, older editions (7<sup>th</sup>, etc,) are not acceptable, as the chapters in previous editions do not match the most current edition we are using!)

2) Stiff: The Curious Lives of Human Cadavers  
Roach, Mary

\*Please note that this is available free as a pdf online if you search for it.

3) For one week this semester you will review a book of your choosing. Details are in the Discussion board. You may use a free online book, one via Amazon (kindle or used are cheapest), free from the library, etc.

Articles & Videos that I have posted in the associated week on the Discussion Board.

*COURSE OBJECTIVES AND GOALS:*

Upon completing this course, students should be able to:

- Understand our relationship with death, both as an individual and as a member of society
- See how social forces and events affect the length of our lives, how we grieve, and how we die
- Learn how dying people are perceived and treated in our society and what can be done to provide the best possible care
- Master an understanding of continuing developments and challenges to hospice (palliative care).
- Understand what is becoming of faith and doubt about an afterlife

Additionally, assigned readings and the independent research required for engaged participation will utilize and expand on research, communication, and writing skills acquired in other courses.

*TECHNOLOGY:*

Students will be expected to access and use Blackboard on a regular basis (<https://courses.gmu.edu/>). Important class information, such as the syllabus and weekly practicum assignments, will be posted here. To access Blackboard, students should use their George Mason email ID and password.

In addition, students should check their GMU email account regularly. Be sure to check that new messages can be received and that you are not over the message limit. You also have the option for your

GMU account to be forwarded to another email address. If anything important occurs (such as information about assignments, class cancellation, etc.) you will be notified via your GMU email.

#### *ATTENDANCE & PARTICIPATION:*

As this is an online, asynchronous course, your “presence” on the discussion boards is imperative for you to receive full credit.

#### Course Format:

This course will be structured as a discussion seminar, but online. Students are expected to have **read the assigned articles prior to the date** in which they will be discussed and be prepared to participate. Active participation from all students is essential to the quality of the course and, as discussed below, will be an important grading criteria. So you will read the articles and corresponding chapter, watch any videos I have posted, then answer my questions, then apply the information by responded to other students, or engaging in an active learning exercise question or assignment.

#### **\*\* Discussion Board and Participation Policy \***

Due to the online format of this class, you will not attend any classroom lectures. Class participation, to include participation in the discussion board, individual class work, and respectful interaction between the instructor and students are emphasized in this course.

I will post several questions/topics on the discussion board for each week. The discussion board is set up to be a “reflection loop.” *What that means, is that you need to respond to my questions, and read and respond to at least one other student in order to earn all 5 or 10 points for that week.* There are 8 weeks in our semester, which I have broken down into modules. The first week is just the introduction, and one module. The remaining weeks have two modules per week, A and B. A starts on Monday and is due Thursday evening at 11:59PM. Since we have an odd number of days in each week, we have one day that overlaps, and B starts on Thursday and is due Sunday at 11:59PM. There are 10 modules worth 5 points each, and 5 modules worth 10 points each. I do open the modules early, so if you work on the weekends, you are welcome to “post ahead”!

**NOTE:** I do accept late work, however for every week it is late, you will lose one point. I will not accept any late work after July 29th. Our course does not have a final exam, so our last day of classes is July 29th, 2023.

*Netiquette:* You will be communicating with one another via the discussion board. It is likely that you will not always agree with the opinions of your fellow classmates. Disagreement is fine but you will need to respect others’ views. Thus, personal attacks and derogatory comments will not be tolerated. If, however, you do disagree with someone, then I expect you to state your position in an articulate fashion on the discussion board.

Grading Rubric for Topical Module Discussion Board Questions/Posts:  
Please see rubric in Blackboard.

#### ***518 Students:***

##### ***Death, Dying, Bereavement, & The Media (25 points)***

Numerous psychological studies have explored the link between media and behavior. In this case, students (you) are going to examine the possible relationship between popular/mainstream stories and grieving phenotypes. To do this, and to encourage your engagement with the material and understanding,

students are required to submit a review & reflect paper. The papers will be double-spaced, 1” margins, and should have a cover page and a reference section, and should be a minimum of 10 pages in content length. Spelling and grammar do count, and citations should be in APA 7th. Please see <http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/560/01/> for a helpful formatting resource.

**Further instructions are on Blackboard.** You MUST use peer-reviewed, a.k.a. journal, references (roughly one per page, so for a 10-12 page paper, I expect to see at LEAST 10-12 scholarly references), incorporating the research and ideas explored in this class.

#### *GRADES:*

Discussion Board posts = 100 points

518 Review & Reflect Research Paper = 25 points

**Total Possible Points: 125 for graduate students**

#### *GRADE CALCULATION:*

For simplicity, the points have been assigned such that a student can track their own grade without any confusing arithmetic acrobatics (hence the even 100 points for undergraduates). I round to the second decimal, so a grade of 91.49 is considered a 92 (A-), and a grade of 96.03 is a 96 (A).

#### *Grade Breakdown for Undergraduate Students:*

A+ 101 and up	B+ 89 – 87	C+ 79 – 77	D 69 - 60
A 94 – 100	B 86 – 83	C 76 – 73	F 59 and below
A- 93 – 90	B- 82 – 80	C- 72 – 70	

#### *Grade Breakdown for Graduate Students:*

A+ 125 and up	B+ 109 – 112	C+ 96 – 99	D 79 - 85
A 116 – 124	B 104 – 108	C 91 – 95	F 78 and below
A- 113 – 115	B- 100 – 103	C- 86 - 90	

#### *HONOR CODE:*

All provisions of the GMU Honor Code will be followed in this class. Information regarding the Honor Code and what constitutes academic dishonesty can be found in the 2011-201 University Catalog or online at the following website: <http://www.gmu.edu/catalog/apolicies/>.

#### *DISABILITY HELP:*

If you are a student with a disability and you need academic accommodations, please see me and contact the Disability Resource Center (DRC) at 703-993-2474. All academic accommodations must be arranged through that office.

*SCHEDULE OF CLASSES:*

\*Topics subject to change as needed to ensure that the majority of students are comfortable with material covered prior to moving to the next topic.

Date	Topic	Readings/Videos
START <i>Tuesday Start this week only</i> 05/30-06/04 Introduction Week 1 Module A and Module B	Introduction to Class; <u><b>AND</b></u> As we think about death.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Parkes (2013) Article</li><li>• Corr Video</li></ul>
06/05-08 Week 2 Module A	Exploring Death: Personal Interpretations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Nair-Collins (2013) Article</li><li>• Parnia (2013) Article</li><li>• Corr Chapters 2, 3, &amp; 4</li><li>• Brief intro video</li></ul>
06/08-11 Week 2 Module B	Exploring Death: Philosophical Implications	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Corr Chapters 6, 7, &amp; 8</li><li>• Video: W;t (Wit)</li></ul>
06/12-15 Week 3 Module A	Exploring the meaning of death: Cadavers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Corr Chapter 5</li><li>• Student Choice 2 Chapters from <i>Stiff</i></li><li>• Taiwanese Video</li><li>• Indonesia Video</li></ul>
06/15-18 Week 3 Module B	Death with Dignity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Corr Chapters 16 &amp; 18</li><li>• Introduction Video</li><li>• NPR Article</li><li>• 10 Right to Die Cases</li></ul>
06/19-22 Week 4 Module A	End of Life Issues: Advance Directives & Legal Concerns	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• LA Times Article</li><li>• Advance Directive Website</li></ul>
06/22-25 Week 4 Module B	Suicide	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Rallis et al (2015) article</li><li>• McCord &amp; Morse (2017) Chapter</li><li>• Corr Chapter 17</li><li>• Youth Suicide Fact Sheet</li></ul>
06/26-29 Week 5 Module A	Grief and Mourning Bereavement Overload & the Elderly	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Corr Chapters 9, 10, &amp; 15</li><li>• Ken Doka Video</li><li>• Robert Niemeyer Video</li></ul>
06/29-07/02 Week 5 Module B	Coping with Loss & Grief: The Funeral Process	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Corr Chapter 11</li><li>• Funeral Process PDF (I made this based on Kastenbaum, 2011)</li></ul>
07/03-06 Week 6 Module A	Special Populations Part 1: Children & Death	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Corr Chapter 12</li><li>• Kaplow et al (2014)</li><li>• McClatchey et al (2014)</li><li>• Boelen &amp; Spuij (2013)</li></ul>
07/06-09 Week 6	Special Populations Part 2: Adolescents, Teenagers, & Death	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Corr Chapter 13</li><li>• Student Choice: Teen</li></ul>

Module B		Book Review
07/10-13 Week 7 Module A	Special Populations Part 3: Intersection Between Development and Death Conceptualization and a Special Topic: Grief and Developmental Disabilities---when mental age doesn't "match" chronological age	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sormanti &amp; Ballan (2011)</li> <li>• Miller et al Monograph (n.d.)</li> <li>• Morse, Hoch, &amp; Freeman (2016)</li> <li>• Clute (2010)</li> <li>• Clute 19<sup>th</sup> National Symposium</li> </ul>
07/13-16 Week 7 Module B	Death, Dying, & Culture: African & India	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Corr Chapter 19 (revisit 5)</li> <li>• Dying in Africa Video</li> <li>• The Thing that Happened Video (Uganda)</li> <li>• Varnasi Video (India)</li> </ul>
07/17-20 Week 8 Module A	Resilience, Self-Care, & Death Competence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Gamino &amp; Ritter (2012)</li> <li>• Grief-Map</li> <li>• Revisit Corr Chapter 1</li> </ul>
07/20-23 Week 8 Module B	<b><u>All Students Wrap-up - *Final Posts must be submitted by Saturday, 07/23/2023 at 11:59PM</u></b>	
	<b><u>No late work accepted after 07/29/23 11:59PM; No final Exam</u></b>	
<b>07/29/23 11:59PM : Review &amp; Reflect Paper</b>		

\*Syllabus subject to change.

## Important Dates:

<https://registrar.gmu.edu/calendars/summer-2023/>