Course Description: Sociological approach exploring how the American culture as a society deals with illness, dying, and death.

Learning Outcomes: This course is designed to expose you to the sociological perspective in terms of the major theories, research methods, & concepts related to an understanding of death & dying. The following Dept. learning objectives are also relevant for this class:

- **PLO1.** The student will be able to identify, compare, and contrast classical and contemporary theories of Sociology relevant to the study of death & dying.
- **PLO2.** The student will be able to identify the principles of good social scientific research design in the study of death & dying. Such principles include validity, reliability, precision in measurement, and sampling methodology.
- **PLO3.** The student will possess sociological knowledge as evidenced by the identification of the major concepts involved with the study of death & dying.
- **PLO4.** The student will be able to apply sociological knowledge and skills to a variety of social contexts related to death & dying.
- **PLO5.** The student will be able to read theoretical arguments and to identify their major strengths and weaknesses as applied to death & dying.

Student Learning Outcomes

*Student learning outcomes for this class include (but are not limited to):*

1. Students will possess knowledge of the study of Death & Dying as a multidisciplinary field.
2. Students will be able to identify unique & distinctive features of the study of Death & Dying from the
academic discipline of Sociology.
3. Students will be able to identify, compare, and contrast three major sociological theories or conceptual frameworks relevant to the study of death & dying.
4. Students will be able to identify the principles of good sociological research. Such principles include common criteria commonly used for choice of research methods, validity, reliability, and research ethics.
5. Students will possess sociological knowledge as evidenced by the identification of major concepts involved with an understanding of major social institutions, including religion and the health care system, and their influence on social processes related to death & dying.

Program Learning Outcomes
This course addresses the following Program Learning Objectives:

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Grading:
A. **Grading Scale:** A 10-point grading scale is in effect in this course. Any allocation of “bonus points” to an exam is at the discretion of the instructor. Typically, additional points are added only when the class average is below 70 (on a major exam).

B. **Exams (80%):** Three (3) exams will be given during the semester. Exam #1 is 25% of the course grade, while Exam #2 counts as 30% of the total grade. Finally, Exam #3 is worth 25% of the total course grade. Exams will cover both assigned readings and lectures. Tests will be closed book, in-class, and the format usually includes both objective and subjective questions. Typically, major exams include multiple-choice questions & one essay question (drawing from both text & lecture). **Do not expect class lectures to cover all of the significant aspects of the topic - 2 ½ hours of class time per week is an inadequate amount of time to cover all course material in an upper-level course.** In other words, please remember that exams cover 100% of the lecture material, and 100% of the text material. Review resources for each chapter are available on the publisher’s student companion website (see web address above under text information). It is therefore your responsibility read the chapters in a timely manner & to learn the text material for the major exams. It is useful to think of the text and lecture as separate “learning paths.” To perform well on exams, attend class regularly, read the text chapters when assigned, take careful lecture notes, & review them frequently. Thus, regular class attendance is important in this class. Full lecture notes are not available from the instructor should you miss class. Rather, it is suggested that students contact a fellow class member if you need “complete” notes. The instructor, however, can provide a general description of material covered in a specific class missed. Typically, a review sheet is distributed during class prior to a major exam. There is no comprehensive final exam given in this class; the third major exam is given at the scheduled Final Exam time.

**Tentative Exam Dates Are:**
Exam 1 - THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 15
Exam 2 - TUESDAY, MARCH 27
Exam 3 - TUESDAY, MAY 8, 10:30 AM (FINAL EXAM TIME)

Make-up exams will be given during Dead Week. If you miss an exam for any reason, please plan to take the exam at that time. Please check with the instructor regarding the exact time of make-up
exams. The format of make-up exams may change.

C. **Applied/Experiential Project (20%)**: The details of this requirement will be presented on a separate handout by the 2nd week of classes. The Applied Project involves learning about death & dying via personal reflections, informal interviews, & analysis of selected sources related to death prevention, causes of death, or death-related practices. The project will be due at the last regularly scheduled class meeting of Dead Week.

D. **Attendance**: Regular class attendance is extremely important, in order to gain exposure to course material to the fullest extent possible. In an upper-level Sociology class, discussions provide a valuable opportunity for “peer teaching,” as class members contribute to scholarly discourse. There are no “excused” absences in this course. Grade reductions may be made for excessive absences, i.e., three (3) or more. Absences related to late registration, drop/add, or pre-registration count in the total. Class meets on a regular schedule immediately before and after University holidays. There is no provision for “making up” an absence. Class attendance may not be recorded at every class meeting. The official SFA Attendance Policy (Policy 6.7) may be viewed here: http://www.sfasu.edu/policies/class-attendance-and-excused-absence-6.7.pdf

E. **Withheld Grades Policy**: At the discretion of the instructor of record and with the approval of the academic unit head, a grade of WH will be assigned only if the student cannot complete the course work because of unavoidable circumstances. Students must complete the work within one calendar year from the end of the semester in which they receive a WH, or the grade automatically becomes an F, except as allowed through policy [i.e., Active Military Service (6.14)]. If students register for the same course in future semesters, the WH will automatically become an F and will be counted as a repeated course for the purpose of computing the grade point average. Details on the SFA Withheld Grades Policy is available here: http://www.sfasu.edu/policies/course-grades.pdf

F. **Other Important Matters**:

**Use of Cell Phones & Computer-related Electronic Devices**: Please limit your use of cell phones in class, including text messaging. Laptop computers & tablets may be used for note-taking, but their use should be class-connected, not of a personal nature. Excessive use of such devices during class is potentially disruptive to other students & the overall dynamics of the class.

**Written Communication Skills**: In a 300-level course students should possess strong written communication skills. As a minimum standard, spelling/grammatical errors, or other writing problems (on any work in the course) may result in a grade reduction, with a 20-point maximum per assignment/exam for writing-related errors.

**Accommodation for Disabilities**: To obtain disability related accommodations, alternate formats and/or auxiliary aids, students with disabilities must contact the Office of Disability Services (ODS), Human Services Building Room 325, 468-3004/468-1004 (TDD) as early as possible in the semester. Once verified, ODS will notify the course instructor and outline the accommodation and/or auxiliary aids to be provided. Failure to request services in a timely manner may delay your accommodations. For more detailed information, go to: http://www.sfasu.edu/disabilityservices.

**Cheating and Plagiarism**: Academic integrity is a responsibility of all university faculty and students. Faculty members promote academic integrity in multiple ways including instruction on the components of academic honesty, as well as abiding by university policy on penalties for cheating and plagiarism.
**Definition of Academic Dishonesty** - Academic dishonesty includes both cheating and plagiarism. Cheating includes but is not limited to (1) using or attempting to use unauthorized materials to aid in achieving a better grade on a component of a class; (2) the falsification or invention of any information, including citations, on an assigned exercise; and/or (3) helping or attempting to help another in an act of cheating or plagiarism. Plagiarism is presenting the words or ideas of another person as if they were your own. Examples of plagiarism are (1) submitting an assignment as if it were one's own work when, in fact, it is at least partly the work of another; (2) submitting a work that has been purchased or otherwise obtained from an Internet source or another source; and (3) incorporating the words or ideas of an author into one's paper without giving the author due credit.

The availability of the Internet is a double-edged sword: it greatly assists in the research process, but it is a tempting source of seemingly “ready-made” information. When a student uses three (3) or more words from another source without proper attribution, it is generally considered plagiarism. Cheating & plagiarism, including failing to properly attribute work, is a serious breach of academic integrity & can lead to failure on an assignment. Please read the complete Academic Integrity policy at: http://www.sfasu.edu/policies/academic_integrity.asp

**Tentative Course Outline**

*Note: Class lectures typically cover 1-1½ chapters per week.*

**Week of/Chapter & Topic***

**JAN. 16 - FEB.15:**
- **Prologue**

1. **Attitudes toward Death: A Climate of Change**
2. **Perspectives on Death: Historical & Cultural**
3. **Learning About Death: Socialization**
4. **Facing Death: Living with Life-Threatening Illness**
5. **Health Care Systems: Patients, Staff, and Institutions**

~ EXAM #1, THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 15 ~

**FEB. 16 - MARCH 27:**
8. **Last Rites: Funerals and Body Disposition**
9. **Survivors: Understanding the Experience of Loss**
13 Risks, Perils, & Traumatic Death

10 Death in the Lives of Children and Adolescents

11 Death in the Lives of Adults

~ EXAM #2, TUESDAY, MARCH 27 ~

MARCH 28 - MAY 8:

14 Beyond Death/After Life

12 Suicide

4 Death Systems: Mortality & Society

6 End-of-Life Issues and Decisions

15 The Path Ahead: Personal and Social Choices

-- Epilogue

~ EXAM #3, TUESDAY, MAY 8, 10:30 AM (FINAL EXAM TIME) ~

Selected Quotes on the Sociology of Death & Dying

If all our misfortunes were laid in one common heap, whence everyone must take an equal portion, most people would be contented to take their own and depart.
Socrates

Learn to get in touch with silence within yourself and know that everything in this life has a purpose. There are no mistakes, no coincidences. All events are blessings given to us to learn from.
Elisabeth Kübler-Ross

In the deserts of the heart, let the healing fountain start.
W.H. Auden

There is a light in this world, a healing spirit more powerful than any darkness we may encounter. We sometime lose sight of this force when there is suffering, and too much pain. Then suddenly, the spirit will emerge through the lives of ordinary people who hear a call and answer in extraordinary ways.
Mother Teresa

Death is not the greatest loss in life. The greatest loss is what dies inside us while we live.
Norman Cousins

I am of course confident that I will fulfill my tasks as a writer in all circumstances -- from my grave even more successfully and more irrefutably than in my lifetime. No one can bar the road to truth, and to advance
its cause I am prepared to accept even death.
Alexander Solzhenitsyn

The meaning of earthly existence lies not, as we have grown used to thinking, in prospering but in the development of the soul.
Alexander Solzhenitsyn

Look around you - there are people around you. Maybe you will remember one of them all your life and later eat your heart out because you didn't make use of the opportunity to ask him questions. And the less you talk, the more you'll hear.
Alexander Solzhenitsyn

...It's only on a black day that you begin to have friends.
Alexander Solzhenitsyn

Remembering that I'll be dead soon is the most important tool I've ever encountered to help me make the big choices in life. Because almost everything - all external expectations, all pride, all fear of embarrassment or failure - these things just fall away in the face of death, leaving only what is truly important.
Steve Jobs

Our dead are never dead to us, until we have forgotten them.
George Eliot

It’s never too late to be who you might have been.
George Eliot

Blessed is the influence of one true, loving human soul on another.
George Eliot

... What about the main thing in life, all its riddles? If you want, I'll spell it out for you right now. Do not pursue what is illusionary - property and position: all that is gained at the expense of your nerves decade after decade, and is confiscated in one fell night. Live with a steady superiority over life - don't be afraid of misfortune, and do not yearn for happiness; it is, after all, all the same: the bitter doesn't last forever, and the sweet never fills the cup to overflowing. It is enough if you don't freeze in the cold and if thirst and hunger don't claw at your insides. If your back isn't broken, if your feet can walk, if both arms can bend, if both eyes can see, if both ears hear, then whom should you envy? And why? Our envy of others devours us most of all. Rub your eyes and purify your heart - and prize above all else in the world those who love you and who wish you well. Do not hurt them or scold them, and never part from any of them in anger; after all, you simply do not know: it may be your last act... and that will be how you are imprinted on their memory.
Alexander Solzhenitsyn