“Death is a mirror in which the entire meaning of life is reflected.” (The Tibetan Book of Living and Dying)

UBC . PSYC-208-002 Psychology of Death & Dying

Winter Term 1 (September – December 2018) Wednesdays 4:00 – 6:50 pm in SWNG 222

YOUR INSTRUCTOR
David King, PhD
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Office: Room 4035, Audain Art Centre, 6398 University Blvd
Office Hours: Wednesdays 2:30 – 3:15 pm or by appointment
Website: www.davidbking.net

YOUR TEACHING ASSISTANT
Jin Wen
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Office Hrs: Wednesdays 11:00 am – 12:00 pm or by appointment

COURSE DESCRIPTION
This course explores a wide-range of psychological and social issues related to death, dying, and loss, including the development of attitudes toward death, the psychosocial and cultural contexts of dying, the mental life of the dying person, palliative and hospice care, assisted suicide, trauma, and adjustment to loss. Dialogue will consider the experiences of the dying, the bereaved, and those who work with them in formal and informal care settings. The purpose of this course is to provide a primarily psychosocial perspective on these topics.

PREREQUISITES
Education in psychology at the introductory level is recommended but not mandatory. Key psychological terms and concepts will be reviewed and defined in class as needed. Some general understanding of basic statistics and research methods may also be helpful. Most importantly, your maturity and sensitivity are required...

PLEASE NOTE. The topic of death is a difficult one, and a source of unease and discomfort for most people. People deal with death (including the death of loved ones and the thought of their own death) in very different ways. Some people avoid reminders of it altogether, while others may have committed themselves strongly to a specific belief or perspective on the topic. I will approach this course with as much frankness and honesty as I can, acknowledging diverse views whenever possible. This will sometimes necessitate the sharing of content (images, stories, etc.) that may be upsetting to some, as well as perspectives that may feel threatening to one’s own (whether shared by me or other students). Respect for diverse opinions must be maintained at all times (i.e., it is okay to respectfully disagree). For those currently in more sensitive positions, it is your responsibility to decide in advance if this is the right time for you to take this course.

Because death is a universally relevant topic, reflecting on your own thoughts and experiences regarding death is inevitable (and encouraged) in this course. We will be discussing such topics as loss and grief, suicidal ideation, death preparation, and the prospect of your own death. Although these are emotionally salient topics, this course is not intended to serve as an opportunity for personal or group therapy. Students who are currently experiencing significant grief or who have difficulty during the course should consult the list of health and wellness resources near the end of this syllabus. In light of these considerations and the sensitivities surrounding this topic, your upmost maturity is required during class (see section on ‘Class Etiquette’).
COURSE FORMAT
This course consists of lectures accompanied by frequent in-class discussions and activities aimed at stimulating critical thinking and reflection. Various multimedia platforms (including videos, images, media stories, case studies, etc.) will also be integrated into lectures on a regular basis. A preliminary set of lecture outlines will be posted on the website prior to each lecture. Slide outlines are intended as visual aids only; it is recommended that you take your own notes in class using the slides as a guide.

COURSE WEBSITE / CANVAS
This course uses Connect (https://canvas.ubc.ca) to make announcements, provide lecture slides/notes before class (by the night before), post grades, and supply any other relevant content to be downloaded by students. Please ensure that this course appears in your Canvas account when logging in with your Campus-Wide Login (CWL) information. It is your responsibility to check in regularly for important updates, although special announcements will also be made via class email.

REQUIRED READING

1. DYING AND DEATH IN CANADA (3rd Ed., 2016) by Northcott & Wilson

Please see course schedule on final page of syllabus for chapter assignments.

2. ADDITIONAL ARTICLES WILL BE ASSIGNED REGULARLY THROUGHOUT THE COURSE

Additional reading assignments will include mainly peer-reviewed articles and papers which intend to further enhance textbook content and explore psychosocial factors specifically in greater detail.

These readings will be assigned on a weekly basis in advance of the relevant week. Links will be posted on the course website no later than the preceding Friday. It is your responsibility to check the course website regularly for additional assigned content. All additional assigned readings are testable unless otherwise noted.

COURSE EVALUATION  Students must complete...

3 equally-weighted, non-cumulative exams (see schedule for dates) – worth 75% (25% each)
See section on ‘Examinations’ for additional details and requirements on exams.

3 thought papers (1-2 pages each, submitted once per course unit) – worth 25% (8.333...% each)
See section on ‘Thought Papers’ for additional details and requirements.

Students may also receive up to 3 bonus percentage points for participating in HSP research.
Optional; see section on ‘Extra Credit’ for more information.
Examinations. Examinations are **non-cumulative**. Two midterm exams will be held during class time (see course schedule) while the final exam will be scheduled by the university during the regular exam period. You are expected to keep your schedule clear during the final exam period in order to accommodate the final exam.

Exam Content: The exams will consist of primarily multiple choice as well as written questions (short answer; point form responses are acceptable). **Exam questions will cover material from relevant lectures, textbook chapters, and other assigned readings (unless otherwise noted).** The purpose of lectures is to amplify, explain, and expand upon material found in the textbook and assigned readings. Although there will be overlap between the lectures and readings, there will also be material that will be covered in lectures that is not specifically discussed in readings. Furthermore, there may be some material from assigned readings that will not be explicitly discussed in class.

On Exam Day: Please bring an HB pencil and an eraser to each exam to allow for electronic scoring of the multiple-choice questions. Note that during exams, invigilators may ask students to move or alter students’ seating arrangements with no explanation provided. This may be due to the suspected or observed misconduct of a classmate in an adjacent seat. Note that if you arrive more than 30 minutes late to an exam, you may be refused admittance to the exam and therefore be assigned a grade of “0” on the exam. **Students who arrive to an exam after a classmate has completed the exam and left the exam room will not be permitted to write the exam.** This applies to all examinations, including midterms.

Missing an Exam: Examinations will be given on published dates only. Exceptions will be made in cases of medical problems and emergencies, for which documentation will be required. Exceptions will also be made for students who have religious obligations that conflict with an exam date. **If you are unable to write an exam due to medical problems, please contact me before the exam or within 24 hours after the exam. Students who do not contact me within 24 hours of the exam will be assigned a grade of “0” on the exam.** If you are unable to write an exam due to religious obligations, please notify me within the first 2 weeks of class. Special accommodations cannot be made for purposes of travel or vacations.

Make-Up Exams: If you are unable to write an exam for medical reasons, you are expected to complete it within the shortest time possible at the convenience of the TA. **You may be offered only one alternative time to write the exam and it is your responsibility to be accommodating to the TA** (i.e., it is not possible to offer multiple dates for make-ups). You are required to contact the TA immediately upon confirming your absence with me in order to schedule the make-up. This is in order to ensure that you write the exam as soon as possible following your illness. Moreover, the content and/or format of the make-up exam may differ from the original version. **In instances where you are unable to accommodate the TA’s schedule, or in cases where a make-up exam must be missed, you will be asked to contact Arts Advising to mediate the situation.** Like originally scheduled exams, missed make-up exams will only be accommodated with medical documentation. **If any of these procedures are not followed, you may receive a grade of ‘0’ on the respective exam.** In certain circumstances, including periods in which too many requests for make-up exams have been received, other arrangements may be made, including (but not restricted to) waiving (i.e., excluding) the exam in question.

Exam Grades: Exam grades will be posted on the course website as soon as they are available. Please allow 2 weeks for grades to be posted. Students wishing to view their midterm exams should do so with their TA (at a scheduled review session or by appointment). Students who wish to have their midterm exam re-graded should email me detailing why they think that their exam was unjustly graded within 2 weeks of the grades being posted. Re-grades will not be considered after the 2-week mark, although students are welcome to review their midterm exams at any point during the term. Final examinations must be reviewed directly with me, at a scheduled review session or by appointment. Note that due to minor errors that may occur in grading and/or scoring, exam grades may be adjusted after their original posting. In such corrections, your exam grade may either increase or decrease in order to ensure that all grades reflect an accurate assessment of material.
Thought Papers. You are required to submit 3 ‘thought papers’ over the course of the term (1 thought paper must be submitted for each unit of the course). Thought papers are not meant to be summaries of course material. Rather, they are intended to give you the opportunity to develop and express your own thoughts about a particular question posed in class. Throughout our lecture discussions, we will take time to reflect on a number of critical thinking questions. Some of these questions will be eligible for thought paper topics, as will be clearly indicated on the slides. In each of the 3 units of the course (see course schedule), you may choose any one of these questions to write about in a 1-2 page thought paper. The thought paper should not be a summary or reiteration of our in-class discussion, but should instead include additional or new insights following your own reflection and contemplation on the matter. Although thought papers should be academic in tone, they may include personal or anecdotal references where appropriate. Alternatively, you may also support your thoughts or insights by referencing other sources. The goal is to express your critical thinking and reasoning skills on paper. Additional direction will be provided in-class and/or on the course website.

Thought Paper Requirements: Thought papers must be typed, double-spaced (with 1-inch margins), in 12-point Times New Roman or similar font, and between 1 and 2 pages in length. First-person perspective should be used only when referring to personal experiences, and direct quoting should be avoided in papers of this length unless absolutely necessary (i.e., when paraphrasing would change the meaning of the original statement). Thought papers should adhere to basic APA formatting guidelines as outlined in the Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association, Sixth Edition (APA, 2009), but do not require a title page, abstract, running head, headings, or reference section (let’s keep it as simple as possible). The library has a handout summarizing APA citation procedures available at http://www.library.ubc.ca/pubs/apastyle.pdf. In the event that you refer to another source in a thought paper, you should then attach a standard APA page of references. Given the page number restrictions, however, please ensure that you do not include more than 3 references in any single thought paper. You must include the relevant question as stated in lecture at the top of your thought paper along with your name and student ID number. Please keep it simple! This is an example of how the top of each thought paper might appear:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question: What are the potential practical limitations of the Kubler-Ross stage model of dying? John Smith 12341234</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Although Kubler-Ross’ proposed stages of dying dramatically changed our understanding of typical responses to impending death, there are some practical limitations. In a clinical setting, one concern revolves</td>
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Thought Paper Grading: Thought papers will be graded primarily on critical thinking and insightfulness, originality of thought, and organization and clarity. Although grammar, spelling, and formatting are not crucial concerns, they should nevertheless be at such a level that they do not compromise the clarity of your thoughts. Each thought paper will be assigned a point grade out of 100 to reflect a percentage score. Thought papers will account for 25% of your final grade in the course (i.e., 8.333... % each).

Thought Paper Submission: Thought papers must be submitted within one week of the question being posed in class (i.e., when a preferred critical thinking question is presented in lecture, the related thought paper is due by the following Wednesday), before the end of that day (11:59 PM). Electronic copies must be uploaded through the course website (see Assignments section) in either PDF or Microsoft Word (DOC) file format. Because you have many opportunities over the term, no late papers will be accepted. Only one paper will be accepted per unit (no exceptions).
Thought Paper Grades: Grades for thought papers will be posted on the course website as soon as they are available. Please allow 2 weeks for grades to be posted following submission. Students wishing to discuss or review their thought papers should make an appointment with the TA. Students who have viewed a thought paper and who wish to have it re-graded should email me detailing why they think that their thought paper was unjustly graded within 2 weeks of the grades being posted.

Extra Credit. You may earn extra credit for research participation (at a rate of 1/2 point for 1/2 hour, to a maximum of 3 points) or, as an alternative, by completing a library writing project (see HSP information on website listed below). Your earned points are added to your final grade (after any scaling, i.e., before meeting the department’s standards for grade distribution). For complete details, or to register, visit https://ubc-psych.sona-systems.com. Please register in this online system as soon as possible, as deadlines are in place. For additional information, see "Subject Pool Information for Participants" on the above-noted website.

DEPARTMENTAL POLICY ON GRADE DISTRIBUTION
Courses offered by the Psychology Department are required to meet a target grade distribution. This is done in order to ensure that all students are assessed fairly in relation to students in other sections of the same course and to students in other courses. The target grade distribution for undergraduate psychology courses requires that the mean for the class fall between 66% and 70%, with a standard deviation of approximately 13%. Accordingly, students should note that the Department may scale the final grades in this course up or down if the distribution of grades deviates substantially from the target. A student’s grade is not official until it appears on their academic record.

ACADEMIC ACCOMMODATION / CONCESSION
UBC accommodates students with disabilities who have registered with Access and Diversity (http://www.students.ubc.ca/access/index.cfm). Please inform me of any accommodations as early as possible.

During your time in this course, if you encounter medical, emotional, or personal problems that affect your attendance or performance, please notify me. You may be able to obtain academic concession from the Dean of your Faculty. Please discuss any extenuating circumstances with me prior to exam dates. In order to ensure equity among the students in the class, accommodations will not be made after an exam has been written. For further information on academic concession, please consult Policies and Regulations in the UBC Calendar (http://www.calendar.ubc.ca/vancouver/index.cfm).

CHEATING & ACADEMIC OFFENCES
Cheating, plagiarism, and other forms of academic misconduct are very serious concerns of the University, and the Department of Psychology has taken steps to alleviate them. In the first place, the Department has implemented software that can reliably detect cheating on multiple-choice exams by analyzing the patterns of students’ responses. In addition, the Department subscribes to TurnItIn—a service designed to detect and deter plagiarism. In all cases of suspected academic misconduct, the parties involved will be pursued to the fullest extent dictated by the guidelines of the University. Strong evidence of cheating or plagiarism may result in a zero credit for the work in question. According to the University Act (section 61), the President of UBC has the right to impose harsher penalties including (but not limited to) a failing grade for the course, suspension from the University, cancellation of scholarships, or a notation added to a student’s transcript. All graded work in this course, unless otherwise specified, is to be original work done independently by individuals. If you have any questions as to whether or not what you are doing is even a borderline case of academic misconduct, please consult your instructor. For details on pertinent University policies and procedures, please see Chapter 5 in the UBC Calendar (http://students.ubc.ca/calendar). Further course policies can be obtained from the UBC Calendar on academic regulations.
IN-CLASS PARTICIPATION
I strongly encourage and appreciate student participation. Participation may be in the form of questions or comments posed during class amongst your classmates or outside of class in discussion with me. I will make every effort to create a classroom environment in which students feel comfortable to discuss their ideas. If, however, you would prefer to share your ideas with me outside of class, you are welcome to see me during my office hours or by appointment. In order to encourage and facilitate participation, I ask that all students support their classmates’ efforts to contribute to class discussion. General course policies can be obtained from the UBC Calendar on academic regulations.

CLASS ETIQUETTE
In consideration of your fellow students, please turn your phones off during class. The use of laptops in class is an effective means to take notes and record comments related to course content. However, some students use laptops in class to surf the internet, engage in e-mail correspondence, and/or work on material associated with other courses. These activities can be very distracting to those who sit in adjacent seats and can interfere with their efforts to focus on course content. For this reason, all students who intend to use laptops in class for activities unrelated to the course are asked to sit in rows at the rear of the classroom. Please also make an effort to type quietly, as such background sounds can be very distracting for others. If you arrive at class late or need to leave early, do so with minimal disruption.

RESPECT & DECENCY
I will only ever tolerate an inclusive, respectful, and safe classroom environment. The opinions and perspectives of all individuals are valued and respected, no matter their age, gender, ability, ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation, or gender identity. To this end, and in support of UBC’s Positive Space campaign, I further aim to foster a classroom atmosphere that is receptive to and welcoming of LGBTQ people and issues (see http://positivespace.ubc.ca). All individuals in the classroom should feel safe to express their thoughts and opinions without judgment, ridicule, or discrimination. As such, thoughts and opinions should only ever be shared in a respectful and polite manner. In regards to more sensitive issues, it is advisable that students “think before they speak.” If a particular statement or behaviour is likely to offend someone or make an individual feel alienated or threatened in any way, it should not be shared. Educated and respectful opinions, on the other hand, are always welcome. Students should familiarize themselves with UBC’s policy on maintaining a Respectful Environment on campus and in the classroom: http://www.hr.ubc.ca/respectful-environment/

ATTENDANCE & MISSING CLASS
Although attendance is not recorded, you are responsible for all material covered during class. Should you miss class for any reason, it is your responsibility to find a classmate who is willing to share their notes with you (and you may want to establish this early on in order to better prepare). If your absence is legitimate, then I will be happy to answer questions about the missed material once you have consulted with a fellow student.

COMMUNICATION WITH INSTRUCTOR & TA
Complex questions are typically easier to answer face-to-face, rather than via e-mail. In addition to the instructor, the TA is a great resource and will be able to provide you with answers to many of your questions. The TA works in close contact with the instructor and will refer matters if they cannot resolve them for you. We take your questions very seriously and want to facilitate learning. For practical reasons, please allow at least 24 hours for us to reply, particularly just prior to exams when student requests tend to be high. If the response to your question or concern is already answered in this syllabus, you may not receive a response by email.
REQUESTS FOR LETTERS OF REFERENCE
During your academic career, you may require a letter of reference or recommendation (for admission into a graduate or diploma program, to apply for a research job, etc.). Unfortunately, I will not be able to accommodate all requests for such letters. I am only willing to write letters for those students who engage in the course material beyond simply attending class and writing exams. This means that in order for such a request to be considered, you must participate in class discussion and/or visit me during office hours to discuss course material (i.e., I must know who you are!). I am also unwilling to write letters for students whose standing grade in the course is below a 75. If these criteria are met, sufficient notice must be provided and accommodation is still not guaranteed. I can only write letters for a limited number of students each term.

LEARNING RESOURCES
There are a number of useful resources available on and off campus to assist students in their learning goals:

Study Support: Learning Commons (http://learningcommons.ubc.ca/) is an online resource designed to provide UBC students with learning and study support. It is an interactive website that provides access to information on exam preparation, tutoring, on-campus learning workshops, study groups, and technical tools. The University of Northern British Columbia (UNBC) has a number of useful learning resources available for students online. A series of helpful study skills handouts (e.g., concentration tips, memory strategies) from UNBC can be found at: http://www.unbc.ca/lsc/index.html.

Writing Support: UBC students may obtain assistance with writing through the UBC Writing Centre (http://www.writingcentre.ubc.ca/). The Writing Centre offers courses, tutoring services, and an online Writer’s Workshop to assist students in developing their writing skills. The UBC Library (http://www.library.ubc.ca/home/instruct/) provides online information to assist students in conducting library searches for papers. Time Management: Resources to assist you in managing your time across courses are available at: http://www.arc.sbc.edu/timeschedule.html.

HEALTH & WELLNESS RESOURCES
You may at some point find yourself struggling to manage your health (mental or physical) while in school. Below is a list of health-related resources on and off campus that you may wish to utilize.

Access and Diversity: Access and Diversity provides accommodations for UBC students living with physical or mental disabilities. Website: students.ubc.ca/about/access | Phone Number: 604-822-5844
BC Crisis Center: Non-profit, volunteer-driven organization that provides emotional support to youth, adults, and seniors in crisis in BC. Crisis line available 24/7. Website: crisiscentre.bc.ca | Phone Number: 604-872-3311
Distress Line: If you are in distress or are worried about someone in distress who may hurt themselves, call 1-800-SUICIDE 24 hours a day to connect to a BC crisis line, without a wait or busy signal.
Counselling Services at UBC: Counselling services offers a variety of resources to help you maintain your mental health while in school. You may see a counsellor on an individual basis, attend group counselling, or to document an illness if you should require academic concession. Website: students.ubc.ca/livewell/services/counselling-services | Phone Number: 604-822-3811
The Kaleidoscope: A confidential peer-run mental health support group that takes place on campus at least once a week. You may attend the group if you are experiencing any kind of mental health related challenges, or if you’re just feeling stressed about school in general. Registration is not required to attend the group. See the website for meeting times and locations. Food and drink are provided. Website: the-kaleidoscope.com
Live Well, Learn Well: The Live Well, Learn Well initiative is a resource hub that provides students with information to help improve physical and mental wellbeing. Website: students.ubc.ca/livewelllearnwell

Mental Health Awareness Club: A club that offers opportunities to speak about mental health with others and strives to promote mental health awareness throughout the UBC community. Website: ubcmhac.sites.olt.ubc.ca/

Mood Disorders Clinic UBC: A psychiatric program designed specifically to treat individuals living with depression or bipolar disorder. Website: ubc-mooddisorders.vch.ca/

Pacific Spirit Addiction Services: A free and confidential service for youth and young adults up to the age of 24. Services include counselling, access to an addiction physician - including usage of a methadone maintenance program - and a drug education series. Phone Number: 604-267-3970

Psychology Clinic at UBC: Professional psychological services provided to the community, including assessment & treatment for children, adults & families by clinical psychology trainees. Website: clinic.psych.ubc.ca

SHARE: Self Harm Anonymous Recovery and Education is a program designed to promote self-care and educate about self-harm. SHARE support groups meet biweekly; times and locations can be found on their website. Website: www.vivreshare.org

SpeakEasy: A student run service that offers confidential support for students experiencing crisis. Also a good resource for additional information and referrals within the UBC community. Website: ams.ubc.ca/services/speakeasy/ | Phone number: 604-822-9246

Student Health Services at UBC: Student health provides students with a variety of healthcare related services to help you maintain your health while studying. Access to doctors and registered nurses. Website: students.ubc.ca/livewell/services/student-health-service | Phone Number: 604- 822-7011

Wellness Centre at UBC: Speak with other UBC students about tips for managing stress, keeping healthy sleep and eating patterns, concerns about safe sex, etc. Website: students.ubc.ca/livewell/services/wellness-centre Phone Number: 604-822-8450
### Schedule of Course Lectures, Readings, & Exams

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Dates</th>
<th>Lecture # and Topics</th>
<th>Textbook Readings:</th>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>UNIT 1 → PSYCHOLOGICAL &amp; EXISTENTIAL FACTORS IN DEATH &amp; DYING</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sept. 5</td>
<td>1. INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY OF DEATH &amp; DYING</td>
<td>Ch. 2</td>
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<td>Syllabus Review; Introduction to Death &amp; Dying; Stats and Facts</td>
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<td>Sept. 12—19</td>
<td>2. FROM ANXIETY &amp; DENIAL TO DEATH ACCEPTANCE</td>
<td>Ch. 5</td>
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<td>The Perspective of the Dying Person; Key Psychological Considerations</td>
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<td>Sept. 19—26</td>
<td>3. BEREAVEMENT &amp; THE GRIEVING PROCESS</td>
<td>Ch. 6</td>
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<td>The Perspective of the Survivor; Stages of Grief and Bereavement</td>
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<tr>
<td>Oct. 3</td>
<td><em>EXAM #1</em> (1 hour 40 minutes, in class)</td>
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<td>UNIT 2 → SOCIAL &amp; CULTURAL CONTEXTS OF DEATH &amp; DYING</td>
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<td>Oct. 10</td>
<td>4. THE SOCIAL CONTEXT OF DEATH &amp; DYING</td>
<td>Ch. 3</td>
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<td>Social Institutions: Family, Religion, &amp; the Law; The Formalities of Dying</td>
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<td>Oct. 17</td>
<td>5. CULTURAL PERSPECTIVES ON DEATH, DYING, &amp; LOSS</td>
<td>Chs. 1 &amp; 4</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Cultural &amp; Religious Perspectives: Western, Non-Western, &amp; Indigenous</td>
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<td>Oct. 24</td>
<td>6. FINAL CONSIDERATIONS ON CULTURE &amp; DEATH</td>
<td>Ch. 4</td>
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<td>The Role of Culture in Death Attitudes; Shame &amp; Stigma; Death in Pop Culture</td>
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<td>Nov. 7</td>
<td><em>EXAM #2</em> (1 hour 40 minutes, in class)</td>
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<td>UNIT 3 → END-OF-LIFE CARE AND DEATH WORK</td>
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<td>Nov. 14</td>
<td>7. CARING FOR THE DYING</td>
<td>Ch. 7</td>
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<td>The Healthcare Context; Factors in End-of-Life Care, Assisted Dying</td>
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<tr>
<td>Nov. 21</td>
<td>8. THE IMPACT OF END-OF-LIFE CARE &amp; DEATH WORK</td>
<td>Ch. 8</td>
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<td>Grieving in a Professional Context; Nurses, Physicians, &amp; Medical Examiners</td>
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<td>Nov. 28</td>
<td>9. THE FUTURE OF DEATH &amp; DYING</td>
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<td>The Implications of Life Extension; Final Thoughts &amp; Course Wrap-Up</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dec. 4–19</td>
<td><em>EXAM #3</em> (1 hour 40 minutes, scheduled during university exam period)</td>
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**NOTE:** You are not responsible for reading the concluding chapter of the textbook. Remember, additional readings will be assigned throughout the course on a regular basis.