The Last Dance: Psycho-Socio-Cultural Perspectives on Death, Dying and Bereavement

COURSE OUTLINE 2016/2017

Course Instructors
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Course Details
Date: 16 August to 1 November 2016 (No Recess Week Break)
Time: Every Tuesday 14:30 to 17:20
Venue: HSS Seminar Room 7 (HSSSEMRM7)
Academic Unit: 4 AU

Overview
The study of death and dying is concerned with questions that are rooted at the core of human experience. Individuals who set out to increase their knowledge of mortality are embarking on life’s most important exploration, a journey of personal discovery and spiritual awakening. This course provides an interdisciplinary overview of the major psycho-socio-cultural perspectives, theories and clinical practices on death and dying from a global viewpoint with a critical focus on the Asian experience. Through interactive lectures, experiential workshops and creative group projects, students will be offered an opportunity to examine the psychological, socio-spiritual, ethical and political issues of mortality through a range of cultural lenses. Such exploration will facilitate insights, reflections and personal growth for enhancing students’ capacity in dealing with the inevitability of morality, while equipping them with the core intellectual skills and values for living a meaningful and purposeful life.

Learning Objective
1) Provide students’ with proficient knowledge on death, dying and bereavement as well as issues concerning spirituality and meaning of life.
2) Develop students’ awareness on the psychological, social and cultural impact of death and loss among different ethnic groups with a particular focused on the Asian experience.
3) Enhance students’ understanding on mortality through the lens of developmental, social, and community psychology
4) Equip student with practical-skills for working with individuals, families and communities facing the challenges of death, dying and bereavement.
5) Cultivate students’ self-reflection on their personal beliefs, attitudes and experiences with death and loss to develop compassion and appreciation of life and personhood.

Course Textbook
Course Materials
Students are required to complete additional readings via books and academic journals that reflect the themes covered in class. Students are also required to read news or magazine article, as well as view news clips and short videos, before each class to engage in flip classroom activities. All course materials are accessible through NTULearn.

Course Outline & Schedule

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<tr>
<th>Week</th>
<th>Theme &amp; Content</th>
<th>Lecture</th>
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<tr>
<td>16 Aug</td>
<td>(I) Introduction and Overview</td>
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<td>An overview of class guidelines and syllabus, with a discussion of required course</td>
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<td>projects and activities. Initiation of personal exploration of death and morality.</td>
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<td>23 Aug</td>
<td>(II) Developmental Life-Course Perspective for Understanding Death</td>
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<td>An exploration of the expression of attitudes towards mortality in language,</td>
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<td>literature, arts, mass media, and education systems; while emphasizing the</td>
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<td>learning and socialization of death and dying through the developmental life</td>
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<td>• Reading Assignments: Chapter 1 &amp; 2 of Required Textbook</td>
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<td>the end of life: An agenda for human rights in an aging world. In D. Harris &amp;</td>
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<td>R. Bordere (eds.), <em>Promoting Social Justice in Loss and Grief</em> (pp. 100-109).</td>
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<td>New York: Routledge.</td>
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<td>• Article for Flip Classroom: Weeks, L. (2011). Is it wrong to celebrate Bin</td>
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<td>Laden’s Death? [National Public Radio, 2011]</td>
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<td>30 Aug</td>
<td>(III) Evolving Attitudes on Death in Sociocultural Psychology</td>
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<td>A comparative analysis of the social, cultural and organizational discourses of</td>
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<td>death attitudes and beliefs and their impact on individuals’ and families’</td>
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<td>experiences with death and dying. Meanings of good deaths in the Asian context</td>
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<td>The Blessing and Curses of Filial Piety on Dignity at the End-of-Life:</td>
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<td>Lived Experience of Hong Kong Chinese Adult Children Caregivers. *Journal of</td>
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<td>• Article for Flip Classroom: Lin, J., &amp; Akhileswaran, F. (2011). Dying the Good</td>
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<td>Death. [The Straits Time]</td>
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<td>6 Sept</td>
<td>(IV) Death Systems for the Governance and Management of Mortality</td>
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<td>A critical examination of the institutionalization, management and legislation</td>
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<td>of mortality, with debates over the definition and certification of death, as</td>
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<td>well as reviews of the development of hospice and palliative care, advance</td>
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<td>care planning, advance medical directives in relations to patient-family-</td>
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<td>physicians relationships in both international and local contexts.</td>
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<td>• Reading Assignments: Chapter 4 &amp; 5 of Required Textbook</td>
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<td>and Quality of Life in Community Palliative Care. In K. Fong &amp; K.W. Tong</td>
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<td>(eds.), *Community Care in Hong Kong: Current practices, practice-research</td>
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<td>studies and future directions* (pp. 319-341). Hong Kong: City University of</td>
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<td>• Article for Flip Classroom: Ho, A. (2011). Who Decides on Care with a Patient</td>
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<td>is Dying? [The Straits Times]</td>
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<td>• Reflective Log 1 Due</td>
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<td>13 Sept</td>
<td>(V) Community Health Psychology and Public Health Palliative Care&lt;br&gt;An in-depth analysis of modern healthcare, principles of medical ethics, life prolongation, physician-assisted suicide and euthanasia. Public health approaches to promote and ensure palliative care as a basic human right, through the social discourse of compassion and creation of compassionate cities are discussed.&lt;br&gt;- <strong>Reading Assignment:</strong> Chapter 6 &amp; 15 of Required Textbook&lt;br&gt;- <strong>Additional Readings:</strong> Ho, A.H.Y., &amp; Chan, C.L.W. (2011). Liberating bereaved persons from the oppression of death and loss in Chinese societies: examples of the public health approaches. In S. Conway (ed.) <em>Governing Death and Loss: empowerment, involvement and participation</em> (pp. 119-128). UK: Oxford University Press.&lt;br&gt;- <strong>Article for Flip Classroom:</strong> Gunn, A. (2010). He lived compassion at life’s end. [Charter for Compassion Home]</td>
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<td>20 Sept</td>
<td>(VI) The Psychology of Suicide and Traumatic Deaths&lt;br&gt;A conceptual review of the explanatory theories and models of suicide, suicide prevention and intervention, with an elaborative discussion on issues of mortality pertaining to disasters, wars, terrorism and horrendous deaths.&lt;br&gt;- <strong>Reading Assignment:</strong> Chapter 12 &amp; 13 of Required Textbook&lt;br&gt;- <strong>Additional Readings:</strong> Ho, A.H.Y., Chui, C.H.K., &amp; Borschel, M. (In-Press). Understanding and managing youth and elderly suicide in Developed East Asia: The imperative of compassion in public health. In G. Cox &amp; N. Thompson (eds.), <em>Handbook of Traumatic Loss</em>. UK: Routledge.&lt;br&gt;- <strong>Article for Flip Classroom:</strong> Chia, Y. (2013) More Young People Committed Suicide Last Year. [Today Singapore]&lt;br&gt;- <strong>In-Class Quiz 1</strong></td>
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<td>4 Oct</td>
<td>(VIII) Psycho-Socio-Cultural Impact of Last Rites and Death Rituals&lt;br&gt;A psycho-anthropological analysis of the functions of funerals and rites of passage, adjusting and reestablishing kinship, and facilitating the grieving process of the living. Issues concerning organ donation, memorialization and body disposal are discussed.&lt;br&gt;- <strong>Reading Assignment:</strong> Chapter 8 of Required Text&lt;br&gt;- <strong>Additional Readings:</strong> Ho, A.H.Y., Leung, P.P.Y., Tse, D.M.W., et al. (2013). Dignity amidst Liminality: Suffering within Healing among Chinese Terminal Cancer Patients. <em>Death Studies</em>, 37(10), 953-970.&lt;br&gt;- <strong>Article for Flip Classroom:</strong> Neisloss, L. (2012). Cemetery as battleground for ‘soul of Singapore [CNN]&lt;br&gt;- <strong>Reflective Log 2 Due</strong></td>
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<td>(XII) Presentations of Students’ Creative Group Projects</td>
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Learning Outcomes

Upon completion of this course, students will be able to:

1) Describe and explain the fundamental knowledge, attitudes, and practices of death, dying and bereavement with a cultural sensitivity to the Asian experience.

2) Demonstrate an understanding of the psycho-socio-emotional impact of death and loss on the individual and the family, and appraise the psycho-socio-cultural impact of mortality on society.

3) Demonstrate an understanding of the psychology of death and loss among different population cohorts, and critically apprise issues of mortality and social among vulnerable and underprivileged groups.

4) Appraise the future development of social policies, service provisions, education programmes on the governance and management of death, dying and bereavement.

5) Reflect on the meaning of life through a heightened awareness of death, develop empathy and compassion towards self and others, and create a more profound understanding of self through an examination of personal beliefs, cultural ideologies and popular philosophies on spirituality and mortality.

Student Assessment

Based on the objectives and learning outcomes of the course, the use of 100% continuous assessment will be most appropriate to determine the learning outcomes.

(A) Class Participation-Flapped Classroom (10%)

This course is designed with a Flipped Classroom learning environment that emphasizes student participation and engagement. Particularly, students are required to read a designated article and/or review a series of short videos for Flipped Classroom activities before each class. Combining these knowledge together with the materials covered in each formal lectures, students are expected to assume an active role to lead and engage in small group discussions, conceptual presentations and theoretical debates.

(B) In-Class Quizzes (20%)

Students are required to write two short in-class quizzes with multiple choice questions that cover both lectures and required reading materials from the course.

- Quiz Dates: 20 September & 25 October
- No make-up quizzes are allowed unless due to a valid reason with supporting documents (i.e. sickness and medical note)

(C) Monthly Reflective Logs (30%)

Students are required to keep a monthly individual reflective log to ruminate upon their thoughts, feelings and attitudes on the various topics on death and dying covered in this course. This activity provides students with the opportunities to critically explore and reflect upon issues concerning mortality, spirituality, personhood, society and greater humanity through acknowledging and understanding the nature of life and death. A total of 3 reflective logs of length between 400-500 words are required from each student. Assessment is based on students’ ability to reflect, conceptualize, transform and integrate their learning into significant personal experiences and belief system.

- Word length: 400-500 words, double-spaced, 12pt size, including references
- Dates of Submission: 6 September, 4 & 25 October via Turnitin @ NTULearn
Assessment Criteria for Monthly Reflective Logs:

Reconstructing
The student displays a high level of abstract thinking to generalize and apply her/her learning. He/she draws original conclusions from reflections, generates principles and formulates a personal theory in taking a stance on an issue. He/she further deliberates upon the personal significance of his/her learning and plans further learning on the basis of such reflections.

Reasoning
The student integrates his/her learning into an appropriate relationship involving a high level of transformation and conceptualization. He/she seeks deep understanding of why something has happened, exploring the relationship of theory and practice in some depth.

Relating
The student identifies aspects of his/her learning which have personal meaning, connecting with his/her experience. The student gives superficial explanation of the reason why something has happened or identifies something that they need or plan to do, or change.

Responding
The student uses his/ her learning in some way, but with little transformation or conceptualization.

Reporting
The student reports his/her learning with no added insights or transformation.

(D) Community Psychology Project – Multimedia Production (20%)

For Students in HP4272:
- In groups of 4-5, students are required to develop a community psychology project for tackling the various psycho-socio-cultural issues related to morality.

For Students in HP7235
- Students are required to work independently to develop a community psychology project for tackling the various psycho-socio-cultural issues related to morality.

Overall goals of the project:
- The issues to be tackled could include, but not limited to: public health palliative care, advance care planning, organ donation suicide prevention, relieving death taboos, promoting awareness on grief and loss, eliminating death oppression for underprivileged groups, finding meaning and compassion through caring for the dying, and etc.
- Students will first be required to conduct a literature review on the chosen topic, of which will serve as the empirical foundation of their project. They are then required to adopt a community psychology/public health approach for tackling the issue at hand by using a variety of creative mediums including arts, photography, documentary, short-films and other audio-visual productions. Each group is required to create a 3-5 minute multi-media production, inclusive of a self-reflective segment. The end-product will be presented in the final lecture.
- Time allowed: 6 minutes per project including time of question and answer.
- Date of Presentation: 1 November
Assessment Criteria for Community Psychology Project – Multimedia Production:

**Conceptualization & application of theories** 35%
- Understanding the topic/issue/phenomenon
- Ability to conceptualize the topic/issue/phenomenon with the application of a relevant theory on death, dying and bereavement

**Creativity & innovation** 35%
- Being inventive in the way of conducting & presenting the project
- Ability to bring new perspective to undertaking the project

**Public health impact** 20%
- Ability to bring new perspective of the project’s impact on public health as well as its effect on the pertinent stakeholders

**Articulation of reflection and learning** 10%
- Reflection of learning and process
- Ability to relate learning to everyday life experiences

(E) Community Psychology Project – Written Report (20%)
Each group/student is required to submit a written report of 4,000-6,000 words discussing the community psychology project. The report shall include a theoretical background of the topic of interest supported by a comprehensive review of up-to-date literature, discussion of the conceptual approach of the work undertaken, the relevant public health impact, as well as personal reflections on learning. The report needs to follow APA formatting with full referencing and citations.

- Word length: within 5,000 words, double-spaced, 12pt size, including references
- Date of Submission: 15 November via Turnitin @ NTULearn

Assessment Criteria for Community Psychology Project – Written Report:

**Literature Review and conceptualization** 35%
- Understand and review the topic/issue/phenomenon of interest using empirical evidence in current literature
- Ability to conceptualize and synthesize the topic/issue/phenomenon of interest with relevant theories and concepts

**Critical thinking and analysis of public health impact** 35%
- Critical, reflective, and/or original thought
- Cultural integration, understanding of local situation

**Personal Reflection** 20%
- Reflective use of and ability to relate learning to everyday life experiences

**Clarity, Use of Language and Reference** 10%
- Accuracy and clarity of language
- Adherence to a proper academic reference system (i.e. APA)

Submission of Assignments
Students are required to submit their assignments on time, specifically by 12 noon on the scheduled date. Penalties for late submission are as follows:

- Late submission with a valid reason and supporting documents (i.e. sickness and medical note) will be accepted within one week of the scheduled submission date, with deduction of 2 marks per day. No mark will be given to late submission after one week.
• Late submission without a legitimate reason will not be accepted and no mark will be given.

Academic Conduct
The University Policy on plagiarism, academic fraud and academic dishonesty will be strictly enforced. Please check the NTU Academic Integrity Policy at the following: http://www.ntu.edu.sg/ai/ForEveryone/Pages/NTUAcademicIntegrityPolicy.aspx

Specifically, NTU Honour Code currently defines ‘plagiarism’ as ‘to use or pass off as one’s own, writings or ideas of another, without acknowledging or crediting the source from which the ideas are taken’. This includes:

• The use of words, images, diagrams, graphs or ideas derived from books, journals, magazines, visual media, and the internet without proper acknowledgement;
• Copying of work from the internet or any other sources and presenting as one’s own; and
• Submitting the same piece of work for different courses or to different journals and publications.

Additional References


Recommended Websites
American Academy of Hospice and Palliative Medicine (AAHPM) http://www.aahpm.org
American Hospice Foundation (AHF) http://www.americanhospice.org
Association of Death Education and Counseling (ADEC) http://www.adec.org
Association of Life-Death Education, Taiwan http://210.60.194.100/life2000
National Alliance for Grieving Children http://childrensgrieve.org/childrens-grief-awareness
Death Café http://www.deathcafe.com
Dying Matters http://www.dyingmatter.org
Empowerment Network for Adjustment to Bereavement and Loss in End-of-life (ENABLE) http://www.enable.hk
International Psycho-Oncology Society (IPOS) http://www.ipos-society.org/education/core_curriculum/core_curriculum_en.aspx
HospiceHome, Hong Kong. http://www.hospicehome.hk
Life Before Death http://www.lifebeforedeath.com/qualityofdeath/
GriefNet http://www.griefnet.org