**Wayland Mission Statement**

Wayland Baptist University exists to educate students in an academically challenging, learning-focused, and distinctively Christian environment for professional success, and service to God and humankind.

**Contact Information**

**Course**

: PSYC 4309 VC01 – Psychology of Death and Dying

**Campus**

: WBUonline

**Term/Session**

**:** Spring 2 CMP 2024

**Instructor**

**:** Heather Dillard, MA

**WBU Email Address**

**:** heather.dillard@wayland.wbu.edu

**Office Hours, Building, and Location**

**:** WBUonline

**Class Meeting Time and Location**

**:** WBUonline

**Course Information**

**Catalog Description**

**:** American “death system” reflecting contemporary theories of death and dying.

**There is no prerequisite for this course.**

**Textbook Information**

**Required Textbook(s) and/or Required Materials**

**:**

*Death, Society and the Human Experience*, Kastenbaum   
Published by Taylor & Francis ED: 12th YEAR: 2018   
ISBN#: 9781138292406

*The textbook for this course is part of the* ***Wayland’s Automatic eBook*** *program. You will have access to an eBook and interactive learning material on the first day of class through your Blackboard course site. The cost of this Automatic eBook will be billed directly to your student account when you register for the course. You will be notified via email with access instructions and additional information. If you do not wish to participate in the Automatic eBook program, you will have the first 12 days of class to opt-out of the program (additional details will be outlined in your email instructions). For more information on the Automatic eBook program, visit the Wayland Bookstore* [*Automatic eBook FAQ*](https://bookstore.wbu.edu/site_inclusive.asp) *page.*

**Course Outcome Competencies**

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

* Describe major psychological theories and concepts related to death and dying
* Analyze the impact of culture on views of death, including the idea of the American Death System
* Evaluate and apply concepts to legal and moral problems surrounding death
* Explore and evaluate one’s own views and feelings regarding death

**Attendance Requirements**

WBUonline

Students are expected to participate in all required instructional activities in their courses. Online courses are no different in this regard; however, participation must be defined in a different manner. Student “attendance” in an online course is defined as active participation in the course as described in the course syllabus. Instructors in online courses are responsible for providing students with clear instructions for how they are required to participate in the course. Additionally, instructors are responsible for incorporating specific instructional activities within their course and will, at a minimum, have weekly mechanisms for documenting student participation. These mechanisms may include, but are not limited to, participating in a weekly discussion board, submitting/completing assignments in Blackboard, or communicating with the instructor. Students aware of necessary absences must inform the professor with as much advance notice as possible in order to make appropriate arrangements. Any student absent 25 percent or more of the online course, i.e., non-participatory during 2 or more weeks of an 8-week session, may receive an F for that course. Instructors may also file a Report of Unsatisfactory Progress for students with excessive non-participation. Any student who has not actively participated in an online class prior to the census date for any given session is considered a “no-show” and will be administratively withdrawn from the class without record. To be counted as actively participating, it is not sufficient to log in and view the course. The student must be submitting work as described in the course syllabus. Additional attendance and participation policies for each course, as defined by the instructor in the course syllabus, are considered a part of the university’s attendance policy.

**University Policies**

[Link to Statement on Academic Integrity](https://www.wbu.edu/academics/writing-center/Academic%20Integrity%20Statement%20Pol%208.4.1%20Attch%20Oct%2020222.pdf)

**Disability Statement**

**:** In compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA), it is the policy of Wayland Baptist University that no otherwise qualified person with a disability be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subject to discrimination under any educational program or activity in the university. The Disability Services Coordinator and Academic Coach serves as the coordinator of students with disabilities and must be contacted concerning accommodation requests (office (806) 291-1057. Documentation of a disability must accompany any request for accommodations.

Accessibility issues with content in WBUonline courses or in Blackboard should be addressed to the WBU accessibility coordinator, Dr. Rick Hammer, [hammerr@wbu.edu](mailto:hammerr@wbu.edu) or call (806) 292-9150.

**Course Requirements and Grading Criteria**

**Please complete the Required First Assignment in main menu folder at the top of your Bb course page \*\*FIRST.\*\***. This is so that WBU can get an accurate count of class attendance and participation. Please complete this assignment first. All other assignment deadlines are listed below.

Weekly Assignments will begin each Monday. They will be due by the next Sunday of that week at midnight CST. **Please note:** **10 points per day will be taken for each late assignment. So don’t be late.** Pay close attention to when assignments are due and plan accordingly.

**\*NOTE\* I have all six (6) essay assignments open the first day of class. So, you may start on them and complete them early, if you wish. They do have differing due dates, however. Each of the below essays are to be typed, double spaced, using a 12 font.**

**Recollection of Death Experiences Assignment: (Due 4/7)** You are to create a chronology of your death experiences from your first to your most recent. With your description of each experience, include your age at the time. Spend time reflecting on the event, your emotions and actions, and the actions of others. Part of the purpose of this class is to develop a self-awareness of how we feel about death. I expect you to share some personal experiences. Your privacy will be respected. Start your narrative with your first experience of death or loss. I want you to concentrate on death (family, neighbors, and pets) but other loss or separation can be used. Recapture the feelings associated with that experience. Create in your mind a picture of the occasion. For your first death experience and the others in your chronology try to include the following information: How old were you? What/who died? How did you feel? How did you act? Who else was there? How did they act and seem to feel? What was the *long-term effect* of the person's death on you and your family? In a concluding paragraph, you must discuss how your reactions to death have changed. Do you believe you have had a healthy reaction to death? Why/why not? Write this assignment in a narrative, perhaps using a paragraph for each experience. This assignment should not be a list and should be at least **2 typed pages long**.

**Cemetery Assignment: (Due 4/14**) Go to the local cemetery and spend some time walking around. Describe the layout and feeling you get from the site. Is it pleasant/unpleasant, why? Is there still room for more graves? How much? Examine the decorations around the graves. Describe them. Do you see anything unusual? Describe. What is the oldest grave with decorations? How well maintained is the cemetery? Spend some time looking around. Examine the grave markers. Did you find any interesting statements? Quote them please! Are there any unusual married couple markers? Anything else curious about the markers? Are any worn, grown over, etc.? Do any stones need repair? Is the cemetery divided into any special areas? Look very carefully. Is there a children's or baby's area? a veteran's area? religious areas? family plots? Describe.  What is the oldest gravestone that you can find? Are there any recent burials? Review your overall impressions of this cemetery. Discuss how this cemetery could be improved. What in your opinion makes for the perfect cemetery? Other comments? This paper is to be at least **2 typed pages long**.

**My Obituary Assignment: (Due 4/28)** You are going to die someday. Imagine what an obituary might say about your life. You should include the following information in your obituary when applicable:

* projected age of death (You must live until at least retirement…you can use the website: deathclock.com to figure your date of death.), time, date, place, and cause of death, anything unusual, residential address/area at time of death,
* previous residences from birth to death, educational experience, military experiences, occupational experiences, accomplishments (Think hard!), community involvement, volunteer work, hobbies, interests, retirement activities,
* survivors (family), preceded in death by whom?, visitations, when and when, special services?, memorial service, where and when, conducted by whom, body disposition, special requests for gifts, etc.

The obituary is NOT to be written as a list but as a *narrative* with paragraphs and sentences. You are to create a journalistic testimony to the fact that a life had been lived, and that life had counted for something of significance in its having been lived. Highlight those important aspects of your life. Be creative. Try to be optimistic about your future and your impact. This paper is to be at least **2 pages long**.

**Will Assignment: (Due 5/5)** You are required to turn in your will. If you do not have one, you can find templates online for how to construct your will.

**Death Arrangement Assignment: (Due 5/12**)

***\*\*A special note for this assignment\*\**** *I realize that the due date for this assignment this year falls on Mother’s Day. I know this holiday can be painful to many people for various reasons. If you know that this time period and assignment together are going to trigger you, may I suggest that you work on this assignment early and turn it in before the due date? I would hate for you to wait until the last minute and then not be able to finish the assignment because of inner grief/trauma issues you may still need to work through. Take this assignment in smaller pieces if you need to, and as always, be kind to yourself during this process.*

For this assignment discuss all of the following topics:

Living Will and Last Wishes: If you were dying what measures would you want medical personnel to take to keep you alive? Why? Refer to your text's discussion of advanced directives. Include discussion of hospice, euthanasia, organ transplantation, and your definition of death.

The funeral: Discuss what type of funeral you want. (For example: open casket, closed, memorial, none) Explain your choice. Describe your service: music, poems, sermon, displays...Chapel service, church service, graveside service? What type of casket? Indicate a model from the funeral chapel. What type of urn? Indicate type/design. Explain your choices

Disposal: What cemetery? What type of vault? What type of marker? Mausoleum? Why? Where for ash scattering? If donating your body, you still need to indicate eventual disposal.

I encourage you to keep this assignment and put it in a place so your relatives will know how to follow your wishes. Update your plans as your life changes. If you wish, get a living will form and later attach it to this project for your family’s information. Project should be written in narrative form with paragraphs. Watch your grammar and spelling. Length is to be **at least 3 typed pages long**.

**Resolving Unfinished Business Assignment: (Due 5/12)**

***\*\*A special note for this assignment\*\**** *I realize that the due date for this assignment this year falls on Mother’s Day. I know this holiday can be painful to many people for various reasons. If you know that this time period and assignment together is going to trigger you, may I suggest that you work on this assignment early and turn it in before the due date? I would hate for you to wait until the last minute and then not be able to finish the assignment because of inner grief/trauma issues you may still need to work through. Take this assignment in smaller pieces if you need to, and as always, be kind to yourself during this process.*

This assignment requires you to type a paper discussing the things in your life that you would like to resolve before you die (i.e. making up with sibling in which you are not getting along, taking a trip that you’ve always wanted to do before you die, accomplishing a certain project in your life, etc. Also, in this paper, discuss why you have not been able or willing to accomplish these things at present and what you could do to motivate yourself to do these things. **This paper needs to be in narrative form and at least 2 pages long.**

**Exams**: (30 questions @ 2 points each, 60 points each exam) Three exams will be administered during the course of the semester. The exams will open on Monday morning and close on Sunday night at 11:59 CST. The exams will consist of multiple-choice questions. The tests will consist of items from the textbook. You have one hour for each exam and you may use your book.

**Grade Scoring Breakdown**

Recollection of Death Experiences Assignment 40 points 9%

Cemetery Assignment 40 points 9%

My Obituary Assignment 40 points 9%

Will Assignment 40 points 9%

Death Arrangement Assignment 80 points 18%

Resolving Unfinished Business Assignment 40 points 9%

Exam 1 60 points 13%

Exam 2 60 points 13%

Exam 3 60 points 13%

Totals 460 points 102%

**The University has a standard grade scale:**

A = 90-100, B = 80-89, C = 70-79, D = 60-69, F= below 60, W = Withdrawal, WP = withdrew passing, WF = withdrew failing, I = incomplete. An incomplete may be given within the last two weeks of a long term, within the last week of an 8-week session, or within the last two days of a microterm to a student who is passing, but has not completed a term paper, examination, or other required work for reasons beyond the student’s control. A grade of “incomplete” is changed if the work required is completed prior to the last day of the next long 16-week term or 8-week session, unless the instructor designates an earlier date for completion.  If the work is not completed by the appropriate date, the I is converted to an F.

**Student Grade Appeals**

**:** Students shall have protection through orderly procedures against prejudices or capricious academic evaluation. A student who believes that he or she has not been held to realistic academic standards, just evaluation procedures, or appropriate grading, may appeal the final grade given in the course by using the student grade appeal process described in the Academic Catalog. Appeals may not be made for advanced placement examinations or course bypass examinations. Appeals are limited to the final course grade, which may be upheld, raised, or lowered at any stage of the appeal process. Any recommendation to lower a course grade must be submitted through the Vice President of Academic Affairs to the Faculty Assembly Grade Appeals Committee for review and approval. The Faculty Assembly Grade Appeals Committee may instruct that the course grade be upheld, raised, or lowered to a more proper evaluation.

**Tentative Schedule**

**March 25** Welcome - Term Starts

* **Please complete the Required First Assignment in main menu folder at the top of your Bb course page \*\*FIRST (by March 27th at the latest).\*\***. This is so that WBU can get an accurate count of class attendance and participation. Please complete this assignment first. All other assignment deadlines are listed below.

**March 31** Easter Sunday

**April 7**  Recollection of Death Experiences Assignment **DUE**

**April 14**  Cemetery Assignment **DUE**

**April 21** **Exam 1 - Chapters 1-5**

**April 28** My Obituary Assignment **DUE**

**May 5**  **Exam 2 - Chapters 6-10;** Will Assignment **DUE**

**May 12** Death Arrangement Assignment AND Resolving Unfinished Business Assignment **DUE**

**May 18** End of Spring 2 term; **Exam 3 - Chapters 11-15 and Course Evaluation DUE**

**Additional Information**

**Because of its focus on the family and individual issues, you may find that the materials in this, and other human development courses, will cause you to reflect on your own family life and other unresolved issues in your personal life. The experience of reflection can be a useful tool in learning the material. However, for some, reflecting on family life can bring up unpleasant memories and feelings. If issues arise that you have not dealt with prior to this time, or that seem to be occupying a good deal of your attention, you may want to seek out professional help in sorting through these feelings. If you are unfamiliar with such resources in your community, you could try contacting the local county mental health department or your physician to seek referral to licensed professionals in your area. This course, in particular, may elicit unwelcome memories. It is not the purpose of this course to serve as therapy. If this is the primary reason you are taking the course, you may want to reconsider.**

If any changes are made to the syllabus during the term, I will let you know on the Announcements tab so that you can download the updated syllabus. While I don’t think it should happen often, I want to always communicate clearly with you about changes made to class assignments. This will set you up for success in this course. As always, please contact me if you have any questions. I am here to help!