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*Welcome to*

**HDFS 437/637**

**Death & Dying: Family and Lifespan  
Perspectives**

**Welcome: General Information**

**Document to be used in conjunction with the other 2 documents on  
this Syllabus site:**

**Course Lecture Topics and Projected Schedule**

**and**

**Course Requirements and Grading**

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**University of Nevada, Reno**

**Department of Human Development and Family Studies**

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**Fall 2008 (Class begins August 25 and ends December 17)**

This web course is developed and taught by Colleen I. Murray, Ph.D. If you have questions about the course contact her through the Mail link on this website. If you have problems with the website you can also contact her at [cimurray@unr.nevada.edu](mailto:cimurray@unr.nevada.edu) HDFS 437/637 section 001 will be conducted through the World Wide Web and UNR's WebCampus program. No on-campus section of this course is available this year.

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**Information on this Welcome/General Information Page:**

Course Description

Course Goals and Objectives

Topics of Study

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## Course Description

**HDFS 437/637 (section 001) Death and Dying: Family and Lifespan Perspectives** is a 3 credit course available for either undergraduate or graduate credit. The course examines issues of death and dying, grief processes, sense of meaning, including coping and adaptation for individuals and families as they deal with various kinds of loss. We will look at a range of factors (involving the individual, family, community, and society) that can impact, impede, or facilitate the experiences of individuals and families. Grief will be explored from a lifespan developmental perspective (from prenatal development through late adulthood) within the context of varied types of family and socio-cultural systems. An emphasis will be placed on both personal and professional applications of course information.

This course (HDFS 437/637 section 001) is offered completely over the Internet. It utilizes the World Wide Web to make available "lectures" and resource links. Topics will be assigned on a weekly basis - just as in an on-campus course. Students will have flexibility as to when they go through the material as long as they stay within the week that it is assigned. Each unit includes discussion questions and students will have a 1 week period (generally Monday through Sunday night) in which to contribute their responses to assigned discussion questions and to respond to the comments posted by other class members.

Communication elements will include mail and web-based discussions. Our discussion format does *not* require that all students "chat" at the same time, and

allows for flexibility of diverse schedules. A major element of the course is communication, and students are expected to regularly interact and exchange ideas with each other and the professor. High quality communication requires that students complete reading assignments so they can participate in an informed manner.

Where possible, online video clips and links to appropriate sites will be included in the weekly lectures. Students may also be interested independently viewing videos available at the UNR library, such as the PBS television series ["On Our Own Terms: Moyers on Dying"](#).

The philosophy underlying this course is in line with the "Statements on Death, Dying, and Bereavement" (1994) of the International Work Group on Death, Dying and Bereavement. The introduction states:

Death, dying, and bereavement are fundamental and pervasive aspects of the human experience. Individuals and societies can only achieve fullness of living by understanding and appreciating these realities. The absence of such understanding and appreciation may result in unnecessary suffering, loss of dignity, alienation, and diminished quality of living. Therefore, education about death, dying, and bereavement is an essential component of the educational process at all levels, both formal and informal. (IWG, 1994)

To see additional influential documents developed by the [International Work Group on Death, Dying and Bereavement](#), check out their website and click on Publications.

***How does HDFS 637 differ from HDFS 437?*** Graduate students enrolled in HDFS 637 are expected to show greater depth of thought and analysis in their discussions and assignments. The integration of theory is expected where relevant.

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## **Course Goals and Objectives**

The aim of education about death, dying, and bereavement is to contribute to general education as a basis for personal development and responsible social participation. It must also contribute to the specific education of those who, as a result of personal or professional circumstances, are closely associated with death, dying, and bereavement (IWG, *Death Studies*, 1991: 59-65).

This course strives to examine issues of grief and loss as they are experienced across the lifespan of the individual, within family contexts and across families'

histories. Families are seen as systems in which relationships are influenced by meanings derived from actions and interactions, communication, beliefs and expectations. Family, individual and socio-cultural factors combine to affect grief and its place in our lives. Grief can occur in relation to many types of losses, including physical or psychological absence, as well as the loss of dreams and meaning. In this course we will view experiences of loss, such as deaths, as having the potential to concurrently produce change, deterioration and growth.

Course objectives include the following. Students will develop:

- understanding of the characteristics of a range of grief and loss experiences
- ability to apply family systems concepts to understanding individual and family experiences with grief, loss, death & dying
- knowledge of grief as it relates to developmental stages across the lifespan (young children to older adults)
- recognition of individual, family, community and socio-cultural factors that may impede or facilitate experiences of grief and loss
- understanding of characteristics of various contexts we experience (family, school, workplace, hospital, religious) which impede or facilitate dealing with losses and grief
- knowledge of skills and responses for improving personal and professional interactions with bereaved individuals and families
- ability to integrate course materials to develop high quality discussions about grief and loss issues with other students and the professor
- skills in applying course information to better understand real life and case study situations
- suggestions for improving care at the end of life, and for work with the bereaved specific to one's own community, neighborhood or family
- increased appreciation that death, like birth, is a natural part of life

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**Topics of Study** (see the Course Lecture Topics and Projected Schedule for dates)

- Prep. Unit --- Preparation for participating in this web course. Getting our hardware, software, and selves ready. Needs to be completed before beginning content units.
- Topic 1 --- Introduction: Death Awareness; Attitudes; A Common Language; Demographics and Historical Perspectives
- Topic 2 --- Grief from an Individual Perspective: Grief Theories
- Topic 3 --- Grief and Family Contexts
- Topic 4 --- Socio-Cultural Forces: Culture, Ethnicity, and Media
- Topic 5 --- Children
- Topic 6 --- Adolescents and College Students
- Topic 7 --- Adulthood: Early, Middle and Later
- Topic 8 --- Roles and Relationships #1
- Topic 9 --- Roles and Relationships #2; Gender
- Topic 10 --- Complicated Grief; Ambiguous Loss & Boundary Ambiguity
- Topic 11 --- Sudden, Accidental, and Traumatic Losses
- Topic 12 --- Enduring Grief, Anticipatory Loss and Anticipatory Grief
- Topic 13 --- Caregivers or Caretakers?; Palliative Care
- Topic 14 --- Making Decisions: Individuals, Families, Professionals
- Topic 15 --- Spirituality, Rituals & Ceremonies: Connection, Healing, & Change; Concluding Celebration of Life

\*\* These topics and their order are subject to change in relation to class needs or technological issues.

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## Textbooks and Readings

### Required Readings:

- Corr, C.A., Nabe, C.M., & Corr, D.M. (2009). Death and dying, life and living. (6<sup>th</sup> . ed.) Belmont, CA: Wadsworth. (This textbook can be

purchased at the ASUN Bookstore in the Joe Crowley Student Union at the University of Nevada. You also may contact the website for the Textbook Division at the bookstore for details on having the book mailed to you. )

■ Selected Required Readings. A variety of readings will be required which supplement, enhance and go beyond what exists in the Corr, et al. textbook. These readings are available in electronic journal format the course WebCampus site.

### Recommended Supplemental Readings (optional):

For students who anticipate working with families and loss, or those who want some additional examination of that topic, the ASUN Bookstore has available copies of E.R. Shapiro's book (1994) *Grief as a family process: A developmental approach to clinical practice*. New York: Guilford. Written by a marriage and family therapist, this book combines information about stages of human development, stages of family development, and the workings of family systems in a variety of contexts in order to better understand and work with families experiencing grief and loss. Another good book is the *Handbook of Bereavement Research* which is recently available in a new edition.

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## Course Requirements and Evaluation

(see the Requirements and Grading document on the Syllabus site for more details)

Students enrolled in HDFS 437/637 will be evaluated on

- completion of the preparatory unit and its related tasks. This unit is an orientation to the class web and internet environment. It provides information about the workings of the class and allows for correction of pre-existing problems or equipment issues. This unit also includes the first class discussion, which involves introductions by each student and interactions with one another.
- responses to questions or completion of assigned tasks in each topic. These written responses will become part of the weekly discussions.
- active participation in on-line class discussion. For each unit, discussion requires a *minimum contribution* of one time per unit, *and* a minimum of responding to the comments of *at least* one other student.

- research participation activity either in the form of Student Research Credits through the new UNR social research site or through an original written integration research paper (details to be provided to students):

## Technological Needs

HDFS 437/637 will be conducted through the World Wide Web (utilizing WebCampus) and e-mail. (No on-campus version of this course will be offered this year)

For successful completion of this web course you will need:

- a computer configured to access the World Wide Web (WWW)
- a WWW browser (such as Netscape, Microsoft Internet Explorer, etc.). The course is formatted using Netscape; and is the recommended browser. Browsers with existing proxies (such as proxies for a company firewall) will not be able to access the UNR library licensed databases (including electronic journals). The basic America Online web browser cannot be used to access the library's licensed databases (see next point).
- the ability to upload and download files from the WWW
- an Internet connection
- the ability to send and receive e-mail
- the ability to send and receive files
- access to the UNR WebCampus site (which comes with enrollment in this course).

\*\*\* At the beginning of the semester, the WebCampus administrators at UNR will be entering all students registered for this web course into a course database. Students will use their NetId and passwords to utilize the site. If you drop the course, you need to let Dr. Murray know so that she can remove you from WebCampus access to this course.

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## Course Tuition and Fees

See the UNR class schedule ( linked on the UNR homepage at: [www.unr.edu](http://www.unr.edu) ) for information on tuition and fees, as well as deadlines for adding and withdrawing from courses. This web course is offered through HDFS at regular tuition charges and does not incur the additional charges for other forms of continuing education courses.

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## Strengths and Limitations of this Web Course

**Should I enroll in the on-campus/classroom section or the web class version of this course?** You will need to weigh the pros and cons of the in-class versus web class for yourself, consider how they fit your time constraints, as well as your personal style of learning and need for social interaction/support. There have been some national studies that suggest people are somewhat more likely to drop out/not complete web courses than they are classroom courses - probably because of several reasons: doing it on the web takes more self-discipline and organization than coming to class; some people really need person-to-person interaction to stay interested in a topic, etc. This need for interaction was a guiding force behind the use of required weekly discussions instead of individually completed quizzes and examinations. In fact, Dr. Kathleen Gilbert of Indiana University, indicates that for a course on grief the web format may actually be preferable to face-to-face dialogue in a classroom where students can feel more inhibited/uncomfortable talking about this topic. (See bottom of this document for further information on Dr. Gilbert's work).

### Technological Pros and Cons

You should be able to access the materials for this course any time of the day or night, with the exception of any times when the university computer might have a problem, or occasionally when they close down for a few hours (at night) to upgrade a system. (That is typically on Friday evenings, so plan your coursework around that downtime) The only other time I've heard people may have trouble getting onto the web site for a class would be if there are too many people trying to access the UNR web courses system all at once -- but those kinds of problems exist for any web site.

Many technical problems are unique to the system you use, and the class instructor will be unable to answer questions about technical matters. Instead, you are encouraged to contact your service provider. At UNR you can contact the Academic Computing Services Help Desk at 775 - 784 - 4320, through their pages on the [UNR homepage](http://www.unr.edu) or by e-mail at [help@unr.edu](mailto:help@unr.edu)

If you have problems with the Discussion site on WebCampus, please let me know via the Mail tool, or via phone at 775-784-7006 or 775-784-1878.

## Pros and Cons at the Personal Level

Underlying this course is the premise that to deal effectively with individuals and families dealing with grief and loss we must become aware of/and address issues related to our own concerns, experiences, feelings, fears, and thoughts in relation to grief and loss. This is not to suggest that this course is designed to help you "get over" your losses; that is neither the purpose nor in keeping with the philosophy of the course. It is intended to help you become aware of your own issues that may hinder or help you in working with others.

This course utilizes real-life stories, case studies and web sites about loss and grief from families. It takes an applied approach to understanding those experiences, and may trigger emotional responses for students. Usually students describe this as a benefit they derive from the class, for the resulting awareness and insight into one's own personal issues better prepares one for working professionally with loss. However, I would like to caution you -- if you are intensely involved in grappling with your own losses the course may feel overwhelming; you might feel better prepared to take it at a later time. Although you may find the course helpful in dealing with your own losses, it is not designed to take the place of counseling, therapy, or a support group. If I become concerned about any students in the course, I reserve the right to suggest they seek professional assistance.

## Course Completion Problems?

If you experience either technical or personal problems that may affect your ability to participate or complete the class, please let me know. I will work with you to help you finish.

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For Further Information:

\*\*\* To request further information please contact the instructor via the Mail tool, or at [cimurray@unr.nevada.edu](mailto:cimurray@unr.nevada.edu)

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URL:

<https://webct.unr.edu/webct/logon/241076123031/documents08/grief08/grief.htm>

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Special thanks to [Dr. Kathleen Gilbert](#) of Indiana University whose informative [publications](#) and own web course "Grief in a Family Context" served as a model for the structure of this web course Welcome Page

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Information about this work can be obtained from Dr. Colleen Murray at [cimurray@unr.nevada.edu](mailto:cimurray@unr.nevada.edu) Students enrolled in this course are encouraged to print copies of course materials for their own non-profit educational use.

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# Course Lecture Topics and Projected Schedule

## Death and Dying: Family and Lifespan Perspectives

HDFS 437/637

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This web course contains a preparation unit and fifteen weekly topics. The course begins August 25, 2008 and ends on December 15, 2008. (Online course evaluation takes place Dec 16 and 17). The Preparation Unit needs to be completed before beginning the weekly topics. This preparation checks to ensure that our hardware, software and selves are ready to go.

The course is always evolving. Although I am not anticipating any changes, please be aware that topics, assignments and discussion dates or activities may be altered if needed - such as in cases where there are equipment failures, or if it seems the students' needs can be better met with the change. You will be notified of any changes through the WebCT site and e-mail, or by telephone.

Information on the content of topics and anticipated completion dates follow. From time to time emergencies or situations crop up that require delay in completing a topic. Please let me know if that is the case for you, rather than dealing with delays in isolation and feeling stressed. I will strive to find ways to help everyone complete the course; but can only do so if I am aware that you have some extenuating circumstances. Thanks for working together with me!

\*\* End time for participating in online topic discussions is 11:59 PM on the last day of each weekly topic.

### ■ Preparation Unit - Getting Ready for Class

*Please complete between Aug. 26 and Sept. 1 (delays are ok if you added the course late). This unit **must** be completed before working on Topic 1.*

This unit provides practice in the skills needed to successfully complete this course. Since many students enrolled in this course have not taken an entirely on-line course before this, practice is essential for making the course go well.

This unit also provides a way for you to send contact information to the instructor and to introduce yourself in the class discussion.

### ■ **Topic 1 - Introduction: Death Awareness; Attitudes; A Common Language; Demographics and Historical Perspectives**

*Please complete between Sept. 1 and Sept. 7. If you registered late or are having problems please contact the instructor by the end of Topic 1.*

This introduction provides some sociological background on the field. It also helps us begin to look at our own beliefs and concerns about death, loss and grief.

### ■ **Topic 2 - Grief from an Individual Perspective: Grief Theories**

*Please complete between Sept. 8 and Sept. 14.*

Most work on grief and loss has focused on the individual without acknowledging contextual issues that influence our reactions and beliefs. We will look at the major perspectives of what is grief, as well as what is viewed as "normal", and whether grief and loss result in a new type of what becomes normal.

### ■ **Topic 3 - Grief and Family Contexts**

*Please complete between Sept. 15 and Sept. 21.*

We will explore grief as a component of a family system, as well as how the family impacts the grief of individual members and the meanings we ascribe to loss.

### ■ **Topic 4 - Socio-Cultural Forces: Culture, Ethnicity, and Media**

*Please complete between Sept. 22 and Sept 28.*

Cultural differences exist in the meanings we give to loss and the ways we display our grief. Within cultures there also are differences related to one's religious, socio-economic, rural-urban experiences, etc. A family that includes

members from different cultural groups has the added challenges and opportunities that arise in dealing with these variations. We will explore the role the media plays today in "virtual grief".

### ■ **Topic 5 - Children**

*Please complete between Sept 29 and Oct. 5.*

How we deal with death of others and our own illnesses is influenced by stage of development. We will explore how children (infants through school age children) think about and react to death, as well as their own illnesses. We will look at the use of bibliotherapy, art therapy, adults' responses to children, and the inclusion of children in family mourning experiences.

### ■ **Topic 6 - Adolescents and College Students**

*Please complete between Oct. 6 and Oct. 12.*

Developmental stage influences how adolescents view and respond to the deaths of others, or their own impending death. We also will look at issues related to adolescent violence and suicide, and the responses of schools and colleges to bereaved students.

### ■ **Topic 7 - Adulthood: Early, Middle and Later**

*Please complete between Oct. 13 and Oct. 19.*

Developmental stage and stage-related life experiences still influence adult's experiences and responses to loss. We will look at lifespan and intergenerational issues; the death of parent, child and spouse/partner at various periods of adulthood; work place response to grieving employees; and the issue of multiple losses.

### ■ **Topic 8 - Roles and Relationships #1**

*Please complete between Oct. 20 and Oct. 26.*

This week we will examine roles and relationships within the family, focusing on the issue of continued relationships following death. In particular we will discuss bereaved parents and their marriages, infant or prenatal loss, and bereaved siblings.

### ■ **Topic 9 - Roles and Relationships #2; Gender**

*Please complete between Oct. 27 and Nov. 2*

Relationship issues this week will extend to include loss of pets, and the responses of support groups and surviving friends. We also will look at the similarities and differences in men's and women's grief, as well as how those differences may effect our relationships.

### ■ **Topic 10 - Complicated Grief; Ambiguous Loss & Boundary Ambiguity**

*Please complete between Nov. 3 and Nov. 9.*

The nature of family relationships and their potential for unclear system boundaries, characteristics of society, and types of death most common today seem to interact and contribute to an increase in the incidence of complicated grief. In addition, stigmatized deaths and perceptions of who has a "right" to grieve result in disenfranchised grief. Also contributing to complicated grief are losses that are ambiguous - where the person for whom we are grieving may be physically absent but psychologically present, or physically present but psychologically not the person we once knew.

### ■ **Topic 11 - Sudden, Accidental, and Traumatic Losses**

*Please complete between Nov. 10 and Nov. 16.*

Sudden or traumatic losses have typically been viewed as difficult for individuals to resolve, posing challenges for families to quickly reorganize. We will examine issues of suicide, accidental death, and trauma (both human-made and natural disasters).

### ■ **Topic 12 - Enduring Grief, Anticipatory Loss and Anticipatory Grief**

*Please complete between Nov. 17 and Nov. 23.*

Topic 12 looks at grief that surrounds a long term disability or condition for which there is a series of losses across the years. We will look at issues for families who deal with other losses for which there is the expectation that the condition will lead to death, and how technology blurs the line between sudden and anticipated loss.

### **■ Topic 13 - Caregivers or Caretakers?; Palliative Care**

*Please complete between Nov. 23 and Dec. 2.* This is slightly extended (and overlaps other topics) due to Thanksgiving holiday period.

Topic 13 looks at issues for caregivers, whether they be family members of professionals, and the role our own ethnicity plays in our responses as caregivers. We will explore issues of compassion fatigue, deferred judgment, palliative care, and post traumatic growth.

### **■ Topic 14 - Making Decisions: Individuals, Families, Professionals**

*Please complete between Dec. 1 and Dec 8.* This is slightly extended (and overlaps other topics) due to Thanksgiving holiday period. *Á*

Families and professionals are faced with a range of decisions related to end-of-life issues. Examples include issues of ending life support, assisted suicide, living wills and advance directives, estate planning, organ donation and funerals, and seeking grief support or counseling.

### **■ Topic 15 - Spirituality, Rituals and Ceremonies: Connection, Healing and Change; Celebration of Life (closure)**

*Please complete between Dec. 8 and Dec. 15.* *Á* Also is to be followed by the completion of course evaluation by Dec. 17.

Rituals and ceremonies (whether religious or secular) can be helpful in balancing the issues of loss and connection. The use of humor, dreams, music or writing may be helpful in times of change. Spirituality and/or religion provide some families with a link to symbolic immortality and connection to those who have died.

■ **Course ends on Dec. 17, 2008**

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**To return to course sitemap, "go back" to the Homepage.**

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This Schedule Page created: 8/27/00: modified 8/26/08

URL:

<https://webct.unr.edu/webct/logon/241076123031/documents08/schedule08.htm>

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Information about this work can be obtained from Dr. Colleen Murray at [cimurray@unr.nevada.edu](mailto:cimurray@unr.nevada.edu). Students enrolled in this course are encouraged to print copies of course materials for their own non-profit educational use.

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# Course Requirements and Grading

## Death and Dying: Family and Lifespan Perspectives

### HDFS 437/637

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Underlying this course is the premise that to deal effectively with individuals and families experiencing grief and loss we must go beyond just learning facts. To truly understand and be able to utilize the material we need opportunities to apply it. Therefore, assignments for this course are designed to provide opportunities to apply what we are learning. Requirements include: Completion of the Preparation Unit; Topic Assignments or Activities; Posting Written Discussion and Responses to Others; Diversity Paper; and Research Participation. (Later we will be discussing methods of turning in papers in this web course.)

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#### Course Requirements

■ **1. Completion of the activities assigned in the Preparation Unit and its related tasks.**

This unit is an orientation to the class web and Internet environments, as well as electronic connection to the UNR library e-journal collection. It provides information about the workings of the class and allows for correction of pre-existing problems or equipment issues. An introductory reading assignment is given in order to orient students to the class's philosophy. This unit also includes the first class Discussion, which involves introductions by each student and interactions with one another. *Requirement: Students complete the tasks in the prep unit, alert the instructor and designer of any unresolved technical problems, post their introduction, read the introductions of others, and reply to others.*

■ **2. Responses to questions, observations, or completion of assigned activities listed within the lecture for each topic.**

As you read the assigned readings and "lectures" please consider them in the context of your professional goals or experiences. This will help you retain more of the material once the course ends, and make better use of it in your daily experiences. The questions posted for the weekly lecture topics serve a variety of purposes: 1) they help you identify and/or focus on the important points in the text and readings; 2) they trigger discussion among students on a topic; 3) they help to verify that you have learned the information as it has been presented in lecture/text/readings; and 4) they ascertain whether you are able to apply the information. In some cases other tasks may be assigned. For each unit the minimum requirements for students will be indicated.

The written responses to discussion questions (which are included in the online "lecture" for each topic) will become part of the weekly discussions. You will post your discussion compositions online and other students will be encouraged to reply to them. The discussion questions are designed to help students focus on integrating the readings with the course "lectures", identify major points as well as conflicting information, demonstrate that they have understood the course information, exhibit critical thinking, and show that they can apply course information. Tasks are occasionally posed for the student to "test out" or observe examples of what this information looks like in everyday life. *Requirement: Students are required to complete the minimum requirements for each topic (as identified in each topic "lecture") in order to earn the minimum passing grade for the course.*

### **3. Active and thoughtful participation in on-line Class Discussion of weekly topics.**

In addition to the written weekly discussion contributions posted on the Discussion site (see requirement 2 above), students are to read and react to the responses of other class members that have been posted on the course Discussion site. These electronic discussions will be our equivalent to classroom interaction.

The written responses to questions posed for each topic will become the initial impetus for the on-line discussion. Students will post their own responses as well as react to the responses of others in the class. This will serve as the equivalent to a classroom discussion. It is intended to help class members apply course material, as well as reflect upon the material, their own views and those of others. It is also intended to help us stay connected to one another; an essential element in avoiding drop out from web-based courses. At times we may work in smaller groups for

discussion of specific questions off-line (via email) and then the groups will provide feedback to the entire class.

The content in this course is closely tied to our daily lives and experiences; thus, the course asks you to apply the information to real-life situations. Your own experiences are very relevant to your understanding of the material. Therefore, discussion can extend beyond the class on-line environment. Students often find it helpful to talk about what they are learning with family and friends. (Talking about issues of loss and grief may be rare or discouraged in some families or environments; using the excuse of taking this class can sometimes open up those boundaries.) Discussion with others outside of class helps broaden students' understanding of the range of perspectives and experiences on any topic; it allows opportunities for self-reflection and re-consideration of one's thoughts on the topic. In addition, it may help them better understand and appreciate those close to them.

You might think of your time at the discussion site as taking the place of the time that would be spent in class in face-to-face interactions.

*Requirement: Students are required to post their responses to questions identified for each topic. They also are required to respond to at least one comment posted by another member of the class each week (requirement #3) **in addition to** responding to a specific question (requirement #2 above). Completion at this minimum level is required to receive a minimum passing grade (minimum passing grade = D- )*

#### ■ 4. **Completion of Diversity Paper**

Collection of information for this paper will begin during Topic 4 on Socio-Cultural Forces. You will be provided a short series of questions about dealing with values, traditions, and beliefs related to grief, loss, death, dying, bereavement, and afterlife. You will be required to choose a person to interview on these questions, conduct the interview, and write about it. The person must be different from you. (You may choose what the "difference" would be.) It could be based on a range of criteria such as: age, race or ethnicity, class, gender, generation, sexual orientation, health status, etc. Think in advance about who you would like to interview in order to learn about differences. The assignment will be due at the beginning of Topic 9. Students will read each others posted papers, and the content will be integrated into class discussion).

Additional details about this assignment will be posted in the future on an Assignment link on the Homepage of the course.

*Requirement: Students are required to conduct the interview and turn in a short paper (generally 3 to 5 pages), keeping anonymity by using made-up names and any details that could identify this individual. The paper describes the individual, addresses the content of the interview, and is written in a literate fashion.*

### **Completion of research participation activity.**

This class has a research participation requirement. Students will learn about the field of research through class materials, as well as through direct experience in social research. There are two ways to fulfill the research participation requirement: the Social Research Participation Credit (SRPC) option or the integrated research paper option. Both are designed to be learning experiences closely integrated with the classroom-based and textbook-based work in this course. See the separate documents (to be added to the homepage) for full details on how to fulfill this requirement. The UNR social research participation website will become available online in early September.

Failure to fulfill the research participation requirement for this course will result in an incomplete grade for the course. If you have any questions about the requirement or your status during the semester, please submit them via email (along with your name, email address and phone number) to the Social Research Subject Pool Administrator, Aaron D. McVean, [amcvean@unr.edu](mailto:amcvean@unr.edu). If you choose the SRPC option, you will participate in 4 hours of research approved by the UNR Office for Human Research Protection. There are many opportunities throughout the semester to participate in approved research projects. Some studies are available online while others can be completed on campus. The choice from among the available SRPC studies is to be made by the student, and they do not have to be grief related, as they are intended to provide experience with social/behavioral research, help form experience that will improve one's understanding of research principles on any social or health-related topic, and thus, inform your understanding of research in the area of loss and grief. Note that the 4 SRPC hour criterion is mandatory, and completing fewer than 4 hours will result in your receiving an incomplete grade for the course.

*Requirement: To obtain a minimum passing grade in this course, students must complete 4 SRPC hours or write and submit an equivalent research paper. If the requirement is not completed the student will receive a course grade of Incomplete. Additional details will be provided in the future to students enrolled in the course through a link on the course WebCampus homepage.*

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## **Course Grading and Distribution of Effort**

**Final course grades will be based upon the following distribution of effort:**

**Preparation Unit - (graded pass/fail)**

**Responding to Assigned Questions, Activities, and Discussion/Responses on the 15 course Topics- 90%**

(Students **must participate** in answering questions and responding to other students in the discussion on each topic in order to receive a passing grade in the course.)

**Diversity Paper - 10% (assigned during Topic 4 and due at the beginning of Topic 9 - October 27, 2008)**

**Research Participation Activity A - (graded pass or incomplete. Incomplete in this activity will result in a grade of Incomplete in the course)**

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## **Grading Scale**

The University of Nevada, Reno provides faculty with the option of using a grading system with pluses and minuses. This course will be using the plus and minus grading system. Students will receive a grade with feedback at the end of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Topic to indicate their progress at that point in the course (approximately during the week of the 4<sup>th</sup> Topic). Weekly grades on topics will be posted on the website. Students can check their grades online. For questions about grades at any other time during the semester, please contact the course assistant, Mr Aaron McVean.

Information follows as to course expectations as related to grading. All students must participate in discussion on each topic in order to receive a passing grade in the course. Description of overall grading criteria and examples follow:

A: The grade range of "A" is for student work that is outstanding. The student completes all requirements and goes well beyond minimum requirements in both the quantity and quality of what is produced. All work is literate and there is clear evidence throughout the student's work that:

- the student has read, thought about, and understood the text and assigned readings;
- responses to assigned questions and tasks are thoughtful, insightful and integrate course lecture and readings appropriately;
- the student is actively engaged in discussion; discussion contributions accurately integrate readings and lectures; are insightful, thoughtful, and relevant to the postings of others
- the student makes a significant and positive contribution to the functioning of the class

B: The grade range of "B" is for student work that is very good. The student completes all requirements and goes beyond minimum requirements in the quality of what is produced for some of the course. All work is literate and there is clear evidence throughout the student's work that:

- the student has read, thought about, and generally understood the text and assigned readings;
- responses to assigned questions and tasks go beyond the minimum requirement listed in each weekly lecture topic, integrate course lecture and readings appropriately, and show some attempts at thoughtfulness;

- discussion involvement is active (goes beyond the weekly minimum of one interactive reply to another class member); discussion contributions integrate readings and lectures; and contributions are relevant to the postings of others
- the student makes a positive contribution to the functioning of the class

C: The grade range of "C" is for student work that adequately completes more than the minimum requirements and shows some evidence of moving beyond the minimum in the quality and quantity of what is produced for some of the course. In other words, performance is adequate. All work is literate and there is clear evidence throughout the student's work that:

- the student has read and understood the text and assigned readings;
- responses to assigned questions and tasks meet (and occasionally exceed) minimum requirements listed in each weekly lecture topic, and include some integration of course lecture and readings;
- discussion involvement is at least at the weekly minimum of one interactive reply to another class member and sometimes exceeds that level; discussion contributions occasionally integrate readings and lectures; and contributions are relevant to the postings of others
- the student makes a positive contribution to the functioning of the class

D: The grade range of "D" is for student work that is minimal. The student completes all minimum requirements. Readings and course lectures are not well-integrated into assignments. Participation is uninvolved or not relevant to the discussion topic. All work is literate and the student's contributions to the functioning of the class are not disruptive or abusive to others. *Remember that the minimum requirement (a D-) for discussion is to answer at least one question and to respond to at least one other student's posting for every unit.*

F: The grade of "F" indicates that the student failed to complete required assignments, effort was superficial, did not read or did not understand

course readings and written materials, and/or the student was disruptive or abusive to others in the class.

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The Preparation Unit and On-Line Discussion Assignments are derived from those developed by Dr. Kathleen Gilbert of Indiana University for her course "Grief in a Family Context".

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**This Assignments, Course Requirements and Grading**  
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Information about this work can be obtained from Dr. Colleen Murray at [cimurray@unr.nevada.edu](mailto:cimurray@unr.nevada.edu). Students enrolled in this course are encouraged to print copies of course materials for their own non-profit educational use.

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