COURSE SYLLABUS

Instructor: Ann Neumann  
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Telephone: 347.721.0711  
Class Location: 726 Broadway, 5th Floor, Room 542

*If a private meeting is desired or a meeting outside the indicated hours is needed, please contact the instructor by email to make an appointment*

COURSE DESCRIPTION

How will you die? Suddenly, by heart attack? Early--in your 30s, 40s or 50s--after two rounds of chemotherapy? In a hospital bed, unconscious, maybe even brain dead, after being kept alive by a feeding tube? At the age of 85 after years of increasing dementia and frailty? This course will examine how death is understood and represented in American culture. Readings will include scholarly and popular works such as Atul Gawande’s *Being Mortal* and Sherwin Nuland’s classic, *How We Die*, as well as various pieces of longform nonfiction. The course will also examine aging and end of life ailments in TV and film. We will discuss questions surrounding the role of doctors, religion, economics and politics in end of life care, as well as the ethical issues pertaining to policymaking for the dying. Issues will include: legalization of assisted suicide, hospice care, and end of life planning; and the theoretical and legal concepts of "choice," "dignity," "quality of life" and "autonomy."

Students will be expected to complete weekly writing assignments of 500 words (2 double spaced pages) that focus on current issues. A mid-term writing assignment of 1,000 to 1,500 words (4 to 6 pages) will lead to a final reported/researched project of approximately 3,500 words (12 to 14 pages).

INSTRUCTIONAL METHODS

This course is taught using a variety of instructional methods including lecture, class discussions, and small group work.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

- Regular, wakeful attendance at course meetings is absolutely essential for your success in this course. Beyond attendance, thoughtful participation in class sessions and preparation in all assigned readings are equally necessary. Each week a different class member will be asked to bring an article that they will share with the group. More than three excused absences will result in failure of the course. (25% of final grade)
- **Weekly writing assignments** (250 to 500 words, 25% of grade) will be workshopped among rotating groups in class
- A **mid-term writing assignment** (1000 to 1500 words), to be pitched to the instructor in advance (25% of final grade)
- A **final writing assignment** (3500 words), ideally but not necessarily an expansion or continuation of the midterm assignment (25% of final grade)

*Note: All written work must conform to high grammatical and compositional standards, and follow an academic citation and style format (e.g., Chicago, MLA, APA, etc.). Please format your papers with one inch margins, double spaced, with twelve-point typeface.*

**ASSESSMENT & GRADING POLICY**

Student learning will be assessed and grades will be assigned according to the following distribution rubric.

**Grade Distribution:**
- Participation, Attendance, One Shared Article & Preparation 25%
- Weekly Writing Assignments 20%
- Mid-term Writing Assignment (1000 - 1500 words) 25%
- Final Writing Assignment (3500 words) 30%

**Grade Rubric:**

**A** = Excellent work, with indication that the student is engaged in dialogue with course materials, through regular and considered contributions (in discussions, working group participation, and shared articles). In the classroom, thoughtful questions and comments are posed, and insights from course readings are introduced and related back to lecture and discussion themes. Written assignments--submitted on time--show a similar excellence of engagement with readings and ideas from the course, and are devoid of spelling and grammatical errors.

**B** = Very good work that displays a firm grasp of course materials, with evidence of more than basic engagement with concepts and themes. Written work is completed on time and shows a solid understanding of readings and themes. Participation is consistent and demonstrates interaction with course materials.

**C** = Acceptable work that demonstrates a basic level of understanding and engagement with course materials. Written work is completed and is of acceptable quality, but needs improvement. Participation is evident but inconsistent or insubstantial.

**D** = A barely passing grade

**F** = Unacceptable work

**Grading Scale**

Grades are assigned according to the following scale:

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<thead>
<tr>
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<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>4.0</td>
<td>A-</td>
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<tr>
<td>B+</td>
<td>3.3</td>
<td>B</td>
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<td>B-</td>
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Assignment Submission Policy
Work should be submitted on time. If, however, you find that you will be unable to meet a deadline, contact the instructor well in advance of the due date in order to make arrangements for late submission. Chronic late submission of work, or failure to submit work, will adversely affect final grades.

Note on Academic Honesty
Please present your own best work in this course. Plagiarized work will not be accepted, and will be punished harshly, according to University guidelines.

Note on Accessibility
Please notify the instructor promptly of any documented disability that may affect your ability to succeed in this course, so that appropriate accommodation can be made.

REQUIRED TEXTS - Available for purchase at NYU Bookstore (726 Broadway)


SCHEDULE OF TOPICS, READINGS, & ASSIGNMENTS

Week One: | Course Introduction & Prefatory Remarks

Week Two: | Key Themes in Death and Dying

Week Three:


Week Four:


=>*Pitches for Mid-term Due*

Week Five:


Week Six:


Week Seven:


“The Walking Dead,” viewing in class
**Week Eight:**

“How to Die in Oregon,” documentary, in class viewing

=>*Mid-term Due*

**Week Nine:**


**Week Ten:**


**Week Eleven:**

Excerpts from *How We Hope: A Moral Psychology*, Adrienne Martin, Princeton University Press, 2014. To be provided to class as a hand out.

**Week Twelve:**


**Week Thirteen:**


**Week Fourteen:**

=>*Final Due No class meeting.*