

Faculty of Health
Department of Psychology
PSYC 3560, Section M: PSYCHOLOGY OF DEATH AND DYING
Tuesdays 11:30am to 2:30pm/ In-person in VIC 135 (Weeks 1 & 2 Online via Zoom)
Winter Term 2022

Welcome to the Psychology of Death and Dying! Putting an exclamation mark after this course title might seem inappropriate, but I'm genuinely excited to be teaching this class. I've found it to be one the most enriching courses to teach, both personally and professionally. I hope you will feel the same at the end of the semester.

IMPORTANT NOTE: When I tell friends and colleagues that I'm teaching Psychology of Death and Dying, their first reactions are usually ones of horror. "What a heavy course to teach!" and my personal favourite, "How is that psychology?" I explain to them that it is actually an incredibly life-affirming course, full of laughter and joy. But the truth is, this course is a difficult one, and it is important that you know that going into it. We're going to talk about topics that are heavy and difficult. Many of us have been personally touched by loss and death, and perhaps that's why we are all here taking (or teaching) this course.

I'm going to push you out of your comfort zone each week. I'm going to teach this course with as much care as I can, but I'm not going to avoid the difficult topics. Throughout the course, I'm going share content that may be upsetting, and I'm going to offer perspectives that may directly challenge your own. If you're going to get the most out of this course, you're going to need to keep an open mind. Respect for diverse opinions and experiences must be maintained at all times (e.g., during lectures, in discussion forums, via email). We're here to learn from each other and that can only happen if the classroom is a safe space.

If you have recently experienced loss or death, I encourage you to think carefully about whether this is the right time for you to take this course. There is no shame in feeling like the wounds are too raw right now. I've been there. Many of us have been there. **Reflecting on your own experiences with loss and death is required in this course and you will not be able to opt out of an assignment because it is emotional. This is the nature of this course and I'm being transparent about it from the start to any avoid issues later on. It's also important that you recognize that this course is not an opportunity (nor a substitute) for therapy.** I'm not a trained clinician, nor are your classmates. Rather, this is an opportunity to learn, listen, and reflect on death, dying, life, and living (yes, I totally ripped that line from the textbook title).

Instructor and T.A. Information

Instructor: Dr. Kathleen Fortune

Office Hours: TBA (via Zoom)

Email: kfortune@yorku.ca

T.A.	Rebecca Lewinson	Jenna Barnhardt
Email	lewinsonyork@gmail.com	jrmb@yorku.ca
Office Hours	TBA (via Zoom)	TBA (via Zoom)

Course Prerequisite(s): Course prerequisites are strictly enforced

- HH/PSYC 1010 6.00 (Introduction to Psychology), with a minimum grade of C.
- Completed at least 54 earned credits

Course Credit Exclusions

Please refer to [York Courses Website](#) for a listing of any course credit exclusions.

Course website: [eClass](#)

All course materials will be available on the course eClass site. This includes my PowerPoint slides and supplementary readings, videos, and podcasts. **If we end up going REMT/online, rather than being in-person as planned, I will record our lectures and post them on eclass**

Course Description

This course is designed to provide you with a comprehensive introduction to empirical findings on death, dying and bereavement. It explores a range of psychological and social issues, including death anxiety, attitudes toward death, grief and bereavement, social and cultural contexts of death and loss, the mental life of the dying person, medically assisted dying, and palliative and hospice care. Emphasis will be placed on the critical analysis and synthesis of the historical, sociocultural, biomedical and psychological research on these topics. The course will consider the experiences of the dying, as well as the experiences of those left behind to cope with the loss, and those who care for the dying.

Program Learning Outcomes

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

1. Demonstrate in-depth knowledge of the psychology of death and dying.
2. Articulate trends in the psychology of death and dying.
3. Express psychological knowledge of death and dying in written form.
4. Describe and explain limits to generalizability of research findings in death and dying.
5. Demonstrate ability to relate information in the psychology of death and dying to own and others' life experiences.

Specific Learning Objectives

By the end of this course, you will have:

- Developed analytical, reflective and critical thought around one's own and others' attitudes toward death, dying and bereavement.
- Become better prepared to deal with death, dying, and bereavement when they arise in your life and in the lives of those around you.
- Developed knowledge of advanced directives, living wills, power of attorney, organ donation, and other important decisions around end-of-life care.
- Developed practical, evidence-based skills that prepare you for careers that involve dealing with the sick, the dying, and the bereaved in a compassionate way.

- A deeper understanding and appreciation of your strengths and limitations as human beings. As Plato said, “The really important thing is not to live, but to live well.” I hope this course plays some small part in helping you live well.

Required Textbook

Corr, Corr, & Doka, *Death & Dying, Life & Living*, 8th Edition. Cengage.

You can purchase this book through the York University bookstore. I believe they have made hard copies, loose-leaf copies, and e-book versions available, but it is also available for purchase on Amazon and from Cengage. You may also find used copies online from students who took the course with me last year.

Course Requirements and Assessment:

Assessment	Date of Evaluation (if known)	Weighting
Assignment 1	February 1, 2022	20%
Test 1	February 15, 2022	30%
Assignment 2	March 15, 2022	20%
Test 2	April 5, 2022	20%
Discussion Forums	Throughout term (5 X 2% each)	10%
Total		100%

Description of Assignments

Tests: There are 2 term tests in the course and no final exam in exam period. Each test will be made up of approximately 70-80 multiple-choice questions based on the textbook and lecture material, as well any indicated supplementary materials posted to eClass.

Discussion Forums: Five times over the term you will be asked to respond to a discussion forum post (e.g., an article, video or podcast). You will also be asked to reply to at least two of your classmates’ posts, with thoughtful responses that extend the conversation. Posts are graded on effort and critical reflection, rather than on accuracy. If you put in the effort, these are ‘easy’ marks. The discussion forums posts are worth 2% each, for a total of 10% of your course grade.

Assignment 1 (Lossography): You will be asked to reflect on your past experiences with loss and/or death and to draw connections between those experiences, and your current beliefs and behaviours around death. You’ll be asked to think about who/what played an influential role in your experience of and/or attitudes toward death and dying (e.g., parents, teachers, religious or cultural figures, the media). If you’re never experienced a death, you can reflect on other losses you may have experienced (e.g., loss of a home because of emigration, prenatal loss, loss of a significant relationship through divorce or separation). I’ll provide a much more detailed rubric for this assignment, but for now, start thinking about this. The lossography assignment will be roughly 4-5 double-spaced pages and it is worth 20% of your course grade.

Assignment 2 (“Good Death”): I’m still working these details out, but the general idea is to have you bring together what you’ve learned in a paper on your idea of a “good death.” I’ll ask you to write about what end-of-life care would ideally look like for you and why. This should include

a discussion of when and whether you would want to continue pursuing medical treatments until the very end, palliative and hospice care options, dying at home, medical assistance in dying, the design of the environment in which you would want to die in, etc. Undoubtedly, many of you will relate some of this to your religious or cultural beliefs, and of course that's okay, but I really want you to focus more on what YOU would want for yourself. I want you to reflect on your own notions of personhood and what constitutes a life worth living for YOU. I'll also ask you to plan your own funeral/death services, with consideration given to the feelings and needs of those you leave behind, as well as your religious or cultural beliefs. Finally, you will also be asked to reflect on what you would want your legacy to be and how you would wish to be remembered by those who knew you and loved you. There will be much more to say about this we get into the course, and I'll provide a detailed set of instructions and a grading rubric within the first few weeks of the course. For now, just start giving it some thought. For me, this is a course about how to live well and how to ensure that everyone has their own version of a "good death," so this is my attempt to get you thinking about the very topics most of us like to avoid thinking about. The assignment will be 4-5 double-spaced typed pages and it is worth 20% of your course grade.

Class Format and Attendance Policy

At this moment, the university is still planning to go ahead with in-person lectures as of the week of Jan 24. I have no control over these decisions, so please do not email me to ask whether you can do this course remotely. These decisions are not mine to make. If something changes, the university will update all of us, and I will update this course syllabus. While I strongly encourage attending lectures, the only absolutely mandatory dates that you must be available during our class time are two test dates listed in the course requirements and assessments table earlier in this syllabus. Please book those dates off work and/or clear 80 minutes to write the test during those dates and times. I cannot accommodate students who schedule more than one class at the same time, or who book work shifts during our class time.

Grading as per Senate Policy

The grading scheme for the course conforms to the 9-point grading system used in undergraduate programs at York (e.g., A+ = 9, A = 8, B+ = 7, C+ = 5, etc.). Assignments and tests* will bear either a letter grade designation or a corresponding number grade (e.g. A+ = 90 to 100, A = 80 to 89, B+ = 75 to 79, etc.)

For a full description of York grading system see the York University Undergraduate Calendar – [Grading Scheme for 2021-22](#)

Missed Tests/Midterm Exams/Late Assignment

For any missed quiz or late assignment, students MUST complete the following online form which will be received and reviewed in the Psychology undergraduate office. At this time, due to COVID-19 an Attending Physician's Statement (APS) is not required, however, a reason for missing an evaluated component in the course must be provided.

[HH PSYC: Missed Tests/Exams Form](#). Failure to complete the form within 48 hours of the original deadline will result in **a grade of zero for the missed quiz or late assignment**.

If you miss one of the tests in this course, you will be required to complete a short-answer only alternative test instead of the multiple-choice test you missed. This will be completed within 1 week of the original test you and there are no exceptions.

If you submit an assignment after the deadline, you will receive a late penalty of 10% per day. The TA's and myself need these fixed deadlines in order to plan our own schedules, and to ensure that you receive timely feedback. Life gets hectic, but meeting deadlines is an important lesson to learn as a undergraduate student, and especially for those students planning to pursue graduate or professional programs.

Add/Drop Deadlines

For a list of all important dates please refer to: [Fall/Winter 2021-22 Important Dates](#)

	Fall (Term F)	Year (Term Y)	Winter (Term W)
Last date to add a course without permission of instructor (also see Financial Deadlines)	Sept. 21	Sept. 21	Jan. 23
Last date to add a course with permission of instructor (also see Financial Deadlines)	Oct. 5	Oct. 26	Feb. 7
Drop deadline: Last date to drop a course without receiving a grade (also see Financial Deadlines)	Nov. 12	Feb. 11	18-Mar
Course Withdrawal Period (withdraw from a course and receive a grade of "W" on transcript – see note below)	Nov. 13 - Dec. 7	Feb. 12 - April 10	March 19 - April 10

Add and Drop Deadline Information

There are deadlines for adding and dropping courses, both academic and financial. Since, for the most part, the dates are **different**, be sure to read the information carefully so that you understand the differences between the sessional dates below and the [Refund Tables](#).

You are strongly advised to pay close attention to the "Last date to enrol without permission of course instructor" deadlines. These deadlines represent the last date students have unrestricted access to the registration and enrolment system.

After that date, you must contact the professor/department offering the course to arrange permission.

You can drop courses using the registration and enrolment system up until the last date to drop a course without receiving a grade (drop deadline).

You may [withdraw from a course](#) using the registration and enrolment system after the drop deadline until the last day of class for the term associated with the course. When you withdraw from a course, the course remains on your transcript without a grade and is notated as 'W'. The withdrawal will not affect your grade point average or count towards the credits required for your degree.

Information on Plagiarism Detection

All written assignments will be submitted to Turnitin via an eClass submission folder. Turnitin is software that detects plagiarism in a variety of forms. Please review the Senate Policy on Academic Integrity in the section on Academic Integrity below, and familiarize yourself with what constitutes plagiarism, in order to ensure that your assignment submissions are not in violation of these rules. If you have any questions, email your TA or myself and we will be happy to answer them. When in doubt, cite the source, and speak to your TA.

Electronic Device Policy

It is expected that you will complete tests in a manner that does not require consulting an unauthorised source during the test.

Academic Integrity for Students

York University takes academic integrity very seriously; please familiarize yourself with [Information about the Senate Policy on Academic Honesty](#).

It is recommended that you review Academic Integrity by completing the [Academic Integrity Tutorial](#) and [Academic Honesty Quiz](#)

Test Banks

The offering for sale of, buying of, and attempting to sell or buy test banks (banks of test questions and/or answers), or any course specific test questions/answers is not permitted in the Faculty of Health. Any student found to be doing this may be considered to have breached the Senate Policy on Academic Honesty. In particular, buying and attempting to sell banks of test questions and/or answers may be considered as “Cheating in an attempt to gain an improper advantage in an academic evaluation” (article 2.1.1 from the Senate Policy) and/or “encouraging, enabling or causing others” (article 2.1.10 from the Senate Policy) to cheat.

Academic Accommodation for Students with Disabilities

While all individuals are expected to satisfy the requirements of their program of study and to aspire to do so at a level of excellence, the university recognizes that persons with disabilities may require reasonable accommodation to enable them to do so. The university encourages students with disabilities to register with Student Accessibility Services (SAS) to discuss their accommodation needs as early as possible in the term to establish the recommended academic accommodations that will be communicated to Course Directors as necessary. Please let me know as early as possible in the term if you anticipate requiring academic accommodation so that we can discuss how to consider your accommodation needs within the context of this course.

<https://accessibility.students.yorku.ca/>

Excerpt from Senate Policy on Academic Accommodation for Students with Disabilities

1. Pursuant to its commitment to sustaining an inclusive, equitable community in which all members are treated with respect and dignity, and consistent with applicable accessibility legislation, York University shall make reasonable and appropriate accommodations in order to promote the ability of students with disabilities to fulfill the academic requirements of their programs. This policy aims to eliminate systemic barriers to participation in academic activities by students with disabilities.

All students are expected to satisfy the essential learning outcomes of courses.

Accommodations shall be consistent with, support and preserve the academic integrity of the curriculum and the academic standards of courses and programs. For further information please refer to: [York University Academic Accommodation for Students with Disabilities Policy](#).

Course Materials Copyright Information

These course materials are designed for use as part of the PSYC3560 course at York University and are the property of the instructor unless otherwise stated. This means that my PowerPoint slides should not be posted to websites by you. These slides are my intellectual property and shared with you for the purposes of this course only. Third party copyrighted materials (such as book chapters, journal articles, music, videos, etc.) have either been licensed for use in this course or fall under an exception or limitation in Canadian Copyright law.

Copying this material for distribution (e.g., uploading material to a commercial third-party website) may lead to a violation of Copyright law. [Intellectual Property Rights Statement](#).

Calumet and Stong Colleges' Student Success Programming:

[Calumet](#) and [Stong](#) Colleges aim to support the success of Faculty of Health students through a variety of **free programs** throughout their university career:

- [Orientation](#) helps new students transition into university, discover campus resources, and establish social and academic networks.
- [Peer Mentoring](#) connects well-trained upper-year students with first year and transfer students to help them transition into university.
- [Course Representative Program](#) aims to build the leadership skills of its Course Reps while contributing to the academic success and resourcefulness of students in core program classes.
- [Peer-Assisted Study Session \(P.A.S.S.\)](#) involve upper-level academically successful and well-trained students who facilitate study sessions in courses that are known to be historically challenging.
- [Peer Tutoring](#) offers one-on-one academic support by trained Peer Tutors.
- Calumet and Stong Colleges also support students' [Health & Wellness](#), [leadership and professional skills development](#), [student/community engagement and wellbeing](#), [career exploration](#), [Indigenous Circle](#), [awards and recognition](#), and [provide opportunities to students to work or volunteer](#).

- Please connect with your Course Director about specific academic resources for this class.
- For additional resources/information about our student success programs, please consult our websites ([Calumet College](#); [Stong College](#)), email scchelp@yorku.ca, and/or follow us on Instagram ([Calumet College](#); [Stong College](#)), Facebook ([Calumet College](#); [Stong College](#)) and [LinkedIn](#)
- Are you receiving our weekly email (Calumet and Stong Colleges - Upcoming evens)? If not, please check your Inbox and Junk folders. If you do not find our weekly emails, then please add your 'preferred email' to your Passport York personal profile. If you need support, please contact ccscadm@yorku.ca, and request to be added to the listerv.

Email Policy

When composing an email to me or to one of your teaching assistants, think carefully about the kind of impression you want to create. Most of you are likely eager to make a lasting, positive impression and to receive a favourable response. However, sending such an email may be new to you, so below are some helpful tips to review before sending an email.

1. Any emails sent to the professor or teaching assistant **MUST** indicate the course number and section in the subject line of the email. Our course and section are **PSYC3560, SEC M**.
2. Make sure to **include your full name and student number in the body of the email**. If your preferred name differs from the name listed on the course roster, please let your professor and TA know that early in the term.
3. **Before sending an email, make sure you've done a thorough job of trying to find the answer to your question in the materials posted to eClass**. That means carefully reading through the course syllabus and other pieces of information posted on eClass to see if the answer is already provided. The professor and TA's receive a high volume of email and **will not respond to emails asking questions that are clearly addressed in the posted course materials**.
4. A proper email to your professor or TA begins by **properly addressing them by their full name and/or title**. In this case, you should refer to me as either **Dr. Fortune or Professor Fortune**. You can address your emails to your TA's by their full names. The body of your email message should be proofread for spelling, grammatical, and punctuation errors, and should be written in a polite tone. Respect goes both ways, and you should treat your professor and TA's with the same respect with which you would like to be treated.
5. Send emails well in advance of when a response is required. While the volume of emails received will vary throughout the year, you should expect to receive a response with 3 days of sending an email. If you have not received a response within that period, follow-up politely.

Discussion Board Etiquette

One of the aspects of this course that I'm most excited about are the discussion board posts, which will allow you to share your thoughts, feelings, and questions about interesting aspects of the course with one another. However, this only works when everyone understands some

general rules around appropriate behaviour on these boards. They must be a safe space for everyone, and the TA's and myself will ensure that they remain so. Read through the guidelines below, to familiarize yourself with our expectations around discussion board behaviour.

- **Respect others.** It is important to remember that you, your peers, and the teaching team are real people who are affected by what you write. It is important to be mindful of the feelings and opinions of others, even if they differ from your own. As a general rule of thumb: If you wouldn't say it to someone's face, don't say it online either.
- **Proofread.** Before sending an email, sending a message to a chat or responding to a discussion, review your response to ensure that it is clear, concise and respectful.
- **Avoid strong language, all caps, and excessive exclamation points.** It is easy for written text to be misread and misunderstood. Have you ever sent a text or email message with good intent, but your recipient thought you were being rude or condescending? If so, then you have experienced this firsthand.
- **Avoid slang, use proper English.** Avoid slang terms such as "wassup?" and texting abbreviations such as "u" instead of "you."
- **Be careful with emoticons.** Limit and possibly avoid the use of emoticons.
- **Pick the right tone, be careful with humour or sarcasm.** Since your communication will be in a written format then it is very important to choose the right words when you are trying to get your meaning across. Be cautious when using humour or sarcasm, as tone is often lost in an email or discussion post.
- **Personal information and confidentiality.** Do not post confidential information about yourself or others in the discussion boards. You are, of course, free to share some personal anecdotes about your life if they are relevant to the question being posed, but keep in mind that the board is viewed by your classmates and potentially others.
- **Don't post or share, publicly or privately, inappropriate material.** Posting or sharing this type of information will go against the code of conduct expected of students at York.
- **Be forgiving.** Be mindful that for many students this will be a new way of interacting and that some may struggle with written communication. Be patient and understanding with your peers as they become familiar and comfortable with the new format and guidelines.

Course Schedule

DATE	TOPIC	ASSIGNED READINGS
JAN 11	Death education & the changing nature of death and dying	Chapter 1 (pgs. 1-14), Chapter 2 (pgs. 21-42)
JAN 18	Attitudes toward death, death anxiety, language around death, death in the media	Chapter 3 (pgs. 45-63) & Chapter 4 (pgs. 88-95)

JAN 25	Developmental Perspectives: how children and adolescents learn about death	Chapter 12 (pgs. 329-336) & Chapters 13 (pgs. 368-374)
Feb 1	Living with Life-Threatening Illness & Caring for the sick and dying, hospice and palliative care Assignment 1 Due Today!	Chapter 6 (pgs. 131-152) & Chapter 7 (pgs. 160-176) & Chapter 8 (pgs. 182-196, 202-204)
FEB 8	Making the tough decisions: How medical professionals, families, and the dying communicate about options at the end of life.	Chapter 16 (pgs. 445-476)
FEB 15	TEST 1 TODAY	Covers chapters and lectures from Jan 15 to Feb 12
FEB 22	READING WEEK BREAK – NO CLASS	NO ASSIGNED READINGS
MAR 1	Understanding grief: dominant models of grief and coping, a critical look at stage-models of grief, how their intuitive appeal can exacerbate grieving	Chapter 9 (pgs. 212-255)
MAR 8	How children and adolescents cope with death of a loved one & the experiences of children and adolescents living with life-threatening illnesses.	Chapter 12 (pgs. 337-355) and Chapter 13 (pgs. 375-388)
MAR 15	How adults experience death of a friend, spouse, child, or parent. The experience of disenfranchised grief in the case of parental loss or childbearing loss. Assignment 2 DUE TODAY	Chapter 14 (pgs. 400-416) and Chapter 15 (pgs. 422-439)
MAR 22	The unique challenges associated with death by suicide. We'll discuss complicated grieving processes, and the social stigma of suicide.	Chapter 17 (pgs. 484-508)
MAR 29	Religious and Cultural Views on Death: how people around the world view death, their death rituals & beliefs about what happens after death. Making meaning out of death and loss, post-traumatic growth.	Small group projects posted to eClass module. Readings posted to eClass. No textbook Chapter readings assigned.
APR 5	TEST 2 TODAY!	Covers chapters and lectures since Test 1