INT. 415: INTERDISCIPLINARY SEMINAR IN DEATH AND DYING

Course Syllabus - Spring, 1995

Objective: This course will address the concepts and processes called "death" and "dying", with emphasis on their social functions. It will discuss death as a phenomenon, and attempt to place that phenomenon within a social and conceptual framework. It will address death within American culture and other cultures, describe and consider the ways cultures react to and deal with death and the process of dying, and consider death as seen from the perspectives of various concerned parties. The course will explore the implications of those considerations, and of certain social and ethical questions associated with death and dying. It will also offer students an opportunity to reflect upon death in their own lives, and their own reactions to death and dying.

Meeting Times: Every Thursday Evening, 6:00 - 8:30pm, Room 235

Texts: Death: The Final Stage of Growth, Elisabeth Kübler-Ross (ed.)
Death, Society, and Human Experience, Robert Kastenbaum

Assignments: 1 short paper (about 5 pages)
1 longer paper (8 - 10 pages)
Ongoing journal-keeping (2-3 pages per week)
1 class presentation
Class participation

Grading: Short paper: 25%
Long paper: 35%
Journal 15% (ungraded - full credit for completion)
Class presentation 15%
Class participation 10% (full credit for regular, sincere effort)

Refer to handouts on "Philosophy Term Papers", "Class Journals", and paper assignments for guidance on form, content, style. These should be followed carefully, but you have a great deal of leeway as to how to address the material and how to get the most for yourself out of the course. The instructor is available at any time for questions or discussion.

Office Hours: Room 266 (Prof. San Juan's Office, Dept. of Philosophy)
Thursday/Friday: 5:00 - 5:45
Tuesday: 5:30 - 7:30
Other times by appointment - feel free to ask.

Also available by home phone: (202) 338-8175
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Summary Syllabus - Spring, 1995

Jan. 19: What is Death?
How Do We Identify Death?
  Biomedical Criteria
  Social Criteria
  Death Equivalencies
The Significance of Death
  Medical
  Social
  Religious
What is Dying?
How Do We Identify Dying?
How Do We Encounter Death and Dying?

Reading: K-R: Preface and Introduction
         Kastenbaum: pp 29-48, and pp 77-90

Jan. 26: The Social Roles Death Plays
How We Face Death
Types of Death
  "Good"/"Bad", "Deserved"/"Undeserved", "Worthy", etc.
  Violent/Peaceful, Expected/Unexpected, Suicide, etc.
Death and Religion

Reading: K-R: pp 5-26
         Kastenbaum: pp 55-73, pp 181-194

Feb. 2: Death American Style
The "Death System"
The Medicalization of Death and Death in the Medical Context
Other Contexts for Death
Pre- and Post-Death Rituals

Reading: Kastenbaum: pp 215-239
         assigned articles (class handouts)

Feb. 9: Death in Other Cultures
Variations of Death Systems
Personalization vs. Medicalization
Contexts for Death
Pre- and Post-Death Rituals

Reading: K-R: pp 27-72
Feb. 16: Disease
Dying as a Process
"Dying" as a State
"The Dying"
The Dying and Their Deaths

Reading: Kastenbaum: pp 90-103, pp 127-144
K-R: pp 105-116

Feb. 23: Witnessing Death
Anticipating Death
Participating in Death
Death in Families
Death Among Acquaintances

Reading: Kastenbaum: pp vii-viii
K-R: pp 133-144
Kastenbaum: pp 245-251

Mar. 2: Caregivers and Death
Healthcare Professions
Religious Workers
Household Members
Death in the Institutional Consciousness

Reading: Kastenbaum: pp 1-4
K-R: pp 117-133

Mar. 9: [Spring Break]

Mar. 16: Grief
Mourning
Loss
Survival

Reading: Kastenbaum: pp 251-273
K-R: pp 97-105

First Paper Due

Mar. 23: Post-Death Patterns
Post-Death Expectations
Aftermath of Death for: Family / Caregivers / Society
Social/Legal Death Observances
Class Presentations
Reading: K-R: pp 87-96
assigned articles (class handouts)

Mar. 30: Why We Care About Death
Our Own Deaths
Planning For Death
Experiencing Dying
Quasi-Deaths
The Big One
Class Presentations

Reading: assigned articles (class handouts)

Apr. 6: Life and Death / Death in Life
"Meaning"
"Growth"
Dying as Change
Dying as Opportunity
Death as Challenge
Death as Closure
Class Presentations

Reading: K-R: pp 145-169

Apr. 13: Death and Social Patterns
Violent Death / Crime / War
Quiet Death / Infant Mortality / Starvation / Neglect
Death by Class / Social Group
Death by Gender
Death of Children
Class Presentations

Reading: Kastenbaum: pp 196-204, pp 147-167
assigned articles (class handouts)

Apr. 20: Healthcare for the Dying
Terminal Care
Hospice
Decisionmaking by/for the Dying
Competency / Autonomy / Last Wishes
Class Presentations

Reading: Kastenbaum: pp 107-124
K-R: pp 73-86

Apr. 27: Ethical Issues Surrounding Death
Control of Dying and Death
Whose Wishes Are Determinate?
Family Conflicts
Treatment Decisions
Religious Conflicts
Social Controversies
Class Presentations

Reading: assigned articles (class handouts)

May 4:
Further Ethical and Social Issues
Current Controversies and Issues
Course Wrap-up
Class Presentations

Reading: assigned articles (class handouts)

Final Paper Due on the Final Examination Date for this class.