

## **GRIEF, LOSS AND FILM**

**Spring, 2006**

**IDS 2205-104**

3:30 - 4:45 ~~FR~~ *TR*

**“In our sleep, pain that cannot forget falls drop by drop upon the heart, and, in our despair, against our will, comes wisdom through the awful grace of God. Aeschylus.” (At RFK grave in Arlington National Cemetery.)**

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**COURSE DESCRIPTION:** Separation, loss, death and renewal are major emotional, intellectual and spiritual/intuitive aspects of daily life. This class will look at grief, loss and life largely through film. We will examine major theories from thanatologists such as Steven Levine, Gerald May, Elizabeth Kubler-Ross, etc. We will look at movie themes from a variety of award winning films (Ordinary People, Return to Bountiful, Fried Green Tomatoes, Million Dollar Baby, Harold & Maude, Shipping News) and TV series like Dead Like Me and Six Feet Under. Epidemiology of suicide, fear of death, the funeral industry and life philosophies are all themes we may examine. Cross cultural, historical and literary themes are a part of the interdisciplinary material to be covered.

**COURSE OBJECTIVES:** Upon successful completion of the course the student will be able to:

1. List and discuss a variety of cultural and cross-cultural causes and responses to death; (Student reports from articles OUT OF THE BLUE, ch. 5 from DEATH AND DYING LIFE AND LIVING (The text), case histories and articles to help deepen knowledge of other cultures.)
2. List and discuss and synthesize specific issues and themes from each film and tie to relevant chapters in the text.
3. Describe and discuss the epidemiology of suicide, noting high risk times and high risk groups in the life cycle; (Lecture and suicide handouts, film, Ordinary People, text ch. 17 & 18).
4. Identify major ethical issues relating to death, dying, and living, euthanasia, living wills, etc. and compare and contrast these issues; (Dax Cowart video: Please Let Me Die; film, Million Dollar Baby, case histories, handouts, ch. 18 text.)
5. Discuss the concept of “unfinished business” and be able to specifically list methods of taking care of unfinished business; (Kubler Ross videos and film, The Shipping News, ch. 10 text.)

6. identify, compare and contrast concepts developed by Kubler-Ross, Stephen Levine, Gerald May, and others who have shaped the Thanatology field; (Films, case histories, lecture from Reichle's notes from conferences with these individuals.) Ch. 8, 10 text.
7. List and discuss the steps in the degeneration of a typical older adult (ex. Alzheimers disease) and describe his/her probable movement from home to rest home to nursing home, to hospital, to funeral home; and connect to each of the individuals cited to films: Return to Bountiful, Peege; (case histories, ch 14, 15 text.)
8. List and discuss the intellectual and emotional steps in the grieving and mourning process, including being able to make appropriate responses to those grieving; (All work, especially text and Reichle's notes and videos from Kubler Ross.)
9. Compare and contrast ways individuals and communities experience transformations from grief, loss and death experiences. (Films: The Shipping News, Harold and Maude, case histories, etc.)

**ATTENDANCE POLICY:** Regular attendance is expected. Attendance and participation are 20% of the final grade. Perfect attendance will boost a test grade a letter grade. Be here, be awake and contribute.

#### **REQUIRED TEXTS:**

1. Bernstein, Richard. OUT OF THE BLUE: The Story of September 11, 2001 from Jihad to Ground Zero. 2002. New York Times.
2. Cassarjian, Robin. FORGIVENESS. 1992. Bantam.
3. Corr, Charles A.; Nabe, Clyde M. and Corr. Donna M. DEATH AND DYING LIFE AND LIVING. 5th Ed. 2006. Brooks/Cole.

#### **COURSE ASSIGNMENTS:**

1. Film reviews. A paper response to the major issues, ideas, concepts AND YOUR REACTIONS to each film seen in class is due at the beginning of the next class. Please make notes of each film in your "viewing journal" as a basis for your paper. Tie into this paper ideas and concepts from text readings. (This is your class admission ticket and a good way of keeping notes for the tests.)
2. Book reviews. A book critique is a 1-2 page summary of the major concepts of the book followed by 2-3 page response of your comments regarding those concepts/ideas. Your critique will be graded on your "getting" the major concepts and synthesizing them, your clearly expressing your reaction to them (pro or con), and your writing ability (does the paper "flow", absence of spelling, grammar, constriction errors, etc.).

**NOTE:** All papers and assignments are due at the beginning of each class. Late papers lose a letter grade and go to the end of the grading line. One may rewrite.

Rewrites due no later than two weeks following return of original paper. Please turn in original with rewrite.

**COURSE EVALUATION:**

Film reviews Due after each film at the next class	25%
Mid-term exam	15%
Book critiques 10% each, .	20%
Final exam -	20%
Attendance, responsible class participation, Instructor evaluation of student performance	20%
	100%

**CLASS SCHEDULE (to follow)**