

**UNITED STATES INTERNATIONAL UNIVERSITY-  
AFRICA PSY 3172 - Understanding Grief, Loss and  
Bereavement  
Course Syllabus  
Credits: 3 Units**

School of Humanities and Social Studies,

**Course Description:**

The course will provide an overview of the societal and individual norms and attitudes regarding the process of dying and subsequent bereavement process. Normal expressions of grief and experiential exercises to gain basic insight and understanding of grief will be tackled. Basic skills for supporting the bereaved will also be covered.

**Link to University Mission Outcomes & Program Learning Outcomes:**

**PLO 1**

Articulate the major concepts, theoretical perspectives, empirical findings and historical trends in psychology

**PLO 2**

Apply basic research methods in psychology including design, data analysis and interpretation

**PLO 3**

Apply critical and creative thinking, inquiry and scientific approach to problems related to behaviour and mental processes

**PLO 4**

Employ psychological principles in personal, social and organizational settings

**PLO 6**

Demonstrate effective communication and interpersonal skills in a variety of settings

**PLO 8**

Recognize, understand and respect the complexity of socio-cultural and global diversity

**PLO 9**

Apply effective strategies for self management and self improvement

**Course Outcomes**

By the end of this course, the student should be able to:

1. Understand and articulate the core issues in loss, grief & bereavement
2. Describe the biological, sociological and psychological in the area of dying, death & bereavement
3. Appreciate the diversity of individual & cultural experiences and the factors that inform our feelings & reactions to death and grieving.
4. Outline ways to assist individuals who are undergoing a time of grief & bereavement

5. Examine their own attitudes and assumptions in regards to the issues of death, as well as begin to deal with their own personal losses.

## **Course Outline**

### **Week 1**

#### **Understanding thanatology**

Defining dying, death & bereavement  
Importance of studying about death  
Approaches to the study of dying & death

*Reading: chapter 1*

### **Week 2**

#### **Perspectives on Death & Life After Death**

Cross-cultural perspectives  
Religious interpretations of Death  
Near-death experiences

*Reading: Chapter 4*

### **Week 3**

#### **Causes of Death**

Aging and Disease  
Accidents & Suicides  
Murder and War

*Reading: Chapter 9(Suicides)  
Chapter 2 – Lewis R. Aiken*

### **Week 4**

#### **Human Development and Death**

Childhood and Death  
Adolescence and Death  
Adulthood & Death

*Reading: Chapter 3*

### **Week 5**

#### **The Dying process**

Death Meanings  
Relating to the dying person  
Dying with dignity

#### **Living with Dying**

Understanding & coping with illness  
Treatment options  
Palliative care  
Hospice movement

*Reading: Chapter 5 & 6*

**Week 6**

**The process of dying**

The dying child

Relating to the dying child

Helping the child cope with dying

parents of the dying child

Siblings of the dying child

*Reading: Chapter 5*

**Week 7**

MID-SEMESTER Exam

**Week 8**

**Death-related Rituals**

Understanding death rituals

Mourning Behaviours

Customs at death

Death rituals of major religious groups

*Reading: Chapter 10*

**Week 9**

**The Business of Dying**

Preparing the dead

Funeral services

Cemeteries

Life Insurance

**The legal aspects of dying**

Death Certificate

Autopsy

Wills

*Reading: Chapter 11 & 12*

**Week 10**

**Coping with loss**

The bereavement role

The grieving process

Assisting the bereaved

Coping with violent death

*Reading: Chapter 13*

**Week 11**

## **Grieving throughout the Life Cycle**

Grieving parents & the loss of a child

Grieving children & adolescents

Grieving adults

*Reading: Chapter 14*

## **Week 12**

### **Bio-medical issues and Euthanasia**

Ethical behaviour

Use of body for medical research

Organ Transplantation

Euthanasia

*Reading: Chapter 8*

## **Week 13**

### **Wrapping it up**

Dying, Death & bereavement in 21<sup>st</sup> century

*Reading: Chapter 14*

## **Week 14**

FINAL EXAM Week

## **Course Requirements**

1. Students will meet twice a week with the lecturer on Tuesdays and Thursdays (1:20 pm – 3:00pm).
2. A maximum of 5 absences is allowed during the entire semester.
3. Students will research and hand in an individual term paper on a topic of their choice that relates to area of loss, grief & bereavement. Each topic should be approved by the lecturer, before students proceed with their research. The term paper should be 7-9 pages long, Font 12, Times New Roman and Double spaced.
4. Students will write personal reflective journals focusing on specific areas as presented by the lecturer. Reflective journals are aimed at helping students analyze their attitudes, fears and beliefs about death and the dying process.
5. Students will be divided into small groups that will be involved in research and group presentations on various areas of the course. Groups will hand compile and hand in their research work to the lecturer for marking.

**Teaching Methodology**

Lectures, Group work and presentations, Class discussions, Guest speaker etc.

**Course Text**

Leming, R. Michael & Dickinson, E. George (2007). *Understanding Dying, Death & Bereavement*. (6<sup>th</sup> Ed). Thomson Wadsworth, USA.

**Course Evaluation:**

Final Exam	30 points
Mid-Term Exam	20 points
Group presentations	10 points
Individual Term paper	15 points
Reflective Journals	15 points
Attendance and Participation	10 points

**Overall 100 points**

**Grading:**

90-100	A	64-67	D+
87-89	A-	65-66	D-
84-86	B+	61-63	D
81-83	B	Below 59	F
78-80	B-		
74-77	C+		
68-70	C-		