GROSSMONT COLLEGE

COURSE OUTLINE OF RECORD

Curriculum Committee Approval: 11/29/2022

Approved by GCCCD Governing Board: 12/13/2022

ENGLISH 219 – DEATH AND DYING IN LITERATURE

1. Course Number Course Title Semester Units

ENGL 219 Death and Dying in Literature 3

Semester Hours

3 hours lecture (48-54 total contact hours); 96-108 outside-of-class hours; 144-162 total hours

2. Course Prerequisites

None

Corequisite

None

Recommended Preparation

None

3. Catalog Description

This course invites students to examine diverse works of literature representative of attitudes toward death and dying as, both, a practical and a philosophical concern.

4. Course Objectives

The students will:

1. Identify and define perspectives of death, dying, and illness in classic and contemporary works of literature.
2. Comparatively evaluate and synthesize cultural perspectives and attitudes towards death and dying in diverse literary texts.
3. Develop a researched term project to appraise and critique literary attitudes toward death, dying, and critical illness.
4. Learn and apply basic vocabulary used within the disciplines of literature.
5. Define and employ basics of critical theory (e.g., reader-response, culturalism/historicism, feminism, new criticism, queer theory, critical disability theory) to contextualize various representations of death and dying in literary texts.

5. Instructional Facilities

Standard Classroom

6. Special Materials Required of Student

None

7. Course Content

1. Students will discuss some of the following topics:
2. Historical attitudes toward death.
3. Illness, medical disability, and death.
4. Aging and end-of-life.
5. Children and mortality.
6. Suicide.
7. Heroic death and sacrifice.
8. Immortality, illimitability, and infinity.
9. Death traditions and ceremonies.
10. Euthanasia and death with dignity.
11. Companion animals and grief.
12. Students will investigate literary settings for social, cultural, and historical influences.
13. Career connections:

Identification and connections to major or field of study, including the following:

1. Appreciation of varied perspectives on death, dying, and critical illness as expressive of humanity;
2. Consideration of the ways the course enriches a student’s experience across the curriculum;
3. Consideration of the ways the course contributes to a student’s professional development;
4. Personal understanding for the social processing of suffering, end-of-life, loss, and grief;
5. Critical thinking about, and empathy for, suffering, death, loss, and grief as a workplace or occupational experience;
6. Appreciation for movements, advocacy, and causes of concern in bioethics, palliative and end-of-life care, right-to-die, death with dignity, disability rights, medical politics, and healthcare reform.

8. Method of Instruction

1. Lecture
2. Guest speakers
3. Facilitation of student-generated discussion of literature
4. Student-led inquiry into relevant literature and theoretical frameworks via discussion groups, presentations, and other projects
5. Diverse multi-modal texts (e.g., films, graphic literature, short video content, podcasts, social media, and audio clips)
6. Peer workshops, and instructor-student conferences to help students complete assignments successfully

9. Methods of Evaluating Student Performance

Formative Assessments:

1. Source collection/research development exercises, such as annotated bibliographies.
2. Reader response/journals, such as on assigned readings and classroom discussions.
3. Quizzes, such as on assigned readings.
4. Contribution to student-generated analysis, interpretation, and discussion of literature.
5. Attendance and reflection on relevant cultural engagements (e.g., literary arts events, guest speakers, screenings, performances, field trips).

Summative Assessments:

1. Contribution in small-group activities, such as peer workshops.
2. Term projects utilizing course perspectives (e.g., evidence-based analytical essays, creative or performative presentations, professional proposals, fieldwork projects).
3. In-class essays and examinations, including final exam.

10. Outside Class Assignments

1. Read assigned texts (e.g., selected poems, short fiction, nonfiction narratives, chapters, or blogs engaged on, or related to, the theme of mortality).
2. Write reader responses and evidence-based analytical and appreciative essays.
3. Develop a term project utilizing course perspectives on death and dying in literature (e.g., a literary research paper, original art or creative writing, professional field work, technical projects of career-related interest, a personal or public legacy project).
4. Watch media that is representative or adaptive of assigned readings.
5. Maintain journals or other types of unstructured prose.
6. Attend relevant cultural and literary engagements on campus, online, and in the greater literary community.

11. Representative Texts

a. Representative Text(s):

1. Alexander, Cassandra. *Year of the Nurse: A 2020 COVID-19 Pandemic Memoir*. Caskara Press, 2021.
2. Dela Peña, Rodrigo, Jr. *A/PART: An Anthology of Queer Southeast Asian Poetry in the Pandemic*. Ed. SEAQCF, 2021.
3. Dickinson, Emily. *The Complete Poems of Emily Dickinson*. Boston, MA: Back Bay Books, 1976.
4. Edson, Margaret. *Wit: A Play*. Faber and Faber, 1999.
5. Faulkner, William. *As I Lay Dying*. Vintage, 1991.
6. Foer, Jonathan Safran. *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close*. Mariner Books, 2005.
7. Green, John. *The Fault in Our Stars*. Dutton, 2012.
8. Hecht, Jennifer Michael. *Stay: A History of Suicide and the Philosophies Against It*. Yale University Press, 2015.
9. Joyce, James. *The Dead: Case Studies in Contemporary Criticism*. Penguin/St. Martin’s, 1993.
10. Kafka, Franz. *The Metamorphosis*. Bantam Classics, 1972.
11. Kalanithi, Paul. *When Breath Becomes Air*. Random House, 2016.
12. Kushner, Tony. *Angels in America: Millennium Approaches* and *Perestroika*. ‎ Nick Hern Books, 2017.
13. Lee, Li-Young. *Book of My Nights*. BOA Editions, 2001.
14. Masters, Edgar Lee. *Spoon River Anthology*. Signet Classics, 1992.
15. Morrison, Toni. *Beloved*. Vintage, 2004.
16. Rougier, Atiba*. An Anthology of Death, Dying, and the Living*. Ed. Cognella Academic Publishing, 2019.
17. Sandars, N.K. *The Epic of Gilgamesh*. Ed. Penguin Books, 1972.
18. Sophocles. *Antigone*. Oxford University Press, 1998.
19. Soyer, Hannah. *The Ending Hasn't Happened Yet*. Ed. Sable Books, 2022.
20. Tolstoy, Leo. *The Death of Ivan Ilyich*. Signet Classics, 2003.

b. Supplementary texts and workbooks:

1. Arendt, Hannah. *The Human Condition*. University of Chicago Press, 1958.
2. Becker, Ernest. *Denial of Death*. The Free Press, 2007.
3. Becker, Ernest. *Escape from Evil*. The Free Press, 1985.
4. Kierkegaard, Soren. *Fear and Trembling* and *The Sickness unto Death*. Revised. Princeton University Press, 2013.
5. Tillich, Paul. *The Courage to Be*. China Light Industry Press, 2018.

6) Wardi, Anissa J. *Death and the Arc of Mourning in African American Literature*. University Press of Florida, 2003.

Addendum: Student Learning Outcomes

Upon completion of this course, our students will be able to do the following:

1. Use literary terminology and basic critical theory to discuss, analyze, synthesize, and interpret views of death and dying in diverse literary works.
2. Write evidence-based literary analyses of views of death and dying in literature demonstrating close reading and interpretive skills, logical reasoning, and argumentative strategies.
3. Recognize and critique cultural, social, and personal perspectives of death and dying in literature that characterize our humanity.