



FACULTY OF HUMANITIES AND SOCIAL SCIENCES

*School of Social and Cultural Studies*

## Sociology and Social Policy

# SOSC 306

## Special Topic: Sociology of Dying and Death

20 POINTS

TRIMESTER 3 2014

### Important dates

**Teaching dates:** 5 January 2015 - 13 February 2015

**Last assessment item due:** 17 February 2015

**Withdrawal dates:** Refer to [www.victoria.ac.nz/students/study/withdrawals-refunds](http://www.victoria.ac.nz/students/study/withdrawals-refunds). If you cannot complete an assignment or sit a test or examination, refer to [www.victoria.ac.nz/students/study/exams/aegrotats](http://www.victoria.ac.nz/students/study/exams/aegrotats).

## Class times and locations

**Lectures:** Monday 1.10 pm – 3.00 pm Murphy LT101  
Tuesday 9.00 am – 10.50 am Murphy LT101

**Course Coordinator** Dr Allison Kirkman  
Murphy Building, MY 1013  
Tel: 04 463 5676  
Email: [allison.kirkman@vuw.ac.nz](mailto:allison.kirkman@vuw.ac.nz)

## Communication of additional information

Any additional course information will be posted on Blackboard. You will automatically receive all Blackboard announcements as an email sent to your @myvuw.ac.nz email address. If you are not going to use this Victoria email address set up for you, we strongly encourage you to forward messages received from the Victoria email system to the email address you do use.

## Prescription

This course explores sociological perspectives on dying and death. Topics include: societal and cultural attitudes, the relationship of gender, sexuality, class, ethnicity and age, and technologies and rituals relating to dying and death. Special attention is paid to dying and death in New Zealand.

## Course learning objectives (CLOs)

This course aims to introduce you to sociological approaches to the study of dying and death.

By the end of the course students should be able to:

1. identify societal and cultural attitudes toward death and dying
2. identify sociological perspectives on death and dying
3. critically analyse the influence of gender, sexuality, class, ethnicity and age on dying and death
4. evaluate research methodologies for studying death and dying
5. apply knowledge of death and dying to New Zealand society.

## Teaching format

Lectures

While attendance at lectures is not compulsory, students are expected to regularly attend them, and will be advantaged if they do so.

## Course content

<b>Week 1</b>	<b>Introduction</b>
Monday 5 January	1. Introduction to course 2. Film: Deadly Business
Tuesday 6 January	1. How and when we die 2. A good death
<b>Week 2</b>	<b>Sudden death</b>

Monday 12 January	1. Sudden death, suicide and intentional death 2. Intensive care and death
Tuesday 13 January	1. Organ donation and transplantation 2. Life, death and a lung transplant (documentary)
<b>Week 3</b>	<b>Care while dying</b>
Monday 19 January	Public holiday – Wellington Anniversary
Tuesday 20 January	1. Researching death and dying 2. Preparing for project
<b>Week 4</b>	<b>Care while dying</b>
Monday 26 January	1. End-of-life care 2. The hospice care
Tuesday 27 January	1. Social death and dementia 2. Euthanasia -The Lesley Martin story (documentary)
<b>Week 5</b>	<b>Following death</b>
Monday 2 February	1. Managing grief and remembering 2. Only human: life after death (documentary)
Tuesday 3 February	1. Burial and cremation 2. Donated to Science (documentary)
<b>Week 6</b>	<b>Culture, ritual and memorialisation</b>
9 February	1. Funerals and memorialisation 2. Tangihanga of the Māori Queen (documentary)
10 February	1. Conclusion 2. Film - Departures

## Mandatory course requirements

In addition to achieving an overall pass mark of at least 50%, students must:

1. Submit the assignment, project and blog.

## Workload

University guidelines stipulate that a 20-point course should require 200 hours, including class time, of student work. Because this course is being taught over six weeks, students should be prepared to commit approximately 30 hours a week to the course over the six weeks. This time will be spent in attending lectures twice a week, reading in preparation for assignments, writing assignments, and undertaking some fieldwork to complete the project.

## Assessment

Assessment items and workload per item		%	CLO(s)	Due date
1	Assignment 1 (1500 words)	30	1,2,3	20 January
2	Project (2500 words)	50	1,2,3,4,5,	10 February
3	Blog (1500 words)	20	4,5	17 February

Assessment is internal and involves three pieces of work. The first is an assignment based on your own experiences, the second is a project based on your own fieldwork and the third is a blog of your reflections on your fieldwork.

### AN IMPORTANT NOTE ABOUT HUMAN ETHICS

For the three items of assessment you must not undertake any research that involves human participants, that is any interviews, surveys, questionnaires or contact with anyone who works in the area of dying and death (e.g., police, hospital workers, hospice workers, funeral industry workers) or who has experienced this personally (e.g., friends and family). For these methods, which involve human participants, you need Human Ethics Committee approval and this has not been sought for the assessment for this course. Failure to comply with this will result in a fail grade.

#### Assignment 1

**Weighting: 30%**

**Word Limit: 1500 words**

**Due: 20 January**

Identify an issue or situation that you have encountered that relates to either dying or death. This may be a personal experience or it may be something you have observed through the media. Describe the situation or issue and then analyse this example using the characteristics of what constitutes a 'good death' in New Zealand society. You should include a full bibliography with this assignment.

#### Project

**Weighting: 50%**

**Word Limit 2500 words**

**Due: 10 February**

For this project you are expected to visit a cemetery or memorial. You should analyse the cemetery from a sociological perspective (this could include analysing it from one or more of the following – gender, age, sexuality, class, status, nature or type of situation). Your final project should contain visual images from the cemetery or memorial (See information on Fieldwork on Blackboard). You can also draw on other sources, such as online data bases associated with the cemetery, newspaper articles, or any other written or electronic sources. A full bibliography should be included.

#### Blog Word

**Weighting: 20%**

**Word Limit 1500 words**

**Due: 17 February**

For your blog you are required to reflect on your experience of the fieldwork that you undertook for your project. This blog should include the following: the strengths and limitations of the nonintrusive observations you made; and ethical issues you encountered and how you resolved them; and what you might do differently if you undertook this project again

## Submission and return of work

All assessment should be submitted electronically to Turnitin and Blackboard. Information on how to do this is provided on Blackboard. The turnaround time for grading will be approximately two weeks and assessed work will be returned through Blackboard.

## Extensions and penalties

### Extensions

Assignments are due on the dates stated. If for some serious reason (e.g., illness or bereavement) you don't think you can get an essay in on time, see your course coordinator **prior** to the due date and discuss the problem.

### Penalties

Late submissions for student assignments in all Sociology and Social Policy undergraduate courses are subject to a penalty. The exact deduction will be calculated on the basis of one half mark per day late for each 10 marks, i.e. 1 mark will be deducted each day for an assignment worth 20% of the total course mark.

*Note: assessment work will not be accepted for marking more than 7 days after the due date or 7 days after an approved extension date. Work must still, however, be submitted to meet the mandatory course requirements.*

## Materials and equipment and/or additional expenses

There are no additional materials required for this course.

## Practicum/placement/field trip/internship arrangements

The fieldwork for the project will be discussed in class and information on doing fieldwork is on Blackboard.

## Set texts

There are no set texts. Required readings will be available through Blackboard.

## Recommended reading

A list of recommended additional readings related to the course and assignments will be posted on Blackboard.

## Class representative

The class representative provides a useful way to communicate feedback to the teaching staff during the course. A class representative will be selected at the first lecture of the course. Students may like to write the Class Rep's name and details in this box:

Class Rep name and contact details:
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## Student feedback

Enhancements made to this course, based on the feedback of previous students, will be covered during the course.

Student feedback on University courses may be found at [www.cad.vuw.ac.nz/feedback/feedback\\_display.php](http://www.cad.vuw.ac.nz/feedback/feedback_display.php).

## Other important information

The information above is specific to this course. There is other important information that students must familiarise themselves with, including:

- Academic Integrity and Plagiarism: [www.victoria.ac.nz/students/study/exams/integrity-plagiarism](http://www.victoria.ac.nz/students/study/exams/integrity-plagiarism)
- Aegrotats: [www.victoria.ac.nz/students/study/exams/aegrotats](http://www.victoria.ac.nz/students/study/exams/aegrotats)
- Academic Progress: [www.victoria.ac.nz/students/study/progress/academic-progress](http://www.victoria.ac.nz/students/study/progress/academic-progress) (including restrictions and non-engagement)
- Dates and deadlines: [www.victoria.ac.nz/students/study/dates](http://www.victoria.ac.nz/students/study/dates)
- FHSS Student and Academic Services Office: [www.victoria.ac.nz/fhss/student-admin](http://www.victoria.ac.nz/fhss/student-admin)
- Grades: [www.victoria.ac.nz/students/study/progress/grades](http://www.victoria.ac.nz/students/study/progress/grades)
- Resolving academic issues: [www.victoria.ac.nz/about/governance/dvc-academic/publications](http://www.victoria.ac.nz/about/governance/dvc-academic/publications)
- Special passes: [www.victoria.ac.nz/about/governance/dvc-academic/publications](http://www.victoria.ac.nz/about/governance/dvc-academic/publications)
- Statutes and policies including the Student Conduct Statute: [www.victoria.ac.nz/about/governance/strategy](http://www.victoria.ac.nz/about/governance/strategy)
- Student support: [www.victoria.ac.nz/students/support](http://www.victoria.ac.nz/students/support)
- Students with disabilities: [www.victoria.ac.nz/st\\_services/disability](http://www.victoria.ac.nz/st_services/disability)
- Student Charter: [www.victoria.ac.nz/learning-teaching/learning-partnerships/student-charter](http://www.victoria.ac.nz/learning-teaching/learning-partnerships/student-charter)
- Student Contract: [www.victoria.ac.nz/study/apply-enrol/terms-conditions/student-contract](http://www.victoria.ac.nz/study/apply-enrol/terms-conditions/student-contract)
- Subject Librarians: <http://library.victoria.ac.nz/library-v2/find-your-subject-librarian>
- Turnitin: [www.cad.vuw.ac.nz/wiki/index.php/Turnitin](http://www.cad.vuw.ac.nz/wiki/index.php/Turnitin)
- University structure: [www.victoria.ac.nz/about/governance/structure](http://www.victoria.ac.nz/about/governance/structure)
- Victoria graduate profile: [www.victoria.ac.nz/learning-teaching/learning-partnerships/graduate-profile](http://www.victoria.ac.nz/learning-teaching/learning-partnerships/graduate-profile)
- VUWSA: [www.vuwsa.org.nz](http://www.vuwsa.org.nz)

## School Contact Information

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School of Social and Cultural Studies:	<a href="http://www.victoria.ac.nz/sacs">www.victoria.ac.nz/sacs</a>