

ENGLISH COMPOSITION

Analysis, Research, and Argument on Death

Course Description

Modern life provides us with abundant food, good shelter from the elements, and health care that has extended our life expectancies well past that of our ancestors—or even our grandparents. It's no wonder then that death today has become something of a mystery for us. Yet many issues surround the topic of death: what is the physical process of death? Is there some kind of existence after death? What is the process of grieving? How have others experienced the death of a loved one? What happens to our bodies after we die? What rituals do we practice in regard to death? How is technology changing the way we experience the death of others?

For all these questions, death gives us a variety of rich opportunities for writing and research, and this course is designed to help students read, think, and compose with these questions in mind. Students in this course will examine not only their own beliefs about death, but also how our society views death. Students will analyze written and visual texts (including essays, memoirs, scholarly works, and documentaries); research death-related issues of their choosing; as well as research arguments based on class discussions, readings, and collaborative work.

This course is part of a student's undergraduate education where he or she is provided with the intellectual background and basic skills for writing that make up an educated person. An interdisciplinary topic such as death works well for this course since the knowledge and skills gained in English composition translate across all disciplines within the university, as well as the professional world. English composition helps foster the intellectual curiosity and continued commitment to scholarship that are the hallmarks of an educated citizen in our pluralistic society.

Required Texts

- *Death*. Rachele M. Smith, ed. Southlake, TX: Fountainhead Press, 2012.
- A rhetoric (addressing research, argument, and analysis) of the instructor's choosing.
- One notebook with lined, perforated pages to serve as class journal.

COURSE GOALS

This course is designed to help students gain proficiency in the basics of oral and written communication, especially for academic purposes. The course provides students with instruction in the basic concepts and principals of argumentation and research (broadly defined). Students also practice the basics of MLA documentation. Assignments include graded essays, journal entries, and a variety of non-graded assignments, such as rough drafts, peer response, and in-class writing.

Learning Outcomes

By the end of the course students will be better able to:

- define and discuss issues related to death;
- analyze a text for its rhetorical context;
- focus on a purpose;
- use writing, reading, and speaking for inquiry and communication;
- integrate their own ideas with others;
- respond to the needs of different audiences;
- develop flexible strategies for generating, revising, editing, and proofreading;
- and develop knowledge of genre conventions ranging from structure and paragraphing, to tone and mechanics.

EVALUATION

There will be five major writing assignments, a journal which records minor writing assignments, as well as activities both in and out of class.. These assignments account for 95% of the final grade. The remaining 5% of the final grade is based on attendance and participation in the class, including participation in class discussions, group work, and peer responses to rough drafts of major assignments:

Writing a Memoir about Death	10%
Taking a Stand Regarding Death	20%
Analyzing the Rhetoric of Sympathy Cards	20%
Researching a Topic on Death and Dying	25%
Writing a Eulogy	10%
Journal	10%
Attendance and Participation	<u>5%</u>
	100%

Since this course is based upon the workshop model for writing instruction, the journal grade enables students to get credit for non-graded yet essential activities. For example, throughout the semester, students will be asked to respond in their journal to the “Explore,” “Invent,” “Collaborate,” and “Compose” prompts in *Death*. These short assignments will help build the skills needed for the semester’s more comprehensive writing and research projects.

SCHEDULE OF READINGS AND ASSIGNMENTS

Introduction: Why Study Death?

Week 1

Readings:

“Introduction“ (pgs ?);
“All the Dead are Vampires” (pgs ?);
Overview of argument from rhetoric textbook.

Assignments Due:

Explore assignment for the song lyrics found in the “Introduction” (pg ?).
Compose assignment for “All the Dead are Vampires” (pg ?).

Week 2

Readings:

“On the Fear of Death” (pgs ?);
“The Truth about Grief” (pgs ?);
Chapter on analyzing arguments from rhetoric textbook.

Assignments Due:

Collaborate and Compose assignment for “On the Fear of Death” (pg ?).
Explore assignment for “The Truth about Grief” (pg ?).

Part One: Death and Memoir

Week 3

Readings:

Excerpt from *Tuesdays with Morrie* (pgs ?);
Excerpt from *The Year of Magical Thinking* (pgs ?).

Assignments Due:

Invent and Explore assignments for *Tuesdays with Morrie* (pgs ?)
Invent and Compose assignments for *The Year of Magical Thinking* (pgs ?)

Week 4

Readings:

“Things that Went Bump in the Night: A Grieving Mother Hangs on for a Haunting” (pg ?);

“Once More to the Lake” (pgs ?);

Assignments Due:

Compose and Collaborate assignments for “Things that Went Bump in the Night.”

Explore and Compose assignments for “Once More to the Lake.”

Week 5

Readings:

“Death of the Moth” (pgs ?);

“Death of a Moth” (pgs ?).

Assignments Due:

Invent and Compose assignments for “Death of the Moth” and Death of a Moth.”

Peer response to fellow student’s draft of **Writing a Memoir about Death**.

Final draft of **Writing a Memoir about Death** assignment.

Part Two: Death and Argument

Week 6

Readings:

Excerpt from *Dead Man Walking* (pgs ?);

“The Transformation of Silence into Language” (pgs ?);

Chapter on rhetorical analysis from rhetoric textbook.

Assignments Due:

Collaborate and Explore assignments for *Dead Man Walking* (pgs ?).

Rhetorical Analysis of “The Transformation of Silence into Language” (pgs. ?).

Week 7

Readings:

Excerpt from *The American Way of Death* (pgs ?);

“Lost to AIDS, but Still Friendled” (pgs ?);

Chapter on writing arguments from rhetoric textbook.

Assignments Due:

Compose assignment for *The American Way of Death* (pgs ?).

Invent assignment for “Lost to AIDS, but Still Friendled” (pgs ?)

Week 8

Readings:

“As Facebook Users Die, Ghosts Reach Out” (pgs ?);

“How Grim is my Valley” (pgs ?);

Assignments Due:

Invent assignment for “As Facebook Users Die, Ghosts Reach Out” (pgs. ?).

Invent and Explore assignments for “How Grim is my Valley” (pgs ?).

Peer response to fellow student’s draft of **Taking a Stand Regarding Death**.

Final draft of **Taking a Stand Regarding Death** assignment.

Part Three: Death and Visual Rhetoric

Week 9

Readings:

“What do You Hope Happens when You Die?” (pgs?)

Excerpt from *Death Note* (pgs ?);

Chapter on visual argument from rhetoric textbook.

Assignments Due:

Invent assignment for “What do You Hope Happens when You Die?” (pg ?).

Collaborate and Compose assignments for *Death Note* (pgs ?).

In-class exercises analyzing non-print texts.

Week 10

Readings:

Hallmark website: www.hallmark.com

American Greetings website: www.americangreetings.com

Blue Mountain website: www.bluemountain.com

Assignments Due:

Invention exercises for assignment on analyzing the rhetoric of greeting cards.

Peer response to fellow student’s draft of **Analyzing the Rhetoric of Sympathy Cards**.

Final draft of **Analyzing the Rhetoric of Sympathy Cards** assignment.

Part Four: Death and Research

Week 11:

Readings:

Chapter on finding sources and conducting research in rhetoric textbook.

Sample student research paper.

Assignments Due:

Topic invention exercise.

MLA citations exercise.

Week 12:

Students will have the week off from class to conduct research (including interviews, observations, and surveys) and to meet with the instructor about the researched arguments in progress.

Week 13:

Readings:

Chapter on incorporating research in rhetoric textbook.

Assignments Due:

In-class exercises on incorporating research.

Peer response to fellow student's draft of **Researching a Topic on Death and Dying**.

Final draft of **Researching a Topic on Death and Dying**.

Part Five: Death and Remembering the Dead

Week 14

Readings:

"Portrait of Mary White" (pgs ?);

Eulogies for Ronald Reagan, Rosa Parks, and Whitney Houston (pgs ?)

Chapter on creative non-fiction in rhetoric book.

Assignments Due:

Invent assignment for "Portrait of Mary White" (pgs ?);

Invent and **Compose** assignments for the Reagan, Parks, and Houston eulogies (pgs ?)

Week 15

Assignments Due:

Peer response to fellow student's draft of **Writing a Eulogy** assignment.

Final draft of **Writing a Eulogy** assignment.

