Death is the one event we will all encounter. It is, thus, a universal component of human experience. Beyond this certainty, few people give much thought to death, especially their own. All of us have been touched by death during our lives, even if only at a distance. It may be as close to us as the death of a loved one, a friend, an acquaintance or a pet, or as removed from us as the death of a famous individual (Princess Diana, Julia Child, or Ronald Regan) or the recent tragedy of the tsunami that has devastated countries and families across South Asia. The study of death is not just a personal journey; death and dying take place in the larger contexts of family, medical practice, society at large, and our legal and moral communities. My hope is that this course will enrich students’ abilities to speak sensitively and intelligently about this topic by honing their critical thinking about the nature of the human condition and the societal issues which arise in the life-death cycle.

Required Texts:
Leo Tolstoy  The Death of Ivan Illyich
Simone de Beauvoir A Very Easy Death
Susan Sontag Illness as Metaphor and AIDS as Metaphor
Ethical Issues in Death and Dying ed. Beauchamp and Veatch [EIDD]
Electronic reserve and web-based readings as indicated in the schedule of reading below

Optional Texts: ONE of the following texts to be read in a “book group” format:
Mitch Albom, Tuesdays With Morrie
Jean Amery, At the Mind’s Limit: Reflections of a Survivor on the Holocaust and its Realities
Helen Prejean, Dead Man Walking
Mary Roach, Stiff: The Curious Lives of Human Cadavers
David Skal, Death Makes a Holiday: A Cultural History of Halloween

Marking:
50% participation (reading quizzes; in-class activities; completion of service learning; active participation in book group)
50% portfolio (three short thought pieces; reflective essay on service learning; book review on book group book)

A  93-100%   A-  90-92%   B+  88-89%   B  83-87%   B-  80-82%
C+  78-79%   C  73-77%   C-  70-72%   D+  68-69%   D  63-67%   D-  60-62%
F below 60%

Regular attendance is expected, and active and informed participation can only help one’s grade.
N.B. Students are expected to turn in only their original work and to properly cite the use of others’ ideas and writings. See the Gustavus Adolphus College Honor Code.
The Details:

1. **Reading quizzes**: There is a substantial reading load in this course; as a way of measuring comprehension and ensuring preparedness, there will be daily reading quizzes. They will generally consist of one or two brief questions at the start of class designed to measure your grasp of a key concept or claim in the reading for that day of class. (5 points each for 100 total points)

2. **In-class activities**: A variety of in-class activities will occur throughout the course. We will take a mandatory field trip to tour several cemeteries during the second week of class (20 points). There will be a debate on the death penalty in the third week of class (worth 10 points). During our discussion of ethical issues, students will do role-playing exercises on topics handed out in class (each will be worth 10 points).

3. **Service Learning**: Students will have the opportunity to work with a community service project. More details will follow, but you will be spending time hanging out with seniors at the Saint Peter Senior Center on several occasions (30 points toward participation for completion). As part of the portfolio, students must write a reflective essay based on their experiences, due on the last day of class (40 points for portfolio).

4. **Book Group**: Each student will select one of the five optional books above to read and discuss in a book group format outside of class time (20 points toward participation) I recommend that the groups meet at the end of the third week of class or the beginning of the fourth week of class. As a follow up to the book group, each student should write a brief (no longer than 2 pages) book review of their book, to be turned in on the last day of class (40 points toward portfolio grade). Book review guidelines will be posted on the website.

5. **Thought pieces**: There will be three short essays (about 5 pages each) based on questions provided at the end of each of the first three weeks of the course. No outside reading is required, though students may engage in additional reading or research to supplement the course readings as they reflect upon the question provided. Proper citation of all material considered in these essays is required (including materials from the course). (40 points *each* toward portfolio grade)

**Miscellany:**

It is the student’s responsibility to contact me regarding any absences. Make-up work is not always a possibility, but I will work with students who have excused absences to cover any and all material missed.

It is crucial to the success of the course that everyone do all the readings assigned. This course is premised on your active, informed participation. I recognize that some of the material we will cover is highly sensitive and can be deeply moving and difficult to deal with at times. If, for any reason, you are uncomfortable with something covered in the course, please see me at once to discuss the situation.

I foster an open environment for learning in my classroom. Such an environment demands mutual respect. Cell phones, pagers, and so on, should be turned off during our class sessions. You should not be on call or scheduled to work during class hours. And so on… you know what I’m talking about. Thank you!
**Schedule of Lecture/Discussion Topics, Readings** (subject to change):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Readings/Assignments</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Jan. 3 (m)</td>
<td>Representations, impressions and facts about death and dying; view Moyers, <em>On Our Own Terms</em>; introduction to course</td>
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<tr>
<td>Jan. 4 (t)</td>
<td>Death of Ivan Illyich</td>
<td>Tolstoy (entire novella)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Jan. 5 (w)</td>
<td>Human mortality</td>
<td>Unamuno (e-reserves), Jonas (e-reserves)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Jan. 6 (th)</td>
<td>defining “quality of life”</td>
<td>Scientific American readings (see webpage)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>⇒ Students will sign-up for service learning assignments</td>
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<tr>
<td>Jan. 7 (f)</td>
<td><em>A Very Easy Death</em></td>
<td>de Beauvoir (entire book)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Jan. 10 (m)</td>
<td>Suffering</td>
<td>Book of Job (on own); Leaman (e-reserves); Kalupahana (e-reserves)</td>
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<td></td>
<td><strong>FIRST THOUGHT PIECE DUE</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Jan. 11 (t)</td>
<td>Immortality, the soul, and the question of life after death</td>
<td>Plato’s Phaedo (website); Tibetan Book of the Dead (e-reserves)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Jan. 12 (w)</td>
<td>Grief and Loss</td>
<td>Frost’s “Home Burial” (website); C.S. Lewis (e-reserves)</td>
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<td>⇒ We will have a panel of guests attending class to discuss the topics of grief and loss in a cross-cultural context.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Jan. 13 (th)</td>
<td>Memorials and Monuments: remembering our dead</td>
<td>Economist (website); Ivy (website); Welford (e-reserves)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Jan. 14 (f)</td>
<td>Burying our dead</td>
<td>FIELD TRIP; optional: Francaviglia (e-reserves)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>⇒ We will be traveling to Minneapolis to tour several cemeteries. This field trip will extend beyond our regular class hours. Please plan accordingly and reserve the time between 9 am and 4pm for this activity.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

**Section 1: existentialism and philosophical issues in death and dying**

**Section 2: traditions and cultural understandings of life and death**
Section 3: social issues in death and dying

Jan. 17 (m) Metaphors and social meanings Sontag, “Illness as Metaphor”

SECOND THOUGHT PIECE DUE

Jan. 18 (t) “The moral of the story”: Children and Death Nagy (e-reserves); Lamers (e-reserves)
⇒ We will be visiting the St. Peter Public Library in the second hour of class to meet with the Children’s Librarian.

Jan. 19 (w) Social responsibility and Justice: Terrorism, Genocide and War Baum (e-reserves); Connell (e-reserves)

Jan. 20 (th) Social responsibility and Justice: The AIDS pandemic UN Report (website)

Jan. 21 (f) Social responsibility and Justice: The Death Penalty MacKinnon (e-reserves); research various positions on websites
⇒ Students should be prepared to defend either a pro-death penalty position or an anti-death penalty position when they arrive in class. So be prepared for BOTH! Upon arrival in class, students will be assigned a position to argue.

Section 4: medical and ethical issues in death, dying and the quality of life

Jan. 24 (m) definitions of death EIDD, ch. 1

THIRD THOUGHT PIECE DUE

Jan. 25 (t) euthanasia; the living will/advance directives EIDD, ch. 4 and 5, selections

Jan. 26 (w) decisions to forgo treatment EIDD, ch. 6 and 7, selections
⇒ Students will work on role-plays in class

Jan. 27 (th) care for the terminally ill EIDD, ch. 8 and 9, selections
⇒ Students will work on role-plays in class

Jan. 28 (f) What is a “good death?” What is a “good life?” hospice website: www.hospicefoundation.org
⇒ I am working to arrange a visit by someone associated with Hospice for this class session; the second half of class will be a discussion to wrap-up your service learning activities.

SERVICE LEARNING ESSAYS AND BOOK REVIEWS DUE