

ENC 1145 Writing About Death

Class number: 11869 (Section 35G3)

Class meeting time: M, W, F | Period 6 (12:50 PM - 1:40 PM)

Location: MAT 0009

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Course Description

Death is often seen as the inevitable conclusion to human existence—something that affects everyone, regardless of who they are. Yet, the circumstances of how, when, and why one dies remain deeply contested. This course challenges the normative idea that death is purely natural by exploring the social, political, and ethical forces that shape literary representations of death and dying.

We will begin with philosophical and religious discussions on death, examining the relationship between life and death. Some of the guiding questions are: What is death? Is death something to fear or celebrate? What, if anything, comes after death? From there, we will explore the interplay between death and “lives” in their multitudes, as portrayed in literature. Reflecting on questions such as “whose lives are valued and worth saving?” and “whose lives are precarious and easily disposed of without being considered murder?”, we will critically unpack how certain populations are rendered more vulnerable and how societal structures influence the value placed on different lives. Simultaneously, we will explore how authors push back against cultural assumptions about death, challenging and reshaping death narratives through their works.

Through the exploration of literary representations related to death, this course also facilitates students to improve their compositional skills- rhetorical analysis, addressing the politics of death, finding creative ways to formulate narratives- in short, using writing as a tool for scholarly, creative and ethical communication about mortality. Students will learn how to closely read texts, critically engage with the weekly materials, and develop sound argumentative skills in their writing. In addition to traditional academic writing assignments, students will create multimodal projects, such as "A Portrait of Death," that reflect their understanding of course content and their evolving perspectives on death. Through such assignments, students will engage deeply with the theme of the course, fostering both analytical thinking and creative expression.

General Education Objectives

- This course confers General Education credit for either Composition (C) or Humanities (H). This course also fulfills 6,000 of the university’s 24,000- word writing requirement (WR).
- Composition courses provide instruction in the methods and conventions of standard written English (grammar, punctuation, usage), as well as the techniques that produce effective texts. Composition courses are writing intensive.
- Course content should include multiple forms of effective writing, different writing styles, approaches and formats, and methods to adapt writing to different audiences, purposes and contexts. Students should learn to organize complex arguments in writing using thesis statements, claims and evidence, and to analyze writing for errors in logic.

- The University Writing Requirement (WR) ensures students both maintain their fluency in writing and use writing as a tool to facilitate learning. To receive Writing Requirement credit, a student must receive a grade of C or higher and a satisfactory completion of the writing component of the course. This means that written assignments must meet minimum word requirements totaling 6000 words.
- Apply research and use writing to achieve a variety of purposes in a variety of disciplinary contexts.
- Demonstrate accurate and responsible cite and incorporate primary and secondary materials.
- Participate in groups with emphasis on listening, critical and reflective thinking, and responding to group members' writing and ideas.
- Present an effective academic writing style.

General Education Learning Outcomes

At the end of this course, students will be expected to have achieved the following learning outcomes in content, communication and critical thinking:

- **Content:** Students demonstrate competence in the terminology, concepts, theories and methodologies used within the academic discipline.
- **Communication:** Students communicate knowledge, ideas and reasoning clearly and effectively in written and oral forms appropriate to the discipline. Students will participate in class discussions throughout the semester to reflect on assigned readings.
- **Critical Thinking:** Students analyze information carefully and logically from multiple perspectives, using discipline-specific methods, and develop reasoned solutions to problems.

Reading Lists

Picturebook:

Duck, Death and the Tulip by Wolf Erlbruch (2007)

ISBN: 978-1877467141

A Stone for Sascha by Aaron Becker (2018)

ISBN: 978-0763665968

The Last Zookeeper by Aaron Becker (2024)

ISBN: 978-1536227680

Film:

Bontoc Eulogy by Marlon Fuentes (1995)

Princess Mononoke by Hayao Miyazaki (1997)

Full-length novel:

The Hate U Give by Angie Thomas (2017)

ISBN: 978-0062498533

[I would recommend that everyone gets a physical copy if your budget allows.]

Short story:

“The Last Night of the World” by Ray Bradbury (1951)

“An Occurrence at Owl Creek Bridge” by Ambrose Bierce (1890)

“The Lottery” by Shirley Jackson (1948)

“The Paper Menagerie” by Ken Liu (2011)

“Venice Drowned” by Kim Stanley Robinson (1981)

*All of the required short stories will be made available through Canvas.

Assignment Descriptions (Total Points Possible: 1000)

100 points - Active Participation/Attendance

Attendance and participation in discussion and group activities are vital to success in this course. Students will be required to work in small groups, participate in class discussion, conduct writing workshops, class activities, homework and complete peer reviews. Students are expected to be prepared for activities on readings. Students must be present for all in-class activities in order to receive credit. In-class activities cannot be made up.

You will be required to generate at least one question, comment, observation, or criticism of the assigned reading and share it with the class during discussion. Failure to participate in class discussion will result in a reduction of your participation grade. Students are required to bring a copy of the assigned text to class. Failure to bring a copy of the assigned reading will also result in a reduction of your participation grade. Many of the assigned texts are made available to you on Canvas.

All students should participate in each class session in some manner by offering points of view, raising questions, asking for clarification, participating in group activities, and/or writing when it is required. If you have concerns with public speaking, please see me for alternative activities to meet participation requirements. These can include submitting observations, questions, or discussion topics prior to class.

50 points – Your Understanding of Death (500 words)

Reflect on your beliefs, assumptions, and feelings about death. Consider any personal, cultural, or philosophical influences that have shaped your understanding. This reflection will serve as a foundation to revisit later in the course.

50 points – Your Eulogy (500 words)

This assignment encourages you to reflect on the legacy, values, and impact you wish to leave behind. By writing your own eulogy, you'll explore the qualities, achievements, and personal growth you aspire to. This exercise is both introspective and goal-setting, allowing you to envision the life you hope to lead.

30 points each, 150 points total - Reading Response (300 words each; 5 total)

You can choose from

1. **Critical Reading Reflection:** A critical reading reflection attempts to tackle a “big idea” or theme of the text and connect it to a wider context. While you should remain close to the text and cite specific textual evidence, these reflections can be more personal and casual than other written assignments. A text may remind you of something else you've read or seen, something you've experienced, etc., and you are welcome to talk about those things in these responses.
2. **Creative Imagined Eulogy:** Write an imagined eulogy for a character within the text, focusing on how the text presents their life, death, and legacy. The eulogy should offer insights into how the character's life and death are portrayed and valued (or undervalued) within the narrative.

50 points - (Artistic Statement for) “A Portrait of Death” (500 words)

Write a statement to accompany your “Portrait of Death” artistic project, explaining the artistic choices made and their intended impact. Address the symbolic elements, the medium chosen, and how these convey your interpretation of mortality as explored in the course. Reflect on the project's significance, highlighting connections to your evolving perspective on death.

200 points - Close Reading Analysis (800 words)

This paper will be a close reading (without any outside sources or research) of any one text on our syllabus that we have previously covered in class. These papers must be thesis driven and focus on critically examining one passage, symbol, theme, etc., of the text.

50 points - Paper Proposal (300 words)

Leading up to your final paper, you will informally “pitch” your paper topic to the class. With one page (300 words) of notes, you will have three minutes to talk through your ideas in a supportive environment and field 1-2 questions from your peers.

50 points - Annotated Bibliography (400 words)

In preparation for your final paper, you will research and submit your intended secondary sources in MLA style and include a short summary and analysis of the source as it pertains to your research and primary text. The required word count will be fulfilled by your summary and analysis of each source.

300 points - Researched Critical Analysis Paper (1,500 words)

Develop a well-researched, original argument about a text or theme from the course, examining how it engages with the social, emotional, political, or ethical dimensions of death. Draw on close reading, secondary sources, and class discussions to support your analysis. Your paper should contribute to the conversation around death by critically engaging with a specific aspect of how it is represented or valued in literature.

Grading Rubric

A	100-93	C (S)	76-73
A-	92-90	C- (U)	72-70
B+	89-87	D+	69-67
B	86-83	D	66-63
B-	82-80	D-	62-60
C+	79-77	E	59-0

Note: A minimum grade of C is required for general education credit.

*Information on current UF grading policies for assigning grade points, see [University grades and grading policies](#).

Grading Method

I will evaluate and provide feedback on all of the student's written assignments with respect to grammar, punctuation, clarity, coherence, and organization; for more information, please go to the university's [Writing Studio](#);

The **Modern Language Association** (MLA) Handbook is our recommended style manual. You may also consult the [Purdue OWL website](#).

Each assignment has its own requirements, but for each paper I will evaluate:

1. Content, including argument, development, and support
2. Organization, including paragraph structure, overall flow of ideas, transitions
3. Mechanics, including grammar, spelling, and style.

Grading Rubric for Critical Analysis Paper

Criteria	Excellent (A)	Good (B)	Satisfactory (C)	Needs Improvement (D/F)	Points

Thesis & Argument (60 pts)	Clear, original, and insightful thesis; sophisticated and well-defined argument. (54-60 pts)	Strong thesis; coherent argument with some insightful moments. (48-53 pts)	Thesis is present but vague; underdeveloped or inconsistent argument. (42-47 pts)	Unclear or missing thesis; weak argument lacking development. (0-41 pts)	
Close Reading (60 pts)	Detailed, insightful close readings; deep understanding of text's meaning. (54-60 pts)	Strong close reading with relevant evidence; good understanding of the text. (48-53 pts)	Some close reading; surface-level analysis or relies on summary. (42-47 pts)	Minimal or no close reading; superficial analysis. (0-41 pts)	
Use of Scholarly Sources (60 pts)	Thoughtful incorporation of sources; critical engagement enhancing the argument. (54-60 pts)	Effective incorporation of sources; may not be fully integrated. (48-53 pts)	Uses sources with weak connections to the argument; limited engagement. (42-47 pts)	Minimal or irrelevant use of sources; misused or absent. (0-41 pts)	
Structure & Organization (50 pts)	Well-organized with logical flow; smooth transitions and clear support of thesis. (46-50 pts)	Generally well-organized; some weak transitions and paragraphs. (41-45 pts)	Some organizational issues; unclear transitions or support. (36-40 pts)	Disorganized with weak transitions; disconnected paragraphs. (0-35 pts)	
Writing Style & Clarity (40 pts)	Clear, concise, and engaging writing; few grammatical errors. (36-40 pts)	Generally clear writing with minor issues; some variety in sentence structure. (32-35 pts)	Understandable writing but frequent grammatical issues; awkward phrasing. (28-31 pts)	Unclear writing with frequent errors; difficult to read. (0-27 pts)	
Mechanics & Formatting (30 pts)	Virtually no errors. Follows all guidelines. (26-30 pts)	Minor errors, follows most guidelines. (23-25 pts)	Some errors, distracting, fails some guidelines. (20-22 pts)	Frequent errors, fails major guidelines. (0-19 pts)	
Total					300

Makeup Policy

Except in the case of certified illness or other UF accepted excuse, there will be no make-up option for missed exams or late assignments. Where possible, make-ups should be arranged by email or in person prior to the expected absence. In case of illness, student should contact instructor on his or her return to classes.

Late Policy

Class roll will be called at the beginning of class. Frequent lateness distracts other students and the instructor and will affect the student's final participation grade. Grade deductions are determined by the instructor at the end of the semester.

Late Papers/Assignments

Unexcused late papers will not be accepted. Failure of technology is not an excuse.

Assignments that are submitted late will lose **10%** off their final grade for each day that they are late. After three days, I will not accept late assignments. Any assignments that require peer interaction (i.e. discussion post responses) may not be submitted late.

In-Class Recording

Students are allowed to record video or audio of class lectures. However, the purposes for which these recordings may be used are strictly controlled. The only allowable purposes are (1) for personal education use, (2) in connection with a complaint to the university, or (3) as evidence in, or in preparation for, a criminal or civil proceeding. All other purposes are prohibited. Specifically, students may not publish recorded lectures without the written consent of the instructor.

A "class lecture" is an educational presentation intended to inform or teach enrolled students about a particular subject, including any instructor-led discussions that form part of the presentation, and delivered by an instructor hired or appointed by the University, or by a guest instructor, as part of a University of Florida course. A class lecture does not include lab sessions, student presentations, clinical presentation such as patient history, academic exercises involving solely student participation, assessments (quizzes, tests, exams), field trips, private conversations between students in the class or between a student and the faculty or guest lecturer during a class session.

Publication without permission of the instructor is prohibited. To "publish" means to share, transmit, circulate, distribute, or provide access to a recording, regardless of format or medium, to another person (or persons), including but not limited to another student within the same class section. Additionally, a recording, or transcript of a recording, is considered published if it is posted on or uploaded to, in whole or in part, any media platform, including but not limited to social media, book, magazine, newspaper, leaflet, or third-party note/tutoring services. A student who publishes a recording without written consent may be subject to a civil cause of action instituted by a person injured by the publication and/or discipline under UF Regulation 4.040 Student Honor Code and Student Conduct Code.

UF's policy on Sexual Harassment

The University of Florida is committed to providing a safe educational, working, and residential environment that is free from sexual harassment or misconduct directed towards any and all members of the community: <https://titleix.ufl.edu/about/title-ix-rights/>.

Academic Honesty

UF students are bound by The Honor Pledge which states “We, the members of the University of Florida community, pledge to hold ourselves and our peers to the highest standards of honor and integrity by abiding by the Honor Code. On all work submitted for credit by students at the University of Florida, the following pledge is either required or implied: “On my honor, I have neither given nor received unauthorized aid in doing this assignment.” The Conduct Code specifies a number of behaviors that are in violation of this code and the possible sanctions. [See the UF Conduct Code website for more information](#). If you have any questions or concerns, please consult with the instructor or TAs in this class.

Accommodations for Students with Disabilities

Students with disabilities who experience learning barriers and would like to request academic accommodations should connect with the Disability Resource Center. [See the “Get Started With the DRC” webpage on the Disability Resource Center site](#). It is important for students to share their accommodation letter with their instructor and discuss their access needs, as early as possible in the semester.

Grade Appeals

In 1000- and 2000-level courses, students may appeal a final course grade by filling out a form available from Carla Blount, Program Assistant, in the Department office (4008 TUR). Please contact Ms. Blount at cblount@ufl.edu Grade appeals may result in a higher, unchanged, or lower final grade.

Environmental Sustainability

Whenever possible, I will use paper-sparing electronic media to distribute our course materials. Consider purchasing electronic editions of assigned texts when they are available or used copies of print texts. If you do not elect to keep your print books, consider sharing them with others after the semester ends. (For example, you could donate them to the Alachua County Friends of the Library annual book sale.)

Online Course Evaluation

Students are expected to provide professional and respectful feedback on the quality of instruction in this course by completing course evaluations online via GatorEvals. Guidance on how to give feedback in a professional and respectful manner is available at <https://gatorevals.aa.ufl.edu/students/>. Students will be notified when the evaluation period opens, and can complete evaluations through the email they receive from GatorEvals, in their Canvas course menu under 1 GatorEvals, or via <https://ufl.bluera.com/ufl/>. Summaries of course evaluation results are available to students at <https://gatorevals.aa.ufl.edu/public-results/>.

Campus Resources

Health and Wellness

- *U Matter, We Care*: If you or someone you know is in distress, please contact umatter@ufl.edu,

352-392-1575, or visit [U Matter, We Care website](#) to refer or report a concern and a team member will reach out to the student in distress.

- *Counseling and Wellness Center*: [Visit the Counseling and Wellness Center website](#) or call 352-392-1575 for information on crisis services as well as non-crisis services.
 - *Student Health Care Center*: Call 352-392-1161 for 24/7 information to help you find the care you need, or [visit the Student Health Care Center website](#).
 - *University Police Department*: [Visit UF Police Department website](#) or call 352-392-1111 (or 9-1-1 for emergencies).
 - *UF Health Shands Emergency Room / Trauma Center*: For immediate medical care call 352-733-0111 or go to the emergency room at 1515 SW Archer Road, Gainesville, FL 32608; [Visit the UF Health Emergency Room and Trauma Center website](#).
 - *GatorWell Health Promotion Services*: For prevention services focused on optimal wellbeing, including Wellness Coaching for Academic Success, [visit the GatorWell website](#) or call 352-2734450.
- Academic Resources
- E-learning technical support: Contact the [UF Computing Help Desk](#) at 352-392-4357 or via e-mail at helpdesk@ufl.edu.
 - [Career Connections Center](#): Reitz Union Suite 1300, 352-3921601. Career assistance and counseling services.
 - [Library Support](#): Various ways to receive assistance with respect to using the libraries or finding resources. Call 866-281-6309 or email ask@ufl.libanswers.com for more information.
 - [Teaching Center](#): 1317 Turlington Hall, 352-392-2010 or to make an appointment 352- 392-6420. General study skills and tutoring.
 - [Writing Studio](#): Daytime (9:30am-3:30pm): 2215 Turlington Hall, 352-846-1138 | Evening (5:00pm-7:00pm): 1545 W University Avenue (Library West, Rm. 339). Help brainstorming, formatting, and writing papers.
 - Academic Complaints: Office of the Ombuds; [Visit the Complaint Portal webpage for more information](#).
 - Enrollment Management Complaints (Registrar, Financial Aid, Admissions): [View the Student Complaint Procedure webpage for more information](#).

Class Schedule

This schedule is only a guide and is subject to change. Unless otherwise indicated, assignments and readings are due the day they are listed on the syllabus, not the following day. Deadlines will be posted on Canvas. Late work will not be accepted. Failure of technology is not an excuse.

	Reading and/or course content	Assignment
W1	Laying the Foundation: What is Death and Why Death?	
1/13 M	Introduction to the Course	
1/15 W	Watch What is the Meaning of Death? before class	
1/17 F	Watch Rethinking Death: Exploring What Happens When We Die before class	
W2	Personal Contemplations on Death	
1/20 M	Holiday – No Class	
1/22 W	Watch Father and Daughter by Michaël Dudok de Wit (2000) together in class	
1/24 F	Read “ The Last Night of the World ” by Ray Bradbury (1951) before class	Prior understanding of death (500 words) due by Friday midnight
W3	Eulogy as Resistance and Reclamation	
1/27 M	What is a Eulogy? 1. Read Eulogy for Rosa Parks by Oprah Winfrey 2. Watch <i>Bontoc Eulogy</i> by Marlon Fuentes (1995) Accessible through UFLib	
1/29 W	Eulogy, For the Collective Loss <i>Bontoc Eulogy</i> by Marlon Fuentes (1995)	
1/31 F	Eulogy Writing Workshop	Eulogy (500 words) due by Friday midnight
W4	Facing Your Own Death	
2/3 M	“ An Occurrence at Owl Creek Bridge ” by Ambrose Bierce (1890)	Reading response #1 (300 words) due at 10 AM, Monday
2/5 W	“An Occurrence at Owl Creek Bridge” by Ambrose Bierce (1890)	
2/7 F	[Picturebook] <i>Duck, Death and the Tulip</i> by Wolf Erlbruch (2007)	
W5	The Lottery of Life & The Randomness of Death	
2/10 M	“ The Lottery ” by Shirley Jackson (1948)	Reading response #2 (300 words) due at 10 AM, Monday
2/12 W	“The Lottery” by Shirley Jackson (1948)	
2/14 F	Close Reading Workshop	
W6	Navigating Grief in Diverse Worlds	

2/17 M	“The Paper Menagerie” by Ken Liu (2011)	Reading response #3.1 (150 words) due at 10 AM, Monday
2/19 W	“The Paper Menagerie” by Ken Liu (2011)	
2/21 F	<i>The Hate U Give</i> by Angie Thomas (2017)	
W7	Navigating Grief in Diverse Worlds	
2/24 M	<i>The Hate U Give</i> by Angie Thomas (2017)	Reading response #3.2 (150 words) due at 10 AM, Monday
2/26 W	<i>The Hate U Give</i> by Angie Thomas (2017)	
2/28 F	Writing Session – No Class	Close reading paper due by the weekend
W8	Nature in Crisis: Dying Landscapes	
3/3 M	[Picturebook] <i>The Last Zookeeper</i> by Aaron Becker (2024)	
3/5 W	Watch Princess Mononoke by Hayao Miyazaki (1997)	Reading response #4 (300 words) due at 10 AM, Wednesday
3/7 F	Watch <i>Princess Mononoke</i> by Hayao Miyazaki (1997)	
W9	Nature in Crisis: Dying Landscapes	
3/10 M	“Venice Drowned” by Kim Stanley Robinson (1981)	Reading response #5 (300 words) due at 10 AM, Monday
3/12 W	“Venice Drowned” by Kim Stanley Robinson (1981)	
3/14 F	Writing Session – No Class	
W10 – Spring Break – Holiday – No Class		
W11	Preparing for Your Final Paper	
3/24 M	Critical Analysis Paper Workshop	
3/26 W	Paper Proposal Workshop	
3/28 F	Proposal Pitch & Feedback Session	Paper Proposal due at 10 AM, Friday
W12	“Finding Sources” Workshop Series	
3/31 M	Annotated Bibliography Workshop	
4/2 W	[Picturebook] <i>A Stone for Sascha</i> by Aaron Becker (2018)	
4/4 F	Writing Session – No Class	Annotated Bibliography due by the weekend
W13	Creative Project Week – “A Portrait of Death”	
4/7 M	“A Portrait of Death” Workshop	
4/9 W	“A Portrait of Death” Presentations	
4/11 F	“A Portrait of Death” Presentations	“A Portrait of Death” due by the weekend
W14	Scholarly Project Week – Critical Analysis Paper	
4/14 M	Writing Session – No Class	

4/16 W	Writing Session – No Class	
4/18 F	Peer Review Workshop	Peer review feedback <u>due in class</u>
W15	Final Week – Get the Work Done!	
4/21 M	End of Semester Snack Party!!!	
4/23 W	No Class	Researched critical analysis paper <u>due on Wednesday midnight</u>