

The International Behaviorology Institute Syllabus for BEHG 455 Behaviorological Thanatology and Dignified Dying

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This syllabus provides course-specific information for a course that The International Behaviorology Institute (TIBI) offers. For guidance on enrolling, procuring required materials, and working through courses, as well as general school related information, see “General parameters and procedures for courses from The International Behaviorology Institute” available online at www.behaviorology.org or in the Spring 2015 issue (Volume 18, Number 2) of *Journal of Behaviorology*. Ledoux (2015) provided the core material for the course description. Also, this TIBI course, number, and syllabus evolved from a previous iteration of this course (see Ledoux, 2005).

Course Title: BEHG 455 Behaviorological Thanatology and Dignified Dying

Credits: 3 TIBI credits

Prerequisites: BEHG 211 Introduction to Behaviorology II

Course Format: Distance (online and offline options)

Time Frame: Commences upon enrollment. Self-paced within specified limits (estimated 150 hours; 3–15 weeks)

Professor: Assigned upon enrollment, with contact information

Required Resources

Sidman, M. (2001). *Coercion and its Fallout Revised Edition*. Boston, MA: Authors Cooperative. (ISBN 978-1-888830-01-8)

(In progress). *Study Questions for Sidman’s Coercion and its Fallout (Revised Edition)*. Ottawa, Canada: BehaveTech Publishing.

Fraley, L. E. (2012). *Dignified Dying—A Behaviorological Thanatology*. Canton, NY: ABCs. (ISBN 978-1-882590-16-7)

Raymond, L. (2015). *Study Questions for Fraley’s Dignified Dying—A Behaviorological Thanatology*. Canton, NY: ABCs. (ISBN 978-1-882508-17-4)

Course Description

After reviewing the roll that punishment and coercion play in prompting violence of all types throughout society, *BEHG 455 Behaviorological Thanatology and Dignified Dying* focuses on the scientific knowledge and skills needed to replace some subtle, residual violence, visited on society members suffering terminal illness, with scientifically informed practices that allow retention of human dignity for all parties in these circumstances, but especially for the dying individual, during the social death, person death, and body death of the terminal-illness process. Answering the question of how we can improve end-of-life interactions between the dying and society, between the increasing numbers of the terminally ill and their survivors, between ourselves and our loved ones in these difficult times, is an integral course component, as is a range of scientifically grounded alternative, proactive, dignity maintaining practices. Which professional group (e.g., medical doctors or nurses, hospice personnel, funeral directors, and/or behaviorologists) might best organize these improvements and new practices is explored, along with some problematic medical ethics. The historical context, and social contingencies affecting new practices, are included in the consideration of how to move from old to new practices.

Broadly, BEHG 455 covers the following topic areas:

- ✂ The problematic outcomes of coercive practices affecting society in general and dying individuals in particular;
- ✂ The unaddressed side-effects of the unrecognized coercive treatment of the terminally ill;
- ✂ Foundations and implications of the discipline of behaviorology applied to field of thanatology;
- ✂ A natural science perspective on the ethics of relevant medical practices with respect to protracted dying;
- ✂ The implications of naturalistic philosophy and science in place of the values associated with other epistemologies;

- ❧ A behaviorological analysis of the bereavement of surviving social partners;
- ❧ Economic realities and the cultural practices of welfare; and
- ❧ Behavior, death, and life in relation to persons.

- ❧ Apply contingency engineering to help survivors through the bereavement process;
- ❧ Explain the myth of personal responsibility; and
- ❧ Describe economic realities and the cultural practices of welfare.

Course Objectives

The primary objective of this course is to expand the student's repertoire of behavior measurably in relevant areas of behaviorological course content. The student will:

- ❧ Analyze punishment and coercion scientifically;
- ❧ Apply the behaviorological analysis of punishment and coercion to past and current problematic cultural practices in end-of-life situations;
- ❧ Evaluate the implications of that analysis and application for successful contingency engineering of more proactive practices for end-of-life situations;
- ❧ Describe the difference between persons and bodies, and analyze the concept of person and the person/body dichotomy, explaining how the behaviorological definition of personhood impacts the topic of death;
- ❧ Analyze the implications of sudden versus slow death;
- ❧ Differentiate social death, person death, and body death;
- ❧ Describe the scientifically uninformed patterns in which the dying are currently treated by both themselves and others, and the historical context from which these patterns derive;
- ❧ Describe the role of medical professionals in end-of-life issues;
- ❧ Define values, rights, and ethics from a behaviorological (i.e., natural science) perspective;
- ❧ Analyze the ethics of managing death and dying;
- ❧ Describe the role of superstitiously conditioned cultural practices;
- ❧ Apply contingency engineering design principles to the scientific development of new, more proactive patterns that increase and maintain the dignity of the dying;
- ❧ Summarize the effects of cultural contingencies on society's acceptance of scientifically sound practices promoting dignified dying;
- ❧ Define bereavement, analyze its aversive nature, and list and describe the bereavement processes;

Summary Written Assignment

Sidman's *Coercion and its Fallout* addresses the problematic effects of aversive stimulation and coercion in general. Consider the content of Sidman's book as applied to the topics in the primary (Fraleay) text, in anticipation of this assignment. (If you are on TIBI's records as having already covered Sidman's book, then complete both this Summary Written assignment and the Topic Paper assignment described in the next section.) The repertoire that the primary text and study questions will have conditioned provides a solid foundation on which to consider, in more depth, the ethics of current and potential practices in dealing with end-of-life issues, including laws and cultural policies and practices, with respect to how society treats the dying and their loved ones, and how all these treat each other.

Prepare an essay of no fewer than five pages and no greater than ten pages, not including front matter and references, double spaced with one-inch margins. In your paper relate, to the content of the Sidman text, an *important-to-you* aspect of current law, policy, and cultural attitudes and practices with respect to end-of-life issues, particularly as these relate to coercive treatment of those dying or "wishing" (i.e., under contingencies) to die, and to their loved ones. Then, to that, relate a summary discussion of the differing perspective that natural science provides and the changes that could be made that would result in a greater respect for liberty and dignity, and mitigation of the behavioral fallout resulting from coercive practices.

Topic Paper

This assignment pertains to students who are in TIBI's records as having already satisfactorily completed the *Coercion and its Fallout* text, and either its study questions or book review assignment, in another course:

Complete the *Dignified Dying...* text assignments, and the Summary Written Assignment, then proceed with this Topic Paper assignment: The course texts raise numerous topics that may evoke interest in the student, and the topic paper assignment provides the student an opportunity to explore one of these topics in greater depth. Get approval for your topic preference by discussing it with your professor, which also provides you the opportunity to review your thesis statement, and even outline, before you begin writing.

Prepare an essay of no fewer than ten pages and no greater than 15 pages, not including front matter and references, double spaced with one-inch margins, on the agreed upon topic. It may be argumentative or expository and should explore the issue in a depth beyond that which was presented in the course. This will require research beyond the course texts. Cite at least five sources, two of which may be the course materials and at least one of the others must be a primary source.

Assignment Sequence & Time Management

The following checklist provides students with the sequence in which the assignments are to be completed with pacing to fit into the 15-week semester time frame. Progressing more slowly than this schedule, assignments could easily get backed up to the point where insufficient time remains to complete them in a satisfactory manner. Students may use this sample schedule to help ensure that they remain on track. We estimate that each weekly assignment load will take approximately 9-10 hours to work through, assuming it takes 150 hours to work through all of the material. Students should expect and plan to put in at least 10 hours per week and use that to gauge whether they will need more or less time in the weeks to come. Students may check the box next to each assignment as they complete and submit it.

Check Week Resource Component

<input type="checkbox"/>	1	<i>Coercion and its Fallout</i> and related Study Questions (SQs)	<i>Intro &</i> <i>Chapters 1-2</i>
<input type="checkbox"/>	2	<i>Coercion and its Fallout</i> and related SQs	<i>Chapters 3-6</i>

<input type="checkbox"/>	3	<i>Coercion and its Fallout</i> and related SQs	<i>Chapters 7-9</i>
<input type="checkbox"/>	4	<i>Coercion and its Fallout</i> and related SQs	<i>Chapters 10-13</i>
<input type="checkbox"/>	5	<i>Coercion and its Fallout</i> and related SQs	<i>Chapters 14-16</i>
<input type="checkbox"/>	6	<i>Coercion and its Fallout</i> and related SQs	<i>Chapters 17-19</i>
<input type="checkbox"/>	7	<i>Dignified Dying</i> and related SQs	<i>Preface &</i> <i>Chapter 1</i>
<input type="checkbox"/>	8	<i>Dignified Dying</i> and related SQs	<i>Chapter 2</i>
<input type="checkbox"/>	9	<i>Dignified Dying</i> and related SQs	<i>Chapter 3</i>
<input type="checkbox"/>	10	<i>Dignified Dying</i> and related SQs (& if Topic Paper assignment applies, then:)	<i>Chapter 4</i> <i>(Topic/Thesis approval)</i>
<input type="checkbox"/>	11	<i>Dignified Dying</i> and related SQs (& if Topic Paper assignment applies, then:)	<i>Chapter 5</i> <i>(Research)</i>
<input type="checkbox"/>	12	<i>Dignified Dying</i> and related SQs (& if Topic Paper assignment applies, then:)	<i>Chapter 6</i> <i>(Research & draft)</i>
<input type="checkbox"/>	13	<i>Dignified Dying</i> and related SQs (& if Topic Paper assignment applies, then:)	<i>Chapters 7-9</i> <i>(Refine for final product)</i>
<input type="checkbox"/>	14	Summary Written Assignment	<i>Begin</i>
<input type="checkbox"/>	14	Summary Written Assignment	<i>Draft</i>



15

Summary Written Assignment *Refine for final product*

Please contact TIBI at www.behaviorology.org with any questions about the content of this syllabus or the *General Parameters & Procedures for Courses from The International Behaviorology Institute*.

References

- Ledoux, S. F. (2005). TIBI online syllabus for BEHG 410 Behaviorological Thanatology and Dignified Dying. *Behaviorology Today*, 8 (2), 18–22.
- Ledoux, S. F. (2015). Appendix 3 Addendum—Curricular courses and resources after 25 years (1990–2015). In S. F. Ledoux. *Origins and Components of Behaviorology—Third Edition* (pp. 314–326). Ottawa, Canada: BehaveTech Publishing. ↻