CHAPTER 1

**STUDYING DYING, DEATH, AND BEREAVEMENT**

**Chapter Outline**

Current Interest in Death and Dying

Why the Increased Interest?

The Mystery of Death

Terrorism

Ethical Issues

Popular Culture

Death Education

Thanatology Classes

Thanatology Publications

Mortality Statistics

Death Etiology and Life Expectancy

Gender Differences in Mortality Rates

Approaches to the Study of Dying and Death

The Biological Approach

The Psychological Approach

The Philosophical Approach

The Anthropological Approach

The Sociological Approach

Structural-Functional Theory

Conflict Theory

Social Exchange Theory

Symbolic Interactionist Theory

Conclusion

Summary

Discussion Questions

Glossary

Suggested Readings

True-False Questions

1. The interdisciplinary study of dying, death, and bereavement is called “thanatology.” **True**

2. American society formally prepares individuals to deal with dying and death on both personal and emotional levels. **False**

3. Death appears to be more abstract for those growing up today than for previous generations. **True**

4. In the early 1940s Hollywood began to produce films around the theme of death when the “good guy” died. **False**

5. Television specials with a theme of dying and death began emerging in the 1970s in the United States. **True**

6. Currently there is almost an obsession, and certainly a fascination, with death-related themes in American movies. **True**

7. The “suicide doctor” in Michigan in the late 20th century was Dr. Jack Kevorkian. **True**

8. A program for the elderly called Road Scholar does not allow the topic of dying and death to be presented. **True**

9. A text published in 1959 for thanatology was an anthology by psychologist Herman Feifel titled *The Meaning of Death*. **True**

10. Jessica Mitford’s *The American Way of Death* in 1963 was very favorable toward the funeral industry. **False**

11. Conflict theory is concerned with explaining the stability of society. **False**

12. Exchange theory is primarily concerned with the issue of societal maintenance and social equilibrium. **False**

13. The leading cause of death in the United States today is cardiovascular disease. **True**

14. Life expectancy in the United States is greater for males than females. **False**

15. The conception sex ratio and the sex ratio at birth in the United States favors males over females. **True**

16. Anthropologist Ashley Montagu suggested that women have a superior use of emotions because they are more likely to cry than men. **True**

17. Biological death has remained much the same over the years and so has the manner in which humans experience death. **False**

18. Gerontophobia is the fear of dying of a debilitating disease. **False**

19. Physical anthropologists who study death-related phenomena have a special interest in death rituals in different cultures. **False**

20. Sociology is a multiparadigm science. **True**

21. Symbolic interactionism is an approach stressing the importance of interpretation of others’ behavior. **True**

22. A major assumption of social exchange theory is that the profit motive governs social situations. **True**

23. The events of September 11, 2001, have caused our society to become more paranoid. **True**

24. Kubler-Ross’ *On Death and Dying*, published in 1969, sparked a lot of interest in the topic of dying and death. **True**

25. Jessica Mitford’s *The American Way of Death*, published in 1963, played a critical role in changes in the funeral industry. **True**

26. Leading causes of death in 1900 were cardiovascular diseases and cancer. **False**

27. Terror management theory (TMT) suggests that people adhere to cultural worldviews and beliefs in order to suppress death and morality-related thoughts. **True**

28. A popular book about a professor dying of ALS in the 1990s is titled *Tuesdays with Morrie* and was written by Mitch Albom. **True**

29. Smoking kills approximately 434,000 Americans each year. **True**

30. Smoking accounts for approximately 5 percent of all deaths globally each year. **True**

31. A ban was imposed on public smoking in the United Kingdom in 2007. **True**

32. Cigarette smoking in movies today is becoming more popular. **True**

33. Infant mortality rates in the United States are the lowest of all postindustrial countries in the world today. **False**

34. In modern Western countries life expectancy is longer for women than for men. **True**

35. Women have a higher morbidity rate than men. **True**

36. A longitudinal study is a study done at one point in time. **False**

37. The psychological approach looks at dying from a developmental perspective. **True**

38. An existentialist approach looks at dying and death from an anthropological perspective. **False**

39. The phenomenology approach to dying and death studies “the thing” itself. **True**

40. Fictive kin refers to terms for individuals who are not related via kinship. **True**

41. A latent function of a funeral is that a funeral is a family reunion. **True**

42. ISAS is a shorthand presentation of structural functionalism. **False**

43. A chronic disease is one which typically kills the patient within a few days of coming down with the disease. **False**

44. Violence, including death, is highly revealed on television today. **True**

45. Death and dying is on the “approval” list” of all US state education departments and is offered in nearly state regularly. **False**