

## Rutgers DSW Program Syllabus

**Module Title:** Existential Theory and Thanatophobia

**Instructor:**

**Residency:** April 2019

**Date:**

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### **Module Description:**

This module introduces students to the key tenets of existential theory and the human relationship with death. Students explore the contributions of Irvin Yalom, Viktor Frankl, Ernest Becker, and others as introductions to perspectives on how individuals cope with the existential dilemmas of mortality. Students are provided with a perspective regarding the relatively recent development of Transpersonal approaches to existential anxiety. Furthermore, specific attention will be paid to the clinical expression of thanatophobia, or fear of death, and how practitioners may begin to treat these presentations.

### **Module Objectives:**

1. Students will appreciate the principles behind existential theory and its application as a therapeutic orientation in clinical work.
2. Students will critically explore the key assumptions of terror management theory and the concept of “existential maturity”.

### **Required Readings:**

1. Greenberg, J., & Arndt, J. (2011). Chapter 19: Terror management theory. In P.A.M. Van Lange, A.W. Kruglanski, & E.T. Higgins (Eds.), *Handbook of Theories of Social Psychology*. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE.
2. Emanuel, L.L., Reddy, N., Hauser, J., & Sonnenfeld, S.B. (2017). “And yet it was a blessing”: The case for existential maturity. *Journal of Palliative Medicine*, 20(4), 318-327.
3. Yalom, I.D., & Josselson, R. (2000). Chapter 8: Existential psychotherapy. In D. Wedding and R.J. Corsini (Eds.), *Current psychotherapies*(10<sup>th</sup> ed.). Belmont, CA: Cengage.

### **Recommended Readings:**

1. Frankl, V.E. (1985). *Man's search for meaning*. Boston, MA: Beacon Press.
2. Yalom, I.D. (2008). Staring at the sun: Overcoming the terror of death. *The Humanistic Psychologist*, 36(3), 283-297.