

Information Letter / Consent Form for Students

September 1, 2025

Study Title: The Art of Death: Graphic Memoirs as Pedagogical Tools in Nursing Education

Who is conducting the study?

Principal Investigator: Dr. Darryn DiFrancesco, Assistant Professor, School of Nursing
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Project Sponsor

This study is funded by BC Campus through their Research Fellows program. The Research Fellows program provides BC post-secondary educators with funding to conduct small-scale research on teaching and learning and explore evidence-based teaching practices that focus on student success.

This project has been approved by the UNBC Research Ethics Board (File No: 6010051).

Purpose of Project

Why are you being asked to take part in this study?

You are being invited to take part in this research study because you are a nursing student at a Northern BC institution. We want to learn more about how graphic memoirs (visual narratives about death and dying) can help prepare nursing students emotionally for end-of-life care encounters in clinical settings.

Why are we doing this study?

Nursing students often encounter death and dying for the first time in clinical settings with limited emotional preparation. This study explores whether engaging with graphic memoirs about death and dying can enhance your emotional preparedness and reflective understanding of end-of-life care. The results will help develop teaching strategies that better prepare future nursing students for these important aspects of patient care. The results also have the potential to improve both student and patient experiences.

Participation is entirely voluntary. You are in no way obligated to participate in this research. You are free to withdraw from this study at any time without giving a reason. If you withdraw from the study, any information you have provided up to that point will be withdrawn and securely destroyed, unless you explicitly consent to your information being retained and analyzed.

What will happen during the project?

As part of your course, you will be required to read a graphic memoir in which death and dying is a major theme. This study will explore your experience reading the graphic memoir as part of your classwork and assess its impact on your emotional preparedness for death and dying.

Your participation in this project is separate from your work in the course and is **completely optional**. If you decide **not** to participate in the study, there will be no consequence to you or your course grade. If you choose to participate, your participation is confidential. Your instructor will not know whether you chose to participate.

If you agree to participate, here is what the study involves:

Review consent form and ask questions

- Total time required: 10-15 minutes

Before reading the graphic memoir:

- You will complete a brief online survey which collects demographic details and your feelings of emotional preparedness for encountering death and dying in clinical settings
 - Total time required: 15-30 minutes.

After the reading the graphic memoir and discussing it in class:

- You will complete a second online survey similar to the initial one. This survey will not contain demographic questions, but will include open-ended questions that ask you to reflect on your experience reading and discussing the graphic memoir in class.
 - Total time required: 30-60 minutes.

Total time commitment: Approximately 1-1.5 hours.

Risks or benefits to participating in the project

Potential risks: The graphic memoirs deal with themes of death, dying, and grief, which some participants may find emotionally challenging or distressing. Some of the survey questions and reflection prompts may feel personal or sensitive. Content warnings will be provided for all graphic memoirs to help you make informed choices.

If at any point in the study you feel uncomfortable or upset and wish to end your participation, please notify the researcher immediately and your wishes will be respected. A list of campus counselling resources has been provided to you and your instructor. We encourage you to access these services if, at any time, you experience distress.

Potential benefits: You may find that engaging with the graphic memoir helps you process thoughts and feelings about death and dying in a supportive, low-pressure environment. This may help you feel more emotionally prepared for future clinical encounters. The reflective activities may also enhance your self-awareness and empathy skills, which are valuable in nursing practice.

It is also possible that this study may not directly benefit you, but in the future, others may benefit from what we learn about using graphic memoirs in nursing education.

Confidentiality, Anonymity and Data Storage

Your participation will be anonymized. Your name will not be used, and you will be assigned a unique participation code to ensure that your identity is protected. You should be aware that based on the demographic data you provide, it may be possible for you to be identified.

As part of the second survey, you will be asked to provide written reflections. Any personal information you reveal in your answers will be kept confidential or redacted in reporting.

The data will be encrypted and stored digitally on a password-protected computer on UNBC's servers. If the data is printed at any point during the research, it will be kept in a locked filing cabinet in a locked office at UNBC, and then destroyed once analysis is complete. You will not be identified by name in any reports, publications, or presentations of the completed study.

Who will have access to your information:

- The principal researcher (Darryn DiFrancesco)
- The research assistant (Alyssa Casey, Fourth-Year Nursing Undergraduate Student), involved in participant communication, survey data collection, and analysis (who will sign a confidentiality agreement)

Data storage and use: The information gathered from this study will be kept for a minimum of 7 years. Digital files will be encrypted and stored on password-protected computers on UNBC servers. Any personal and/or identifying information will be removed from the data once it is analyzed and will not be stored long-term. After 10 years, it will be permanently deleted.

Future use of data: The de-identified data may be re-analyzed in future research studies related to nursing education, death education, or student emotional preparedness. For example, survey responses could be re-analyzed to explore how prior life experience impacts students' sense of emotional readiness for death and dying.

Compensation

When you agree to participate in this study, you will be provided with a physical copy of the book of your choice to borrow for the duration of the module. You will be asked to return this book after you are finished reading. [Book Borrow Option]. If you are a UNBC student, you may be eligible to borrow the e-book version of your chosen graphic novel from the UNBC library at no cost.

Alternatively, you may choose to purchase your own copy of your chosen book. If you choose to purchase your own copy, the research team will reimburse you \$10 in the form of an Amazon or Kobo/Rakuten gift card. To receive the reimbursement, you will be asked to submit the receipt to the research team. [Book Purchase Option]

After completing both surveys, you will be offered a \$25 Amazon gift card in recognition of your time, and may enter to win an additional \$100 Amazon gift card.

Study Results

The results of this study will be published in academic journal articles, presented at conferences, and used to develop Open Educational Resources (OER) for nursing and other care-work programs, such as social work. A summary of the main findings will be made available and can be sent to you if you provide your email address at the end of this form.

Questions, Concerns or Complaints about the project

If you have any questions about what we are asking of you, please contact the Principal Investigator, Darryn DiFrancesco, at Darryn.DiFrancesco@unbc.ca or 250-787-6260.

If you have any concerns or complaints about your rights as a research participant and/or your experiences while participating in this study, contact the UNBC Office of Research at 250-960-6735 or by e-mail at reb@unbc.ca.

Participant Consent and Withdrawal

Taking part in this study is entirely up to you. You have the right to refuse to participate. If you decide to take part, you may choose to withdraw from the study at any time without giving a reason and without any negative impact on your class standing or academic progress.

Your signature below indicates that you have received a copy of this consent form for your own records and that you consent to participate in this study.

CONSENT

About the Study

I have read or been described the information presented in the information letter about the project:

YES NO

I have had the opportunity to ask questions about my involvement in this project and to receive additional details I requested.

YES NO

I understand that if I agree to participate in this project, I may withdraw from the project at any time up until the report completion, with no consequences of any kind.

YES NO

I have been given a copy of this form.

YES NO

Surveys 1 and 2

I give my consent to the researchers to use my responses to the survey questions in the study.

YES NO

*Prior to completing each survey, you will be required to review this letter and confirm your consent.

Study Follow-up

I consent to the use of my survey responses for additional analysis relating to nursing education, death education, or student emotional preparedness for death and dying.

YES NO

I consent to follow-up information (summary of study results) to be sent to me:

YES

NO

If YES, please provide e-mail address: _____

Signature (or note of verbal consent): _____

Name of Participant (Printed): _____

Date: (month)_____ (day)_____ (year)_____