

'Taboo' topic explored in class on death, dying

By Paul Ertelt
Of the Emerald

People don't think about their own deaths, but a sequence of classes offered at the University intends to change that.

"Contemporary Issues in Death Education" is offered this term as part of a three-term sequence about death and dying. The class, intended mainly for professionals such as the clergy, counselors and educators who deal with the dying and bereaved, is sponsored by the Community Education program.

"We're a death denying society," says Prof. Delpha Camp, who is teaching the course. "We don't think about our own death."

But death is "coming out of the closet," Camp says.

Though many consider the subject taboo, an increasing number see the need to come to terms with the inevitable.

"There is something in man that insists on understanding even the things he fears," Camp says. "He can only deny it so long."

Camp's class studies the theoretical, philosophical and ethical questions of death, such as euthanasia and suicide. It also examines the historical perspective, such as how attitudes about death have evolved over the years.

A class field trip to a mortuary provides insight into the practical problems of death.

A similar class scheduled winter term, "Working with the Dying, Their Families and Caregivers," will offer practical training in giving psychological and spiritual support to the dying and their survivors, Camp says.

The sequence concludes spring term with "Confrontations of Death," an experiential class that will allow individuals to confront their own attitudes about their own deaths and the deaths of others, she says.

"The sequence leads through a logical process," Camp says. "It begins with the intellectual aspects, goes into the more practical and then into the subjective."

Camp says it is important for people to accept the reality of death in order to lead fuller lives.

"You can't separate life and death," she says. "They go hand in hand."

One question that often arises is whether there is life after death and what form it might take.

Camp does not try to convince students of a particular theory on life after death, but helps them find a belief with which they are comfortable.

"The purpose of death education is to raise questions, not necessarily to find answers," Camp says. "If someone finds answers — fine."

Dancers to hoof for trees

People have danced to make rain, danced to the beat of music and danced to escape the Great Depression's clutches.

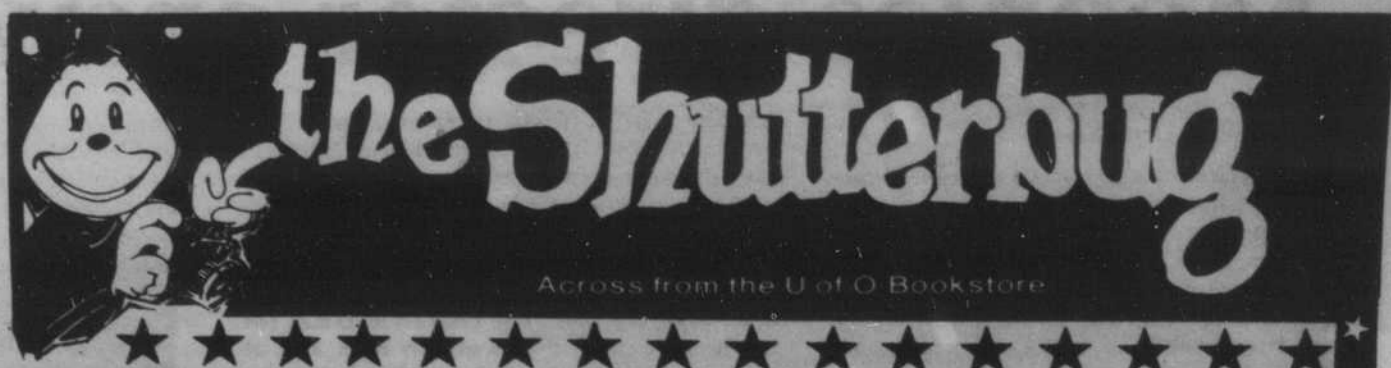
Now people at the University have an opportunity to dance to save trees.

A benefit dance Oct. 8 in the EMU Ballroom sponsored by the Survival Center will donate all proceeds to the Oregon Natural Resources Council to help fund its lobbying efforts in support of the Oregon Forest Wilderness bill.

That bill proposes to increase the amount of Oregon's forested wilderness by 1.2 million acres. Approximately one million acres of Oregon's 31 million acres of forested lands now stand protected as wilderness, while more than 25 million acres contain roads and are used for logging and other purposes.

If the bill is passed, more than 80 percent of the state's forested acreage will still be available for timber production, while some of the state's most outstanding and unique wildlife habitats and recreation areas will become protected according to representatives from the Survival Center.

Providing the beat for the 8 p.m. event will be two local bands, Arousing Spirit and The Porcupines. Tickets are available at The Survival Center and EMU Main Desk, as well as other outlets in Eugene, and cost \$2.50 in advance and \$3 the night of the dance.



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