



## Impact of an Undergraduate Suicidology Course

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Providing a semester-long course in suicidology as part of an undergraduate liberal arts education may help expand knowledge related to suicide, reduce negative bias toward suicide, and increase suicide prevention advocacy.

Called Understanding Suicide, the course sought to describe major theories of suicide, identify common risk and protective factors, and introduce evidence-based approaches to suicide prevention and treatment. It also discussed the impact of suicide at the individual, group, societal, and global levels; explained suicide-related ethical issues; and identified challenges and controversies in the field of suicidology. Researchers compared students who had taken the course with a student control group that had not, based on their knowledge of suicide, negative bias toward suicide, attitudes toward people who had died by suicide, and willingness to engage in suicide prevention advocacy.

Participants received assessments prior to the start of the course, immediately following the course, and four months after it ended. The researchers found that students who completed the course experienced gains in knowledge related to suicide prevention, reduced negative bias toward suicide, and increased willingness to advocate for suicide prevention in their communities. The researchers continued to see these gains at four-month follow-up.

Undergraduate courses in suicidology may help create a larger, more informed community base for suicide prevention efforts.

Muehlenkamp, J. J., & Thoen, S. K. (2019). Short- and long-term impact of an undergraduate suicidology course. *Suicide and Life-Threatening Behavior*. Advance online publication. doi: 10.1111/sltb.12552

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