Course Goals

In this course participants will

1. Address their own mortality.
2. Explore a variety of issues in thanatology
3. Begin to develop a theological and pastoral approach to death.
4. Join with others in a class presentation on a selected topic.
5. Engage others of differing views with honesty and respect.

M.Div. Program Goals addressed by this course

Knowledge of:
• The cultural, social, and ethical realities in which the churches live and respond both globally and locally.
• The arts of ministry

Ability to:
• Develop and express mature personal faith, and with sensitivity and skill, teach the traditions of the church, lead worship and preach, and engage in pastoral care.
• Integrate the elements of the Christian tradition in a theology and practice of ministry, act with moral sensitivity and in accord with professional ethics, and advocate for compassion and justice in personal, congregational, and community settings.

Opportunities for:
• Developing one’s own ecclesiastical identity within an ecumenical ethos, identifying one’s strengths and limits, and learning how to engage in on-going professional development.

Guidelines for Course Interaction
(Adapted from Professor M. Shawn Copeland)

1. We will listen to one another – patiently, carefully – assuming that each one of us is always doing the best that she or he can. We will speak thoughtfully. We will speak in the first person.
2. Although our disagreements may be vigorous, they will not be conducted in a win-lose manner. We will take care that all participants are given the opportunity to engage in the conversation.
3. We will own our assumptions, our conclusions, and their implications. We will be open to another’s intellectual and personal growth and change.
4. We cannot be blamed for the misinformation we have been taught and have absorbed from our society, our culture and our religious backgrounds, but we will be held responsible for repeating misinformation after we have learned otherwise.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

1. Regular class preparation and attendance.

2. Three short papers (2-3 pages).
   Two action assignments.

4. One class presentation (choose one):
5. Final paper/project.
   The final paper or project may be an outgrowth of your class presentation. It will have the following characteristics:
   1. Address an issue in the area of death, dying and bereavement.
   2. Present pertinent information regarding the issue and develop the pastoral and theological implications for ministry.
   3. Include bibliographical resources
   4. If written, meet the standards outlined under “Evaluation of Presentations and Papers”

**Required Texts:**

- *In Sure and Certain Hope: Liturgies, Prayers, and Readings for Funerals and Memorials* (Abingdon 2005)

**Other Readings**

**Death: A Fact for Us**

Philippe Aries. *Western Attitudes Toward Death,* (Johns Hopkins University Press, 1974)

Gerhard Sauter, “How Do 'I' Encounter My Own Death?” *Theology Today* 60.4 (June 2004) 497-507 (ATLAREligion)

**Biblical and Historical Perspectives on Death**
Lloyd L. Bailey, Sr., *Biblical Perspectives on Death,* (Fortress, 1979) pp.1-4, 39-61, 87-110

Tinyiko Sam Maluleke, “Of Collapsible Coffins and Ways of Dying,” *Ecumenical Review* 54.3 (July 2002) 313-332 (available on ATLAREligion)


**Ministry with Dying Persons**
Megory Anderson. Sacred *Dying: Creating Rituals for Embracing the End of Life.* (New York, Marlow and Co. 2003), Chs. 1,2

Ron Wooten Green. *When the Dying Speak.* (Loyola Press, 2001) – Choose one chapter


Hospice and Home Care

Michael Appleton. Good End. (Hats Off Books, 2005)

AIDS

Ron Russell-Coons, “We Have AIDS,” in The Church with AIDS, pp.35-44.


Pastoral Handbook for the AIDS Crisis in Maine, Maine Council of Churches

Suicide and Euthanasia

“Assisted-Suicide Law Gets Key Victory” Christian Century 123.3 (No.3 Feb 7) 10-11.


Death and Children

John W. James, Russell Friedman. When Children Grieve: For Adults to Help Children Deal with Death, Divorce, Pet Loss, Moving and Other Losses. (Collins 2002)

**U.S. Ways of Death**

**The Grief Process**


Puneet Singh. "Pastoral Care Following Pregnancy Loss: The Role of Ritual.” *Journal of Pastoral Care and Counseling* 58/12 (Spring/Summer 2004) 41-53 ATLA.

**Death and The Community of Faith**
Soo-Young Kwon. “Homecoming Rituals: Weaving Multi-Cultural Funeral Rituals.” *Theology Today* 60.3 (Jan 2004) 497-507 ATLA

**Plagiarism**

You are reminded that using others’ words or ideas without attribution and citation constitutes plagiarism, an act of intellectual dishonesty which may result in failing the course. See the Student Guide for a complete description of plagiarism.

**Incomplete Policy for M.Div., M.A., Bangor Plan, and Special Students**

Course work is due as indicated in the syllabi of individual instructors. The latest day an instructor may choose to accept that semester’s course requirements is the final day of the semester.

Students who have not completed a course’s requirements by the time that work is due have one of two options. The first is to petition for an Incomplete Contract; the second is to petition for Withdrawal from the course. To initiate one or the other option, students must obtain either an Incomplete Contract or a Withdrawal Form from the Registrar and submit it to the instructor who will indicate on the form his/her approval. The instructor will then submit it to the Dean for his/her approval. In either case, students must submit their petitions to the instructor no later than the day the course work is originally due. See the Student Guide for complete description of the Incomplete Policy.
COURSE OUTLINE
PTP 1711
Spring, 2006

JANUARY 31: DEATH: A FACT FOR US
IN PREPARATION FOR THE FIRST CLASS, COMPLETE THE QUESTIONNAIRE ON ATTITUDES TOWARD DEATH FOUND ON PP. 11 AND 12 OF THE SYLLABUS.

Introduction to the course, questions, interests, resources of participants.
Brief review of group process, communication skills.

VIDEO: “I Heard the Owl Call My Name”
Questionnaire on Attitudes Toward Death

FEBRUARY 7: DEATH: A FACT FOR US

PREPARATION
Read
Philippe Aries. Western Attitudes Toward Death. ch. 2, 27-52.
Gerhard Sauter, “How Do ‘I’ Encounter My Own Death?” Theology Today 60.4 (June 2004) 497-507 (ATLAReligion)

Write
“If I could choose, when and how would I die?” 2-3 pages.

CLASS SESSION
Presentation and discussion on readings
Small group conversations on papers
VIDEO “An Incident at Owl Creek Bridge”

FEBRUARY 14: BIBLICAL AND HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVES ON DEATH

PREPARATION
Read
The Last Dance (7th edition) ch.3.
AND

Choose One
Phillippe Aries, Western Attitudes Toward Death, pp.1-25, 55-107
Tinyiko Sam Maluleke, “Of Collapsible Coffins and Ways of Dying,” Ecumenical Review 54.3 (July 2002) 313-332 (available on ATLAReligion)
Jacob Neusner, ed. Death and the Afterlife. – Choose one chapter, not Christianity.

Write
“The biblical attitude toward death which most closely parallels my own is . . .” 2-3 pages.

Presentations (two groups/twenty minutes each)
With one or two other persons, prepare a presentation on the optional readings which includes the content of the materials and a means of engaging the class in the issues raised.
CLASS SESSION
Presentations on biblical and historical attitudes toward death.
Small groups based on perspective choices:
  Childhood recollections of death
  Reflections of childhood experiences in adult attitudes
  Theological/faith connections with adult attitudes
Fishbowl role plays.

February 21: MINISTRY WITH DYING PERSONS

PREPARATION
Read
The Last Dance, chs. 6, 7, 8
Choose One
  • Megory Anderson. Sacred Dying: Creating Rituals for Embracing the End of Life. Chs. 1, 2
  • Ron Wooten Green. When the Dying Speak. – Choose one chapter
  • David Kessler. The Needs of the Dying. – Choose one chapter

Presentations (two groups, twenty minutes each)
With one or two other persons, prepare a presentation on the optional reading which includes the content of the materials and a means of engaging the class in the issues raised.

CLASS SESSION
Presentations on readings
Fishbowl exercise: Answering Children’s Questions about Death.

FEBRUARY 28: HOSPICE AND HOME CARE

PREPARATION
Read
Michael Appleton. Good End. (Hats Off Books, 2005)

CLASS SESSION
Presenter from Hospice
Role Plays on Hospice
MARCH 7: READING WEEK  Visit to Funeral Home

MARCH 14: AIDS

PREPARATION
Read
The Last Dance, ch. 13, 486-490

Choose One
- Ron Russell-Coons, “We Have AIDS,” in The Church with AIDS, pp.35-44.
- AIDSAction.org
- DownEast AIDS Network http://downeastaidsnetwork.homestead.com/Resources.html
- Pastoral Handbook for the AIDS Crisis in Maine, Maine Council of Churches

CLASS SESSION

Speaker from Downeast AIDS Network
Role Play on AIDS

MARCH 21: SUICIDE AND EUTHANASIA

PREPARATION
Read
The Last Dance, ch.12

Choose one
- "Assisted-Suicide Law Gets Key Victory" Christian Century 123.3 (No.3 Feb 7) 10-11.

See Also
- Gerald Dworkin, R. G. Frey, Sissela Bok. Euthanasia and Physician Assisted Suicide (For and Against).

Presentation
With three other people, prepare a formal debate on either suicide or euthanasia.
CLASS SESSION

Formal Debate on suicide/euthanasia
Role Plays

MARCH 28: DEATH AND CHILDREN

PREPARATION
Read
The Last Dance, ch.10

Choose One
- John W. James, Russell Friedman. When Children Grieve: For Adults to Help Children Deal with Death, Divorce, Pet Loss, Moving and Other Losses.

CLASS SESSION

Presentation on Readings
Discussion of The Last Dance material
Role Plays

APRIL 7: HOLY WEEK

APRIL 11: DEATH IN THE 21ST CENTURY

PREPARATION
Read
The Last Dance, Ch. 13

Research and Writing
On the web, in newspapers, magazines, journals, the library, music, cartoons, find examples of the sorts of death described in Ch. 13 of The Last Dance. Write 2 -3 pages on the theological implications of these deaths.

CLASS SESSION
Reports on Research and discussion

APRIL 18: AMERICAN WAYS OF DEATH

PREPARATION
Read
The Last Dance, Ch. 9

Action Assignment
Attend a funeral at a funeral home. Then write your own obituary and directions for your funeral.

CLASS SESSION

Presentation on readings.
Small group sessions on personal experiences of funerals.
Video

APRIL 25 THE GRIEF PROCESS

PREPARATION

Read
The Last Dance, Ch. 8, 11

Choose Two
- Puneet Singh. “Pastoral Care Following Pregnancy Loss: The Role of Ritual.” Journal of Pastoral Care and Counseling 58/12 (Spring/Summer 2004) 41-53 ATLA.

Presentations (two groups, twenty minutes each)
With one or two other persons, prepare a presentation on the optional readings which includes the content of the materials and a means of engaging the class in the issues raised.

CLASS SESSION

Presentations on Grief
Role Plays
Video on Grief

MAY 2 DEATH AND THE COMMUNITY OF FAITH

Resource: In Sure and Certain Hope: Liturgies, Prayers, and Readings for Funerals and Memorials
And the worship resources of your religious tradition.

Read

Soo-Young Kwon. “Homecoming Rituals: Weaving Multi-Cultural Funeral Rituals.” Theology Today 60.3 (Jan 2004) 497-507 ATLA

PREPARATION

Action Assignment
Prepare a funeral service for a person who has died of AIDS, violence, or suicide.
CLASS SESSION

Presentation on faith and death.
Small group discussions: discoveries from preparing the funeral service.
Funeral practice in the chapel

MAY 9  DEATH IN THE COMMUNITY OF FAITH

PREPARATION
Read

CLASS SESSION

Discussion of reading
Funeral practice
Review and Evaluation

FINAL PAPER/PROJECT DUE MAY 25, 1998
Questionnaire on Attitudes Toward Death*

1. List three significant losses you have personally sustained in your life. Do not consider just people; also think about the loss of tangible objects, as well as intangibles such as certain hopes, aspirations, beliefs, attitudes and the life. Note your age at the time of loss.

2. Describe briefly how any one (you choose) of the losses above have been dealt with in the course of your grieving. Have you ‘gained’ anything as a result? In what ways specifically? Any surprises?

3. At what age do you consider death no longer premature? Why?

4. Are your parents still living? If no to either, please list who has died, when, at what age (yours and theirs at time of death), and the cause of death.

5. What life-threatening or life-endangering behaviors do you engage in?

6. Cite any bioethical quandaries (such as suicide, euthanasia, abortion . . .) that you are personally concerned about, and briefly state why it is a concern.

7. Have you made a will yet? If yes, what is your relationship to the primary beneficiary?
8. Who died in your most recent death experience? When and under what circumstances did death occur?

9. At what age and in what year do you anticipate your death might occur?

10. What is your preferred mode of body disposition at death (burial, cremation, other?)

11. My expectations for afterlife are:

12. My questions and concerns about death, dying, bereavement or grief are:

SUGGESTIONS FOR CLASS PRESENTATIONS

1. Engage class members in both right brain and left brain activities.

2. Remember that we retain 20% of what we hear, 40% of what we see, and 80% of what we do.

3. Allow time for reflection and silence. Lack of noise or immediate response may mean that people are thinking. (Break the silence when people start fidgeting.)

4. Decide whether you want to
   a) present conclusions and help others understand how the conclusions were achieved;
   b) present problems and help others to solve them; or
   c) provide an opportunity for the group to define both the problems and the conclusions.

5. Decide whether the information/attitudes/perspectives you intend to convey can be discovered from the combined experience of those in the group, whether it is sufficiently unique to need transmissive presentation, or some combination of both.

6. Decide how you will know whether people have learned from your presentation, and how the others in the class will know if they have learned.

7. Remember that people learn in different ways, and provide a variety of learning styles in each presentation.

8. Decide where the locus of authority will reside during your presentation: with the presenters, in the larger receiving group, in the texts, videos or other material, or in the connection between all the factors.

9. Determine how the physical space and the materials in the space will affect your presentation and what, if any, changes you wish to make in the space.

10. If you use outside speakers/presenters, determine why and how you wish them to engage the larger group, and what it is they can provide the class that no one else can, or can do as well.