

Death and Dying [revised syllabus]

CE 459/CFM694 Fall, 2009 Thursdays 1:15-3:05 PM BGC 253



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Readings Individually Drawn From:

Berryman, Jerome. The rite of anointing and the pastoral care of sick children. From Diane Apostolos-Cappadona (Ed.), *The Sacred Play of Children*. New York: Seabury, 1983.

Bush, Michael (Ed.). *This Incomplete One: Words Occasioned by the Death of a Young Person*. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2006.

Callanan, Maggie. *Final Journeys: A Practical Guide for Bringing Care and Comfort at the End of Life*. New York: Bantam, 2008.

Graham, Billy. *Facing Death and the Life After*. Waco, TX: Word, 1987.

Hendin, David. *Death as a Fact of Life*. New York: Norton, 1984.

Kastenbaum, Robert. *Death, Society, and Human Experience*. Boston: Allyn & Bacon, 2009.

Kopp, Ruth. *When Someone You Love is Dying*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1980.

Kubler-Ross, Elizabeth. *On Death and Dying*. New York: Macmillan, 1969.

Leming, Michael, & George Dickinson. *Understanding Dying, Death, and Bereavement*. Belmont, CA: Wadsworth, 2007.

Lewis, C. S. *A Grief Observed*. New York: Bantam, 1961.

O'Connor, Joey. *Children and Grief: Helping Your Child Understand Death*. Grand Rapids, MI: Revell, 2004.

Platt, Larry, & Roger Branch. *Resources for Ministry in Death and Dying*. Nashville: Broadman, 1988.
Strongest chapters: 4, 5, 8, 16, 18, 20

Sittser, Jerry. *A Grace Disguised: How the Soul Grows through Loss*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2005.

Viorst, Judith. *Necessary Losses*. New York: The Free Press, 1986.

Wolterstorff, Nicholas. *Lament for a Son*. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1987.

Young, William. *The Shack*. Los Angeles: Windblown Media, 2007.

Course Description

As the number of elderly people in society continues to increase, greater attention should be given to the process of dying, preparation for death, and the family and friends that remain. This class examines preparation for death physically, socially, and spiritually, as well as the related topics of grieving, funerals, and life after death. The class involves experiential learning activities such as personal preparation for death and field trips such as visiting a funeral home, so the student will be better equipped to help those who must make such preparations for themselves or loved ones. Social issues related to death and dying, such as suicide and euthanasia, are briefly considered, but the primary emphasis is effective ministry with those who are dying and those who are grieving the death of another.

Objectives

The following competencies will be reflected in student activities and products, as assessed by the instructor. Thus students can expect assignments that foster:

1. A comprehension of death as a process rather than merely an event.
2. Recognition of theoretical approaches used in the study of death and grieving.
3. Identification of current issues and sources of support for dying and bereaved people.
4. Analysis of support systems in society related to dying and bereavement.
5. Examination and integration of understandings and feelings about death
6. Structuring a Christian perspective of death, dying, and related issues.
7. Developing skills in advising and helping those who are dying or bereaved.
8. Reflect the above competencies in class discussions and two assignments, to be articulated in detail through a contract grade approach.

Course Requirements

A contract grade approach is used in this class. The contract turned in by the second day of class (September 3).

Besides classroom discussion, two assignments will be articulated in detail in the contract (each of these may, but need not, be subdivided into more specific assignments).

1. **Analysis of Experiences.** Students will engage in a variety of experiences that will include activities such as planning a funeral, making plans and determining costs of embalming, the casket, funeral, cremation, burial, plot, and memorial service. interviewing a person who was recently bereaved, interviewing a widow or widower, visiting a cemetery, writing an obituary, and watching one or more selected movies related to death, dying, and bereavement. These experiences will be reflected in one or more written or audio-visual projects.

2. **Synthesis of Readings.** Students will creatively make use of the selected readings in a manner that involves not only a sufficient number of pages for the class, but also an integration and synthesis of those writings in a manner that will be of both personal benefit and of benefit to others.

Grades

Grades are determined using a contract grade approach. The student will decide within the first week of class the desired final grade, which is not assured by mere completion of work—the course grade involves both quality and quantity of work. After the contract is submitted to the instructor, it must be approved before it is considered a valid contract. It is a good idea to talk over your anticipated contract with the teacher during the first week, either in person or by email. The contract will include a full description of the readings to be done, the assignments to be completed, and the specific dates when assignments are due. No contract will be approved that is missing any of these items or where requirements are all due at the end of the semester.

1. The following grading scale will be used for individual assignments, when relevant. *Note that the term “superior” designates a quality that is higher than an acceptable level, not a comparison with peers in the class.*

94-100	A [distinctive]	80-83.9	B- [acceptable]	67-69.9	D+ [inadequate]
90-93.9	A- [superior]	77-79.9	C+ [acceptable]	64-66.9	D [inadequate]
87-89.9	B+ [superior]	74-76.9	C [acceptable]	60-63.9	D-
84-86.9	B [superior]	70-73.9	C- [inadequate]	< 60	F

2. Another important factor considered in determining the final grade is connecting with the class in an affirming manner. This can be reflected in contributing regularly, significantly, and respectfully in class participation, regular class attendance, turning in work on time, and regularly consulting with the instructor regarding the class.

Topics (revised from class comments)

<u>Week</u>	<u>Topic</u>
Aug 27	Introduction
Sep 3	Death, Grieving, and Life After Death in <i>The Shack</i>
10	Death, Grieving, and Life After Death in <i>The Shack</i>
17	Evening Movie on Death: “Wit”
24	The dying process
Oct 1	How to help those who are dying
8	Grieving for self and others
15	How to help those who are bereaved
22	Evening movie on death: “The Bucket List”
29	Cross-cultural perspectives
Nov 5	Dying children, children’s concepts of death, miscarriage, stillbirth
12	Suicide, euthanasia & biomedical Issues
19	Evening movie on death: “Meet Joe Black”
Dec 3	Life after death
10	Course Evaluations, Debriefing
Finals	Evening movie on death: “Beyond Gates of Splendor”

The information in this syllabus is subject to revision, as announced in regular class periods. Students are responsible for course content and any announcements made when absent, regardless of the reason for missing the class.

Plagiarism, Cheating, and Dishonesty

Plagiarism is the act of representing the work of others as one's own. This and other forms of academic dishonesty are subject to strict disciplinary action, according to the following policy and procedure.

1. Students must avoid unauthorized collaboration, fabrication of data, unauthorized use of computer data, and excessive revision by someone other than the student.
2. Students are responsible to report to their instructor any dishonest behavior of which they are aware, or any circumstances that tend to encourage dishonesty.
3. If there are mitigating circumstances, lesser sanctions than those listed below may be applied with the concurrence of the instructor's superior (i.e. chair or dean).

Suspicion of Dishonesty

1. Students suspected of dishonesty will be confronted discretely and a response solicited.
2. If the student admits to dishonesty, appropriate disciplinary action (as described below) will be applied and a report made to the Student Development Office. The student will also be informed of his or her right of appeal.
3. If the student denies dishonesty, but not to the satisfaction of the instructor, the matter will be referred to the petitions subcommittee of the Educational Policies and Curriculum Committee, who with the Dean of Students will hear both parties and submit their recommendations to the Vice President for Student Development, who shall make a determination.
4. Any further appeals will follow the College process of appeals.

Conformation of Dishonesty

1. A grade of zero will be assigned to any individual assignment or test on which a student has been dishonest.
2. In the case of inadvertent plagiarism, the instructor may at his discretion require that the assignment or examination be rewritten, and may assign a grade one letter grade lower than it otherwise would have been.
3. In the case of a second instance of dishonesty in a course, a student will be dropped from that course with a grade of F and placed on disciplinary probation.
4. Successive acts of dishonesty may result in expulsion from the College, subject to standard procedures of the Student Development Office.
5. A Student who knowingly assists another student in dishonest behavior is equally guilty and subject to the same degrees of sanctions.

--Adapted by CFM faculty from the Wheaton College faculty handbook (section 3.1.16)