

MS 3XD3 Dancing With Mortals: Ministry in the Face of Death and Grief

Instructor: Dorothy Hunse Ph.D.
Contact: dawsonde@mcmaster.ca
Office: 228

Dates:	Saturday January 14	9:00-4:00
	Saturday February 4	9:00-4:00
	Saturday March 4	9:00-4:00
	Saturday April 1	9:00-4:00

COURSE DESCRIPTION

In this world, to live is also to die. The reality of death dramatically informs our living, and yet it is a reality that we can tend to ignore until forced to consider it. It is vital for ministering persons to grapple with the reality of mortality, their own and others, and to develop means of caring equal to the complexity and mystery of death and grief. This course will explore the reality of death, and the nature of ministry to those who are dying and bereaved. Theological, spiritual, psychological, and ethical dimensions of death, dying and bereavement will be discussed. All with a view to preparing students to embrace more deeply the reality of their own mortality, and to equip them to care for others in the face of death and grief.

SPECIALIZATIONS

Pastoral Studies

As a Pastoral Studies course, students will be encouraged to consider the way in which mortality informs our life and ministry, and will be helped to develop ethics and pastoral skills, grounded in a Christian worldview, necessary for providing care to those facing death and bereavement.

Christian Worldview

As a Christian Worldview course, students will have the opportunity to explore death and grief from a Christian perspective, and will be encouraged to consider this perspective in relation to other contemporary worldviews of death and grief.

Church and Culture

As a Church and Culture course, students will be encouraged to assess North American culture(s) in relation to death and grief, and to consider contemporary issues related to death and dying from a Christian point of view.

Counselling and Spiritual Care

As a Counselling and Spiritual Care course, students will be helped to develop theological, spiritual, practical and ethical resources necessary for caring for those facing various situations of death and bereavement.

Doctor of Practical Theology students who wish to apply for this course as an Advanced Elective for their degree program must consult with the Program Director of the DPT and the course instructor in order to develop an Advanced Elective approach to the course that fulfills the specific elements required by the DPT program. Once the elements of the Advanced Elective have been agreed upon by the student, the Program Director, and the instructor, a formal application can be made for an Advanced Elective in connection with this course. Once the application is accepted, DPT students can proceed with the course as part of their degree program.

COURSE OBJECTIVES

Knowing:

1. To deepen appreciation for various perspectives and attitudes towards death, dying and bereavement.
2. To help students develop a robust theological, psychological and spiritual perspective of death, dying and bereavement.
3. To facilitate reflection upon some of the ethical and legal issues that can arise in the face of death.
4. To foster an appreciation for the complexity and mystery of death and dying.

Being:

5. To help students gain a greater awareness of their own perspectives and attitudes towards death, dying and bereavement.
6. To facilitate the student's development of theological and spiritual resources for dying and bereavement.
7. To deepen the student's appreciation of their own mortality, and the way in which our mortality gives shape to the way we live and minister.

Doing:

8. To help students minister effectively with those who are dying and bereaved.
9. To equip students to use theological, psychological and spiritual resources appropriately in the care of those who are dying or bereaved.
10. To foster the development of ways of living and ministering that embraces the reality of mortality.

REQUIRED TEXTS

Callanan, Maggie, and Patricia Kelley. *Final Gifts: Understanding the Special Awareness, needs, and Communications of the Dying*. New York: Bantam Books, 2008.

Davison, Andrew, and Sioned Evans. *Care for the Dying: A Practical and Pastoral Guide*. Eugene Or: Cascade, 2014

Kelley, Melissa M. *Grief: Contemporary Theory and the Practice of Ministry*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2010.

Swinton, John, and Richard Payne eds. *Living Well and Dying Faithfully: Christian Practices for End-of-Life Care*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2009.

RECOMMENDED TEXTS

Attig, Thomas. *How We Grieve: Relearning the World*. Rev. ed. Oxford: Oxford University, 2010.

Gawande, Atul. *Being Mortal: Medicine and What Matters in the End*. Toronto: Doubleday Canada, 2014.

Worden, J. William. *Grief Counseling and Grief Therapy*. 4th ed. New York: Springer, 2008.

COURSE SCHEDULE

January 14 9:00-12:00

- Introduction to the Course and Syllabus
- Sharing our own stories
- North American culture and death

1:00-4:00

- Cultivating our own death awareness
- A theology for befriending our mortality
- Reflection: 2 Corinthians 4:7-12

February 4 9:00-12:00

- The process of dying
- Care as companionship

1:00-4:00

- Issues faced by those dying and their loved ones
- Ways to care for the dying and their loved ones
- Difficult dying (ALS, Dementia/Alzheimers, Childhood dying)
- Reflection: Mark 14:32-40

March 4 9:00-12:00
-Legal and ethical issues
-Medical Assistance in Dying (MAID)

1:00-4:00
-The congregation and caring for the dying
-Anticipatory Grief
-Worldview and Dying
-Reflection: John 13:1-5; 12-17

April 1 9:00-12:00
-Grief theory and the tasks of grieving
-Caring for adults who are grieving
-Caring for children who are grieving

1:00-4:00
-Difficult grieving (Miscarriage, Traumatic Death, Complicated Grief)
-The congregation and care of the bereaved
-Self-care for the ministering person
-Reflection: Matthew 4: 1-11

COURSE REQUIREMENTS SUMMARY

1. Personal Reflection on Death, Dying and Grief			
Part 1:	3-5 pages	15 marks	Due: Jan 14
Part 2:	3-5 pages	15 marks	Due: April 1
2. Research Paper	10-12 pages	35 marks	Due: Mar 18
3. Interview or Case Study	14-16 pages	35 marks	Due: April 8

COURSE REQUIREMENTS DESCRIPTION

Assignment I: Personal Reflection on Death, Dying and Grief

This assignment consists of three parts. The overall aim is to aid personal awareness. To minister well with those who are dying or grieving, and/or to converse well with others about issues related to death and dying and grief, it is important to know ourselves and our own response to death and grief. The instructor will keep everything shared by the student confidential. Students are encouraged to only share that which they feel comfortable sharing.

Part 1:

Reflect upon your personal experiences with death and grief (or lack of experience with death and grief). How have these experiences have informed your perspectives of and attitudes towards death and grief? **Note this assignment is due the first day of class, as it is meant to represent your reflections prior to taking the course.**

The following questions are offered for the purpose of aiding the reflective process. Students may choose to answer these questions as a way of framing their response to this assignment, however they are not required to do so. Students are free to frame their response in a way that best expresses their personal awareness.

- What experiences have you or someone you know had with death and grief?
- How did these experiences affect you physically, emotionally, cognitively, and/or spiritually?
- Would you say your response was healthy and helpful? Would you have liked to have been able to respond differently?
- How did these experiences affect those around you, and how did their response to death and grief impact you?
- Would you say their response was healthy and helpful? Would you have liked them to have been able to respond differently?
- If you have had very little experience with death and grief, how has this fact shaped your attitudes and perspectives of death and grief?
- What fears do you have as you think about future experiences with death and grief?
- What hopes do you have as you think about future experiences with death and grief?

This paper should be 3-5 double-spaced pages, and will be worth 15% of the final course grade. Due January 14.

Part II:

Reflect upon the experience of participating in this course. How has this course challenged and/or confirmed your perspectives of and attitudes towards death and grief. How has this course challenged and/or confirmed your perspectives and attitudes towards life and ministry in the face of our mortality?

This paper should be 3-5 double-spaced pages, and will be worth 15% of the final course grade. Due April 1.

Assignment 2: Research Paper

Write a research paper on a topic of interest pertaining to death and/or grief. Topics are to be approved in advance by the instructor. Include material from course textbooks when relevant. Students are encouraged to choose a topic that pertains to their area of ministry specialization. Some possible topics are:

- The role of Christian practices in supporting people facing death and/or grief
- Cultural attitudes towards death and grief.
- Comparative worldviews of death and grief
- Grieving practices
- Psychological responses to grief
- Theological responses to grief
- Ethical issues in death and dying
- The needs of those facing a life-limiting illness
- Suffering in the dying process

This paper should be 10-12 double-spaced pages, and will be worth 35% of the final course grade. Due March 18.

Assignment 3 Interview or Case Study

The student will prepare an in-depth case study based either on the interview of a person who has lost a loved one, or a first person narrative about grief.

Option 1:

Suggested for students specializing in Pastoral Studies and Counselling and Spiritual Care.

Students may choose to interview a person or interact with a written first person account of grief that represents a similar worldview and/or cultural perspective to their own.

Suggested written accounts include:

-Lewis, C.S. *A Grief Observed*. New York: HarperOne, 2009.

-Wolterstorff, Nicholas. *Lament For A Son*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1987.

Option 2:

Suggested for those students specializing in the areas of Christian Worldview and Church and Culture.

Students may choose to interview a person or interact with a written first person account of grief that represents a differing worldview and/or cultural perspective to their own.

Suggested written accounts include:

-Didion, Joan. *The Year of Magical Thinking*. New York: Knopf Doubleday, 2007.

-Green, Karen. *Bough Down*. Los Angeles: Siglio, 2013.

-Oates, Joyce Carol. *A Widow's Story: A Memoir*. New York: HarperCollins, 2011

-Mathieu, David J. *Way of Wakan: Reflections on Lakota Spirituality and Grief*. Createspace, 2013.

-Wood, Dana. *Mama I'm Not Gone*. Victoria BC: Friesen, 2014

Description of Assignment

This is a culminating assignment. The student is expected to draw upon the course lectures, texts and their own research project in the writing of this paper.

Guidelines regarding the choice of a suitable interviewee, and ethical issues pertaining to the protection of the interviewee will be discussed in class.

1. Write a summary of the person's experience and relate it to what has been learned throughout the entirety of the course. Include an assessment of the person's worldview and cultural approach to dying, death and grief, as well as an assessment of where the person is in his/her grief process. Also draw upon the person's experience to critique the course material. Does the person's experience seem to fit with what has been learned and discussed in the course about the process of dying and bereavement? Did you find any contradictions between the material and the person's experience? To what might you attribute the contradictions—to a difference in worldview, culture, something else? (3-4 double-spaced pages)

2. Pay attention to and write about your own reactions, feelings, responses and/ or any surprises that were elicited by the interview or book. Did you have any strong reactions? Did you have a surprising lack of response? Did issues arise that touch on your own experience with death and grief? What do these responses tell you about how you might respond in future situations of ministry with the dying and bereaved. How will you care for yourself as in you seek to offer this kind of care? (2-3 double-spaced pages)

3. What are the major worldview and/or cultural themes raised by this person's story? What are the major theological and/or spiritual themes raised by this person's story? As best you can, describe the person's worldview of death and grief. Describe any spiritual issues and/or sources of hope that emerge. Describe your own worldview and/or cultural perspective of death, dying and grief. What spiritual issues and/or sources of hope have been raised for you by the person's experience. In what ways is your worldview and cultural perspective and spiritual understandings similar to and/or different from theirs? (3-4 double-spaced pages)

4. Considering the similarities and differences between you and this person, how would you minister to them? Drawing upon all that you have learned in the course, about this person's experience, and about yourself, how would you seek to care for them? Conclude with some thoughts about what you still feel you need to learn in relation to death and grief and the care of those experiencing it. (2-3 double-spaced pages)

This paper should be 10-14 double-spaced pages, and will be worth 35% of the final course grade. Due April 8.

ADDITIONAL NOTES

TEXTBOOK PURCHASE

All required textbooks for this class are available from the College's book service, READ On Bookstore, Room 145, McMaster Divinity College. Texts may be purchased on the first day of class. For advance purchase, you may contact READ On Bookstore, 5 International Blvd, Etobicoke, Ontario M9W 6H3 : phone 416.620.2934; fax 416.622.2308; email books@readon.ca. Other book services may also carry the texts.

LATE POLICY

Assignments must be submitted on the day they are due before 11:59 pm via email in MSWord or PDF format. Assignments submitted after the due date will be considered late and will incur a late penalty of 1% per day (not including weekends).

ACADEMIC HONESTY

Academic dishonesty is a serious offence that may take any number of forms, including plagiarism, the submission of work that is not one's own or for which previous credit has been obtained, and/or unauthorized collaboration with other students. Academic dishonesty can result in severe consequences, e.g., failure of the assignment, failure of the course, a notation on one's academic transcript, and/or suspension or expulsion from the College.

Students are responsible for understanding what constitutes academic dishonesty.

Please refer to the Divinity College Statement on Academic Honesty ~

<http://www.mcmasterdivinity.ca/programs/rules-regulations>

GENDER INCLUSIVE LANGUAGE

McMaster Divinity College uses inclusive language for human beings in worship services, student written materials, and all of its publications. In reference to biblical texts, the integrity of the original expressions and the names of God should be respected. The NRSV and TNIV are examples of the use of inclusive language for human beings. It is expected that inclusive language will be used in chapel services and all MDC assignments.

STYLE

All stylistic considerations (including but not limited to questions of formatting, footnotes, and bibliographic references) must conform to the McMaster Divinity College Style Guidelines for Essays and Theses

<http://www.mcmasterdivinity.ca/sites/default/files/documents/mdcstyleguide.pdf>

Failure to observe appropriate form will result in grade reductions.

DISCLAIMER

This syllabus is the property of the instructor and is prepared with currently available information. The instructor reserves the right to make changes and revisions up to and including the first day of class.