

IPI5/717 (3) Spiritual Perspectives on Death and Dying

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Office hours during term: by appointment

Purpose: Over the last century, medical care has increasingly provided a key cultural framework for understanding death and dying. Technological innovation has prolonged life, but also hidden the reality and inevitability of death. In the process, wisdom about death and dying transmitted through spiritual traditions has been pushed to the margins. More recently, there have been calls to recover that wisdom, teach it widely, and understand its application to contemporary life.

Students in this course will sample that wisdom, surveying topics such as spiritual care for palliative patients and their families; evolving memorial customs and wishes; death scenes in sacred or popular literature and film; responses to a cultural denial of death; spiritual preparation for death; ethics of medically assisted death and the right to die.

Competence Objectives:

Students will be expected to learn and demonstrate the ability to:

- Describe spiritual practices of preparing for and responding to death from at least two religious traditions
- Identify issues in spiritual care relating to death and dying
- Respond to these issues from a theological, psychological, literary or philosophical perspective
- Develop personal insight into their own attitudes towards death and dying
- Offer objective summary and critical assessment of scholarly papers

Format: Summer term 2018, 30 hours total. Attendance at Inter-religious Studies Conference, May 22 (evening), May 23 (day and evening), May 24 (day), for a total of 20 hours, plus one pre-conference class session, (May 11) and one post-conference class session (June 1) for a total of 10 hours. Off-site students can attend the two additional class times on May 11 and June 1 via Adobe connect, but must be in full attendance for the conference.

Identification of the levels at which the course can be taken: Certificate, Basic (Diploma/MA/M.Div) or Advanced (Th.M).

Required reading:

Available on Amazon.ca in paperback and kindle format:

Kuhl, David. *What Dying People Want: Practical Wisdom for the End of Life*. Anchor Canada, 2011.

Raphael, Simcha Paull, *Living and Dying in Ancient Times*. Boulder, CO: Albion-Andalus, 2015.

Posted on moodle:

Selected papers presented at the conference.

Assignments:

For all students:

- (1) Full attendance at all events, as described above in “format.” Attendance should be in accordance with VST policies; thoughtful, engaged participation in class discussion, course activities, and conference.
- (2) Completion of assigned readings.
- (3) One two-hour volunteer shift at the conference, e.g., greeting, registration, logistical support.
- (4) One short oral presentation to the class on a selected conference paper, assigned to you by the instructor no later than May 11 (due in class, June 1).
- (4) A 750-word written response to your assigned conference paper, to be reviewed by the instructor, revised if necessary, and *after instructor approval*, emailed to the paper’s author (Due June 1.)

Additional for certificate students only:

A 750 word reflection paper on one important idea, theme, or presentation from the conference, due no later than August 31, via email to ldkaplan@vst.edu.

Additional or basic-level students only:

A 3000-word paper, exploring interests related to the conference theme, referencing at least 5 conference papers, due no later than August 31, via email to ldkaplan@vst.edu.

Additional for advanced-level students only:

A 4000-word paper, exploring interests related to the conference theme, referencing at least 5 conference papers and at least 5 additional sources due no later than August 31, via email to ldkaplan@vst.edu.

Prerequisites: None.

Selected Bibliography:

Alexander, Eben. *Proof of Heaven: A Neurosurgeon’s Journey into the Afterlife*. New York: Simon & Schuster, 2012

Bernhard, Toni. *How to Be Sick: A Buddhist-Inspired Guide for the Chronically Ill and Their Caregivers*. Somerville, MA: Wisdom Publications, 2010.

Blackman, Sushila. *Graceful exits: how great beings die: death stories of Hindu, Tibetan Buddhist, and Zen masters*. Boston: Shambhala, 2005.

Brener, Anne. *Mourning & Mitzvah: A Guided Journal for Walking the Mourner’s Path Through Grief to Healing*. Woodstock, VT: Jewish Lights Pub., 1993.

Broner, E.M. *Ghost Stories*. Global City Press, 1995.

Byock, Ira. 1999. *Dying well: peace and possibilities at the end of life*. New York: Riverhead Books.

Coleman, Graham and Thuptin Jinpa, eds. *The Tibetan Book of the Dead*. New York: Penguin, 2006.

Dass, Ram et al. *Graceful Passages: A Companion for Living and Dying (Wisdom of the World)* Novato, CA: New World Library, 2001. Paired with *Graceful Passages*, 2CD gift-book produced by Gary Malkin and Michael Stillwater for Wisdom of the World, 2001.

Diamant, Anita. *Saying Kaddish: How to Comfort the Dying, Bury the Dead, and Mourn as a Jew*. (New York: Schocken Books), 1999.

Didion, Joan. *The Year of Magical Thinking*. New York: Vintage International, 2007.

Fersko-Weiss, Henry. *Caring for the Dying: The Doula Approach to a Meaningful Death*. Newburyport, MA: Conari Press, 2017.

Funeral wise. "Funeral Customs by Religion, Ethnicity and Culture." 2018.
<https://www.funeralwise.com/customs/>

Gawande, Atul. *Being mortal*. Toronto: Anchor Canada, 2017.

Gordon, Steve and Irene Kacandas. *Let's Talk about Death: Asking the Questions that Profoundly Change the Way We Live and Die*. Amherst, NY: Prometheus Books, 2015.

Hatfield, Bob and Bruce Hatfield. *Matters of Life and Death*. Kelowna, BC: Wood Lake Books, Inc. 1985.

Jenkinson, Stephen. *Die Wise: A Manifesto for Sanity and Soul*. Berkeley, CA: North Atlantic Books, 2015.

Kalanithi, Paul. *When Breath Becomes Air*. First edition. New York: Random House, 2016.

Kertesz, Imre. *Kaddish for an Unborn Child*. New York: Vintage Classics, 2017.

Kübler-Ross, Elisabeth. *On death and dying: what the dying have to teach doctors, nurses, clergy, and their own families*. [New York]: Macmillan, 1969.

Kübler-Ross, Elisabeth., and David Kessler. *On Grief and Grieving: Finding the Meaning of Grief Through the Five Stages of Loss*. New York: Toronto: Scribner, 2005.

Lamm, Maurice. *The Jewish Way in Death and Mourning*. New York: J. David, 1969.

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

Levine, Stephen. *Meetings at the edge: dialogues with the grieving and dying*, 1984.

Levine, Steven. *One Year to Live: How to Live This Year as If It Were Your Last*. New York: Harmony, 1998.

Levine, Stephen. *Unattended Sorrow: Recovering from Loss and Reviving the Heart*. Emmaus, Pa.: Rodale, 2005.

Levine, Stephen, and Ondrea Levine. 2003. *Qui meurt? une investigation du processus conscient de vivre et mourir*. Paris: Le Grand livre du mois. (*Who Dies? An Investigation of Conscious Living and Conscious Dying*)

Lew, Alan. *This is Real and You Are Completely Unprepared*. Boston: Little, Brown, 2005.

Mints, Binyamin, Binyamin Mints, Joel H. Baron, and Sara Paasche-Orlow. *Deathbed wisdom of the Hasidic masters: The Book of departure and caring for people at the end of life*, 2017.

Nouwen, Henry. *Finding my Way Home: Pathways to Life and the Spirit*. New York: Crossroad Publishing Company, 2001.

O'Brien, Suzanne. *Creating Positive Passings: End of Life Doula, Level 1, Caregiver Training*. Kindle Edition, 2015.

Raphael, Simcha Paull. *Jewish views of the afterlife*. Rowman and Littlefield, 2009,

Raphael, Simcha Paull. *The grief journey and the afterlife: Jewish pastoral care for bereavement*. Boulder, Colorado: Albion Andalus, 2015.

Raphael, Simcha Paull, and Shaul Magid. *Living and dying in ancient times: death, burial, and mourning in Biblical tradition*. Boulder, Colorado: Albion Andalus, 2015.

Raphael, Simcha Paull, and Nadya Gross. *May the angels carry you: Jewish prayers and meditations for the deathbed*. Boulder, Colorado: Albion Andalus, 2016.

Robinson, Marilynne. *Gilead*. New York: Picador, 2004.

Sandberg, Sheryl. *Option B: Facing Adversity, Building Resilience, and Finding Joy*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2017.

Saunders, George. *Lincoln in the Bardo*. New York: Random House, 2017.

Schwalbe, Will. *The End of Your Life Book Club*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2012.

Segal, Alan F. *Life After Death: A History of the Afterlife in the Religions of the West*. 1st Ed. ed. The Anchor Bible Reference Library. New York: Doubleday, 2004.

Singh, Kathleen Dowling. *The Grace in dying: how we are transformed spiritually as we die*. [San Francisco]: HarperSanFrancisco, 2000.

Smart, Michal and Barbara Ashkenas. *Kaddish: Women's Voices*. New York: Urim Publications, 2013.

Wieseltier, Leon. *Kaddish*. New York: Knopf, 1998.

Wilber, Ken. *Grace and grit: spirituality and healing in the life and death of Treya Killam Wilber*. Boston, Mass.: Shambhala, 2001.

Wilder, Thornton. *Our Town*. New York: Harper Perennial Modern Classics, 2003. (first published 1938) 1938.

Willis, Katrina Anne. *Parting gifts*. Tempe, AZ: She Writes Press, 2016.

Zaleski, Carol, and Philip Zaleski. *The Book of Heaven: An Anthology of Writings from Ancient to Modern Times*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000.