

Death and Dying: Comparative Views
Religious Studies 2M03
Online Course – Tentative Outline
Fall 2018
Conestoga College, McMaster School of Nursing

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LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

I acknowledge that Conestoga College is on the traditional territory of the Attawandaron (Neutral), Anishinaabeg, and Haudenosaunee peoples. It is situated on the Haldimand Tract, the land promised to the Six Nations that includes ten kilometers on each side of the Grand River. McMaster University is located on the traditional territories of the Mississauga and Haudenosaunee nations, and within the lands protected by the “Dish With One Spoon” Wampum agreement.

CALENDAR DESCRIPTION

A comparative survey of the diversity of social and ritual practices, religious beliefs, and emotional responses surrounding death in a variety of non-Western cultural contexts.

COURSE OBJECTIVES

1. To provide students with an introductory survey of selected aspects of the cultural and religious considerations of death, dying and bereavement.
2. To ensure that learners engage in analytical, reflective and critical thought regarding their own and others’ attitudes toward death, dying and bereavement.
3. To explore death related themes in various medias including movies, documentaries, news, music, art and/or the Internet.
4. To demonstrate an understanding of the complexities involved in planning funeral experiences and death rituals.

REQUIRED COURSE MATERIAL

- 1) Cacciatore, J., & DeFrain, J. D. (Eds.). (2015). *The world of bereavement: Cultural perspectives on death in families*. Cham: Springer International Publishing.
- 2) Coward, H. & Stajduhar, K. I. (Eds.). (2012). *Religious understandings of a good death in hospice palliative care*. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press.
- 3) Robben, A. C. G. M. (Ed.). (2017). *Death, mourning, and burial: A cross-cultural reader* (2nd ed.). Hoboken, NJ: Wiley-Blackwell.
- 4) Other online readings available on Avenue to Learn.

*All required material is available electronically. Both *Death, mourning and burial* and *Religious understandings of a good death* will also be available for purchase at the Conestoga Bookstore.

EVALUATION OF GRADES

| | |
|------------------------------|-----|
| Participation | 20% |
| Online Quizzes | 20% |
| Movie Review (due October 5) | 25% |
| Essay (due December 3) | 35% |

PARTICIPATION (20%): Participation in the discussion forum is critical for maximizing learning experiences in any distance education course. In this course students are required to be part of an online community of learners who collectively interact through discussion. The instructor will facilitate discussions; however, the instructor will not necessarily address every post. In general, I might share a related idea, intervene if the discussion digresses, or connect student comments together to enhance student learning. Post as early as possible in the week so that people will have time to respond to your contributions. Be respectful of other people's ideas, opinions and beliefs. It is fine to disagree but please respect others' rights to think differently. Discussions will be checked daily during the week and occasionally on weekends. *Weekly* grades will be assessed according to the following rubric.

Participation Rubric

| Criteria | Excellent 1 point | Good .75 point | Acceptable .5 point | Unacceptable .25 or 0 points |
|------------------------------|--|--|---|---|
| Frequency | Participates 3 or more times <i>throughout</i> the week. | Participates a minimum of 2 times <i>throughout</i> the week. Includes an initial posting. | Participates by writing an initial posting. | Limited or no participation. Further effort is required. |
| Initial Posting | Posts well developed assignment that fully addresses and develops all aspects of the task. <i>Initial posting is 250-300 words.</i> | Posts well developed assignment that addresses all aspects of the task but lacks full development of concepts. Initial posting is less than 250 words. | Posts adequate assignment with superficial thought and preparation; does not address all aspects of the task. Initial posting is less than 250 words. | Posts no assignment. |
| Follow-up Postings | Demonstrates analysis of others' posts; extends meaningful discussion by building on previous posts. Each posting is a <i>minimum 125 words.</i> | Elaborates on an existing posting with further comment or observation. Posting is a <i>minimum 125 words.</i> | Posts shallow contribution to discussion; does not enrich discussion. | Posts no follow-up responses to others. |
| Content Contribution | Posts factually correct, reflective and substantive contribution; advances discussion. | Posts information that is factually correct; lacks full development of concept or thought. | Repeats but does not add substantive information to the discussion. | Posts information that is off-topic, incorrect, or irrelevant to discussion. |
| Reference and Support | Uses references to readings, audio-visual material or personal experience to support comments. | Incorporates some references from readings, audio-visual material or personal experience. | Uses personal experience but does not reference readings or other supporting material. | Includes no references or supporting experience. |
| Clarity and Mechanics | Contributes to discussion with clear, concise comments formatted in an easy to read style that is free of grammatical or spelling errors. | Contributes valuable information to discussion with minor clarity or mechanics errors. | Communicates in friendly, courteous and helpful manner with some errors in clarity or mechanics. | Posts long, unorganized or rude content that may contain multiple errors or may be inappropriate. |

~adapted from Barbara Frey's "Rubric for Asynchronous Discussion Participation"

ONLINE QUIZZES (20%): There will be six bi-weekly quizzes. These are straightforward multiple-choice quizzes based on lecture material, audiovisual materials and the required readings. Each quiz will contain approximately 25 questions based on two modules. You will be given 30 minutes to complete the quiz. I strongly suggest that you carefully read through the material *before* challenging the quiz.

MOVIE REVIEW (25%): For this assignment, you may select to review either (1) *Departures* (2008) directed by Yōjirō Takita; (2) *Eve and the Fire Horse* (2005) by Julia Kwan; (3) *Coco* (2017) by Lee Unkrich; (4) *Ikiru* (1952) by Akira Kurosawa, or (5) *Kinyarwanda* (2011) by Alrick Brown. You may choose to either purchase, rent or stream a copy. The movie review should be approximately 1000-1250 words. Please see “Template for Movie Review” for further instructions and expectations. The review is due by October 5, 11:59 PM. Please submit your essay to the appropriate drop box on Avenue to Learn.



ESSAY (35%): This essay will bring together course contents and analytical skills with your own experience of life and death. Drawing on academic resources and incorporating aspects of selected cultural/religious traditions that we have studied in this course, write a detailed account of how your funeral *could* be observed. You may also choose to incorporate the Jewish, Christian or Muslim chapters from *Religious understandings of a good death* or other unassigned chapters from either *Death, mourning and burial* or *The world of bereavement* as academic resources. Begin your essay with a short scenario describing the cause or type of death and initial reactions by others. You should also consider your own understanding of a “good death” in this essay. Is your death perceived of as “good” or “bad” by both yourself and others? In your essay, you will address the following questions: How is your body treated and “disposed of?” Why and where? Is there a service? Who officiates? What rituals are performed? How, why and by whom? What kinds of views of the afterlife will be presumed? How are the mourners to react? What memorial rites or forms of remembrance will there be? Grading will not be based on individual choices, but rather on the analysis of your choices. You should use citations to course materials and other sources. Or, alternatively you could use footnotes/endnotes to make additional academic observations. I do not want to see just an imaginative narrative account—you must incorporate academic sources. BE CREATIVE! The essay should be approximately 2500 words in length. Your essay is due by 11:59 PM. Please submit your essay to the appropriate drop box on Avenue to Learn.

ASSIGNMENT STYLE GUIDE: All graded assignments should be written using APA. For APA style and format please utilize <https://apa.conestogac.on.ca>.

LATE SUBMISSIONS/EXTENSIONS: Students who cannot meet an assignment deadline are required to consult with the course instructor. This consultation must occur before the assignment is due. Late assignments will be penalized at a rate of 5% per day, and will not be accepted more than 5 days after the due date unless prior arrangements have been made with the instructor.

COURSE LECTURES, READINGS, AUDIO-VISUAL MATERIAL AND DUE DATES

September 4

Film:

Reading:

Module 1 – Introduction: The Cross-Cultural Study of Death

The Split Horn: Life of a Hmong Shaman in America (Kanopy)

- (1) Bordere, T.C. (2009). Culturally conscious thanatology. *The Forum* 35(2), p. 1, 3-4.
- (2) Gire, J. (2014). How death imitates life: Cultural influences on conceptions of death and dying. *Online readings in psychology and culture*, 6(2).
- (3) Robben, A. C. G. M. (2017). Death and anthropology: An introduction. In A. C. G. M. Robben (Ed.). *Death, mourning, and burial: A cross-cultural reader* (pp. 1-16). Hoboken, NJ: Wiley-Blackwell.

September 11

Film:

Reading:

Module 2 – Concepts of Death

Dying in Africa: Perspectives on the End of Life in Burkina Faso, Ghana, Mali, and South Africa (Films on Demand)

- (1) Hertz, R. (2017). A contribution to the study of the collective presentation of death. In A. C. G. M. Robben (Ed.). *Death, mourning, and burial: A cross-cultural reader* (pp. 19-33). Hoboken, NJ: Wiley-Blackwell.
- (2) Lifton, R. J. & Olson, E. (2017). Symbolic immortality. In A. C. G. M. Robben (Ed.). *Death, mourning, and burial: A cross-cultural reader* (pp. 44-51). Hoboken, NJ: Wiley-Blackwell.
- (3) Malinowski, B. (2017). Magic, science and religion. In A. C. G. M. Robben (Ed.). *Death, mourning, and burial: A cross-cultural reader* (pp. 79-82). Hoboken, NJ: Wiley-Blackwell.
- (4) Evans-Pritchard, E. E. (2017). Witchcraft, oracles and magic among the Azande. In A. C. G. M. Robben (Ed.). *Death, mourning, and burial: A cross-cultural reader* (pp. 83-89). Hoboken, NJ: Wiley-Blackwell.

- **MODULES 1 AND 2 QUIZ IS DUE BY SEPTEMBER 17, 11:59 PM**

September 18

Film:

Reading:

Module 3 – Mortuary Rituals

Funeral Season (Kanopy)

- (1) van Gennep, A. (2017). The rites of passage. In A. C. G. M. Robben (Ed.). *Death, mourning, and burial: A cross-cultural reader* (pp. 34-43). Hoboken, NJ: Wiley-Blackwell.
- (2) Conklin, B. A. (2017). Hunting the ancestors: Death and alliance in Wari' cannibalism. In A. C. G. M. Robben (Ed.). *Death, mourning, and burial: A cross-cultural reader* (pp. 211-216). Hoboken, NJ: Wiley-Blackwell.
- (3) Haram, L. (2017). 'We are tired of mourning!' The economy of death and bereavement in a time of AIDS. In A. C. G. M. Robben (Ed.). *Death, mourning, and burial: A cross-cultural reader* (pp. 250-261). Hoboken, NJ: Wiley-Blackwell.

September 25

Film:

Reading:

Module 4 – Grief and Mourning

Mourning for Mangatopi (Kanopy)

- (1) Radcliffe-Brown, A. R. (2017). The Andaman islanders. In A. C. G. M. Robben (Ed.). *Death, mourning, and burial: A cross-cultural reader* (pp. 151-155). Hoboken, NJ: Wiley-Blackwell.
- (2) Rosaldo, R. Grief and a headhunter's rage. In A. C. G. M. Robben (Ed.). *Death, mourning, and burial: A cross-cultural reader* (pp. 156-166). Hoboken, NJ: Wiley- Blackwell.
- (3) Schepher-Hughes, N. (2017). Death without weeping. In A. C. G. M. Robben (Ed.). *Death, mourning, and burial: A cross-cultural reader* (pp.167-180). Hoboken, NJ: Wiley-Blackwell.
- (4) King, B. J. The expression of grief in monkeys, apes, and other animals. In A. C. G. M. Robben (Ed.). *Death, mourning, and burial: A cross-cultural reader* (pp.202-208). Hoboken, NJ: Wiley-Blackwell.

- **MODULES 3 AND 4 QUIZ IS DUE BY OCTOBER 1, 11:59 PM**

October 2

Film:

Reading:

Module 5 – Memorials: Relationships with the Dead

La Ofrenda: The Days of the Dead (Kanopy)

- (1) Kopytoff, I. Ancestors as elders in Africa. In A. C. G. M. Robben (Ed.). *Death, mourning, and burial: A cross-cultural reader* (pp. 265-275). Hoboken, NJ: Wiley-Blackwell.
- (2) Bacigalupo, A. M. (2017). The life, death, and rebirth of a Mapuche shaman: Remembering, disremembering, and the willful transformation of memory. In A. C. G. M. Robben (Ed.). *Death, mourning, and burial: A cross-cultural reader* (pp. 276-292). Hoboken, NJ: Wiley-Blackwell.
- (3) Kwon, H. (2017). The ghosts of war and the spirit of cosmopolitanism. In A. C. G. M. Robben (Ed.). *Death, mourning, and burial: A cross-cultural reader* (pp.293-305). Hoboken, NJ: Wiley-Blackwell.

- **MOVIE REVIEW IS DUE BY OCTOBER 5, 11:59 PM**

October 16

Film:

Reading:

Module 6 – Religious Understandings of a Good Death

Life Before Death (Kanopy)

- (1) Wright, M. & Clark, D. (2012). Cicely Saunders and the development of hospice palliative care. In Coward, H. & K. I. Stajduhar, K. I. (Eds.). *Religious understandings of a good death in hospice palliative care* (pp. 11-28). Albany, NY: State University of New York Press.
- (2) Stajduhar, K. & Tschanz, C. (2012). Interfaith chaplaincy in hospice palliative care. In Coward, H. & K. I. Stajduhar, K. I. (Eds.). *Religious understandings of a good death in hospice palliative care* (pp. 277-295). Albany, NY: State University of New York Press.

- **MODULES 5 AND 6 QUIZ IS DUE BY OCTOBER 22, 11:59 PM**

October 23

MODULE 7 – Dying in India

Film:

Death and Dying in Varanasi (Films on Demand)

Reading:

- (1) Rambachan, A. (2012). 'Like a ripe fruit separating effortlessly from its vine:' Religious understandings of a good death: Hinduism. In Coward, H. & K. I. Stajduhar, K. I. (Eds.). *Religious understandings of a good death in hospice palliative care* (pp. 29-50). Albany, NY: State University of New York Press.
- (2) Nayar, K. E. (2012). Punjabi extended family hospice care. In Coward, H. & K. I. Stajduhar, K. I. (Eds.). *Religious understandings of a good death in hospice palliative care* (pp. 211-230). Albany, NY: State University of New York Press.

October 30

Module 8 – Death and the Ancestors in China

Film:

Human Harvest: China's Organ Trafficking (Kanopy)

Reading:

- (1) Hui, E. C. & Leung, D. C. (2012). Chinese religions and hospice care. In Coward, H. & K. I. Stajduhar, K. I. (Eds.). *Religious understandings of a good death in hospice palliative care* (pp. 145-164). Albany, NY: State University of New York Press.
- (2) Qin, S. & Xia, Y. (2015). Grieving rituals and beliefs of Chinese families. In Cacciatore, J. & DeFrain, J. D. (Eds.). *The world of bereavement: Cultural perspectives on death in families* (pp. 69-80). Switzerland: Springer International Publishing.

- MODULES 7 AND 8 QUIZ IS DUE BY NOVEMBER 5, 11:59 PM

November 6

Module 9 – Tibetan Buddhism and the Tibetan Book of the Dead

Films:

Tibetan Book of the Dead: The Great Liberation (National Film Board)*Vultures of Tibet: The Tradition of Sky Burial* (Kanopy)

Readings:

- (1) Bruce, A. (2012). Welcoming an old friend: Buddhist perspectives on good death. In Coward, H. & K. I. Stajduhar, K. I. (Eds.). *Religious understandings of a good death in hospice palliative care* (pp. 51-75). Albany, NY: State University of New York Press.
- (2) Gielen, U. P. (1997). A death on the roof of the world. The perspective of Tibetan Buddhism (73-97). In Parkes, C. M., Laungani, P. & Young, B. (Eds.). *Death and bereavement across cultures*. New York: Routledge.

November 13

Module 10 – Death in Japan, Korea and Thailand

Film:

Saving 10,000: Winning a War on Suicide in Japan<https://topdocumentaryfilms.com/saving-10000-winning-war-suicide-japan/>

Reading:

- (1) Florida, R. & Ratanakul, P. (2012). Buddhist hospice care in Thailand. In Coward, H. & K. I. Stajduhar, K. I. (Eds.). *Religious understandings of a good death in hospice palliative care* (pp. 167-189). Albany, NY: State University of New York Press.
- (2) Cho, E. & Sung M. Death and grief in Korea: The continuum of life and death. In Cacciatore, J. & DeFrain, J. D. (Eds.). *The world of bereavement: Cultural perspectives on death in families* (pp. 81-97). Switzerland: Springer International Publishing.

- MODULES 9 AND 10 QUIZ IS DUE BY NOVEMBER 19, 11:59 PM

November 20

Film:

Module 7 – Indigenous People of North America

Cross Lake: "This is where I live"

<http://www.cbc.ca/fifth/episodes/2016-2017/cross-lake-this-is-where-i-live>

Reading:

(1) Kaufert, J. M., Wiebe, R., Lavallee, M. & Kaufert, P. A. (2012). Seeking physical, cultural, ethical and spiritual 'safe space' for a good death: The experience of indigenous peoples in accessing hospice care. In Coward, H. & K. I. Stajduhar, K. I. (Eds.). *Religious understandings of a good death in hospice palliative care* (pp. 231-256). Albany, NY: State University of New York Press.

(2) Sharp, C., Beckstein, A., Limb, G. & Bullock, Z. (2015). Completing the Circle of Life: Death and Grief Among Native Americans. In Cacciatore, J. & DeFrain, J. D. (Eds.). *The world of bereavement: Cultural perspectives on death in families* (pp. 221-239). Switzerland: Springer International Publishing.

November 27

Film:

MODULE 12 – Death in African Cultures

Homegoings (Kanopy)

Reading:

(1) Hadley, M. L. & Agupio, G. (2012). The Ugandan way of living and dying. In Coward, H. & K. I. Stajduhar, K. I. (Eds.). *Religious understandings of a good death in hospice palliative care* (pp. 191-210). Albany, NY: State University of New York Press.

(2) Njue, J. R. M., Rombo, D., Lutomia, A. N., Smart, L.S., Mwaniki, L. M. & Sore, I. L. (2015). Death, Grief and Culture in Border Kenya: Experiential Strengths-Based Research. In Cacciatore, J. & DeFrain, J. D. (Eds.). *The world of bereavement: Cultural perspectives on death in families* (pp. 3-23). Switzerland: Springer International Publishing.

- **MODULES 11 AND 12 QUIZ IS DUE BY DECEMBER 3, 11:59 PM**
- **ESSAY IS DUE BY DECEMBER 3, 11:59 PM**

University Policies

1. ACADEMIC INTEGRITY POLICY

You are expected to exhibit honesty and use ethical behaviour in all aspects of the learning process. Academic credentials you earn are rooted in principles of honesty and academic integrity.

Academic

dishonesty is to knowingly act or fail to act in a way that results or could result in unearned academic credit or advantage. This behaviour can result in serious consequences, e.g. the grade of zero on an assignment, loss of credit with a notation on the transcript (notation reads: "Grade of F assigned for academic dishonesty"), and/or suspension or expulsion from the university. It is your responsibility to understand what constitutes academic dishonesty. For information on the various types of academic dishonesty please refer to the Academic Integrity Policy, located at www.mcmaster.ca/academicintegrity

The following illustrates only three forms of academic dishonesty:

1. Plagiarism, e.g. the submission of work that is not one's own or for which other credit has been obtained.
2. Improper collaboration in group work.
3. Copying or using unauthorized aids in tests and examinations.

2. TURNITIN.COM LANGUAGE FOR COURSE OUTLINES

In this course, we will be using a web-based service (Turnitin.com) to reveal plagiarism. Students will be expected to submit their work electronically to Turnitin.com and in hard copy so that it can be checked for academic dishonesty. Students who do not wish to submit their work to Turnitin.com must still submit a copy to the instructor. No penalty will be assigned to a student who does not submit work to Turnitin.com. All submitted work is subject to normal verification that standards of academic integrity have been upheld (e.g., on-line search, etc.). To see the Turnitin.com Policy, please go to www.mcmaster.ca/academicintegrity

3. LANGUAGE FOR AVENUE TO LEARN OR OTHER ON-LINE COMPONENTS

In this course, we will be using Avenue to Learn. Students should be aware that, when they access the electronic components of this course, private information such as first and last names, user names for the McMaster e-mail accounts, and program affiliation may become apparent to all other students in the same course.

The available information is dependent on the technology used. Continuation in this course will be deemed consent to this disclosure. If you have any questions or concerns about such disclosure please discuss this with the course instructor.

4. ACADEMIC ACCOMMODATION OF STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

Students who require academic accommodation must contact Student Accessibility Services (SAS) to make arrangements with a Program Coordinator. Academic accommodations must be arranged for each term of study. Student Accessibility Services can be contacted by phone 905525-9140 ext. 28652 or e-mail sas@mcmaster.ca. For further information, consult McMaster University's Policy for Academic Accommodation of Students with Disabilities.

5. POLICY FOR MODIFYING A COURSE:

The instructor and university reserve the right to modify elements of the course during the term. The university may change the dates and deadlines for any or all courses in extreme circumstances. If either type of modification becomes necessary, reasonable notice and communication with the students will be given with explanation and the opportunity to comment on changes. It is the responsibility of the student to check her/his McMaster email and course websites weekly during the term and to note any changes.

6. E-MAIL COMMUNICATION POLICY:

Effective September 1, 2010, it is the policy of the Faculty of Social Sciences that all email communication sent from students to instructors (including TAs), and from students to staff, must originate from the student's own McMaster University e-mail account.

This policy protects confidentiality and confirms the identity of the student. It is the student's responsibility to ensure that communication is sent to the university from a McMaster account. If an instructor becomes aware that a communication has come from an alternate address, the instructor may not reply at his or her discretion. Email

7. MCMASTER STUDENT ABSENCE FORM:

The McMaster Student Absence Form (MSAF) (<http://www.mcmaster.ca/msaf/>) is a self-reporting tool for Undergraduate Students to report MEDICAL absences that last up to 5 days and provides the ability to request accommodation for any missed academic work (that is less than 30% of the course grade). Please note, this tool cannot be used during any final examination period. You may submit a maximum of ONE Academic Work Missed request per term. It is YOUR responsibility to follow up with your instructor immediately regarding the nature of the accommodation. If you are absent for more than 5 days, exceed one request per term, are absent for a reason other than medical, or have missed work worth 30% or more of the final grade, you MUST visit your Faculty Office. You may be required to provide supporting documentation. This form should be filled out when you are about to return to class after your absence.