Conrad Grebel University College
University of Waterloo
TS689/RS391: Aging and the Spiritual Life
Winter 2018

Class Time: Wednesdays 9 – 11:50 am
Location: Room CGR 4224

Instructor: Jane Kuepfer
Office Hours: I am in my office most Wednesdays, Thursdays and Fridays. Drop in anytime my door is open; make an appointment for any conversation of more than a few minutes.
Office Location: Room 2124
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Email: jane.kuepfer@uwaterloo.ca

Course Description:
Through experiential, reflective and theoretical learning, this course will explore spirituality as a central aspect of growth and development in later life. The perspectives of various faith and humanistic traditions will be included. Topics will include: religious beliefs and spiritual concerns later in life; a theology of aging; ministry to persons in later life; spirituality and dementia; death and dying.
Note: this course is cross-listed and welcomes ‘participating visitors’ (auditors). Some of the students in the classroom will be undergraduates, some graduate students, and some participating visitors. It is anticipated that this mixture will contribute to rich discussion and learning.

Course Objectives:
Students completing this course will:

- become aware of and conversant within the field of spirituality and aging
- have opportunity to dialogue about aging and spirituality in a forum that promotes academic rigor and mutual respect – “seeking wisdom, nurturing faith and pursuing justice and peace in service to church and society”
- become aware of assumptions and biases operative in their own understandings of aging and older persons
- develop a relationship with an older person and learn from his/her experience
- develop a familiarity with issues in aging and the capacity to bring critical thinking and a pastoral sensibility to those issues

TS 689 students will, in addition, develop an ability to view issues of aging in the light of a theology of aging.
**Course Expectations:**

**Readings and Attendance:**
This course expects a high level of student participation. You will be expected to read all the assigned readings prior to the weekly class. Lectures and discussions will assume that you have covered that material. While readings may not be addressed directly in class, students are expected to raise questions and engage the readings during class. Regular class attendance and participation is expected. Please contact the instructor to make arrangements if you need to miss a class. *(10% of grade)*

**Expectations for various participants:**
**TS 689** students are expected to complete all readings (including McFadden) and assignments.  
**RS 391** students are expected to complete the readings assigned and prepare shorter assignments.  
**Participating visitors** are expected to complete the readings, but not expected to submit assignments.

**Required Reading Materials:**

Other readings are available online through LEARN or in the library at Conrad Grebel on reserve (3 hour loan).

**TS 689** students only:  

**Learn:**
This course will make use of a WATERLOO LEARN website.

Students must familiarize themselves with the LEARN platform and check it regularly for:
- **News** – Important announcements such as the cancellation of class due to illness will be posted there, so please try to check the site before each class, just in case.  
- **Readings** – All required readings, other than the required text, will be posted in LEARN.  
- **Content** – Any handouts in class will be posted in LEARN.

**Evaluations:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Due Date</th>
<th>Assignment</th>
<th>Weighting</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>January 10</td>
<td>Reflection Paper #1</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>February 7</td>
<td>Presentation</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>March 14</td>
<td>Senior Partner Journal and Reflection Paper #2</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>March 28 (presentation)</td>
<td>Research Paper And Class Presentation</td>
<td>30%</td>
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<tr>
<td>April 4 (paper)</td>
<td>Readings and participation</td>
<td>10%</td>
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Written and Oral Assignments:

Reflection Paper #1
A 4-5 page double-spaced engagement with chapter 2 (pp. 30-45 + 402-407) of the text *Spirituality, Religion, and Aging* by Holly Nelson-Becker.
Reflect on your experience of and understanding of spirituality and religion. If you encountered new ideas in the reading, what inspired you? What made you uncomfortable? What do you know about yourself and how will you hold that as you consider providing spiritual care for unique others? You may find it helpful to work through the ‘exploring your spirituality’ questions on p.24.

Faith Perspectives Presentation
A 10-minute in-class presentation on aging and spirituality from a faith or secular perspective of your choice; e.g. Muslim, Jewish, Christian, Indigenous, Buddhist, Humanist, etc. Two core questions will frame your presentation: 1) How is aging understood within this particular tradition? and 2) What do I need to know about this person’s faith tradition so that I can best offer spiritual care to them? By way of introduction, include a brief summary of the history of the tradition and its core beliefs. Prepare a one-page handout for class members that lists your main points as well as four resources that class members can access for information on the faith tradition you are presenting. Chapter 5 in Nelson-Becker can be a starting point for your research.

Senior Partner Journal and Reflection Paper #2
*This learning opportunity is the experiential component of the course*: Each student will meet for a minimum of six hours throughout the term with an aging person over the age of 70 who is not a relative. (Your partner must be chosen by January 24. Check with the instructor if you need help finding a partner).
- Keep a journal of your experience.
- Write a 7-8 (TS 689 students 8-10) page double-spaced reflection paper about your senior partner. The goal for this paper is to attempt to see the world through the eyes of your senior partner and to reflect on the role and influence of their spirituality on their daily lives. Your paper will be graded on your ability to reflect on this person from the perspective of their physical and cognitive abilities, their family and community system, their developmental capacity, and their religious and spiritual life. (We will be covering these various aspects of aging in class).
- Insights gleaned from the autobiographic journal of your choice (see required readings) should be integrated into the paper.
- TS 689 students will include a one-page spiritual care plan that includes your partner’s strengths and resources as well as spiritual concerns and potential for growth. Reflect on the role of the faith community/congregation (if there is one), in this person’s life.
- Both your journal and your paper are to be handed in, although the journal will not be graded.

Research paper and class presentation:
*Paper* - Choose a topic in the field of spirituality and aging that is of interest to you (See list of research paper ideas. Topic and working bibliography should be shared with the instructor (email or meeting) by February 28.)
- RS391 students: 10-12 pages, double-spaced (2500 – 3000 words);
- TS689 students: minimum of 20 pages (5000 words).
TS 689 students will dedicate a section of the paper to ministry within their topic area. For example, if the topic area is ‘Aging and Singleness’, a section of the paper will be ministry with
seniors who are single. Alternatively, this section may explore your topic in the light of your theology of aging.

Class Presentations will be 15 minutes with 5 minutes for questions and discussion—a total of 20 minutes. Your presentation will include a one-page handout citing the main points and your primary resources.

Further notes about assignments:

- All assignments are to be submitted in hard copy, double-spaced, standard margins and 12-point font, with no report covers.
- Add page numbers.
- Citation of sources may be in APA or Chicago Style (Turabian).
- Use inclusive language when referring to people.
- There is no binding rule about the number of sources to use in the research. It is often better to use fewer sources well than to cite many books and/or journal articles superficially. That said, for the research paper you should expect to do significant reading beyond the required readings discussed in class. I would suggest a minimum of seven sources for RS391 students, and a minimum of ten sources for TS689 students.
- My general rubric for marking research papers is as follows: 1/3 for a fair and accurate representation of your sources, 1/3 for your reflection and critical analysis, 1/3 for the quality of writing.
- Late submission of any assignment will be penalized 3% per calendar day if alternate arrangements have not been made.
Course Schedule:

January 3  
**Introduction**
Topics, Readings and Assignments

Setting the Context: What do we bring to the subject? Exploring our experiences and assumptions about aging.

January 10  
**What is spirituality?**
Read: Nelson-Becker, Chapter 2 (pp 30-45) and pp 402-407

- Reflection paper due (4-5 pages)

January 17  
**What is aging?**
Read: Nelson-Becker, Chapter 4 ‘Religion and Spirituality in Theory’

January 24  
**Spiritual needs and resources**
Read: Nelson-Becker, Chapter 6 ‘Assessment’

  Chapter 8 ‘Spirituality, religion, and health’

  Chapter 9 ‘Spirituality in emotion, depression, and anxiety’

- Have you found a ‘Senior Partner?’

January 31  
**Meaning, purpose and legacy**
Read: Nelson-Becker, Chapter 3 – 77-82 of ‘Values and ethics with older adults’


February 7  
**Faith perspectives and aging**
Read: Nelson-Becker, Chapter 3 – 56-73 ‘Values and ethics with older adults’


- In class reporting/presentation on aging and spirituality from a perspective of your choice

February 14  
**The Spiritual Journey and the tasks of aging**
Read a book written by someone reflecting personally on the experience of aging – choose from list provided (this will be the book you use as part of your reflection paper later in the course)
February 21
Note: No class on February 21 due to Reading Week

February 28  **Spirituality and Dementia**
Read: Nelson-Becker, chapter 10 “Memory, dementia and spiritual care”
– TS 689 students - McFaddens – *Aging Together* - Chapters 1-4
  • Research paper topic and working bibliography shared with the instructor (email or meeting)

March 7  **Spiritual care and support**
Read: Nelson-Becker, chapter 7 “Religious and spiritual interventions with clients”
– TS 689 students - McFaddens – *Aging Together* - Chapters 5-11

March 14  **Discussion of Senior Partners:** In class reporting
  • Senior Partners Reflection Paper due.

March 21  **Spirituality at the end of life/Death and dying**
Read: Nelson-Becker, chapter 11 “Spirituality at the end of life”

March 28
  • Presentation of research papers

April 4
  • **Final Research Paper Due.** Submit the paper in hardcopy during regular business hours to the main office at Conrad Grebel University College.
UWaterloo Policies

Academic Integrity: In order to maintain a culture of academic integrity, members of the University of Waterloo are expected to promote honesty, trust, fairness, respect and responsibility. 
Arts: Academic Integrity website University of Waterloo: Academic Integrity Office

Discipline: A student is expected to know what constitutes academic integrity, to avoid committing academic offences, and to take responsibility for his/her actions. A student who is unsure whether an action constitutes an offence, or who needs help in learning how to avoid offences (e.g., plagiarism, cheating) or about “rules” for group work/collaboration should seek guidance from the course professor, academic advisor, or the Undergraduate Associate Dean. When misconduct has been found to have occurred, disciplinary penalties will be imposed under Policy 71 – Student Discipline. For information on categories of offenses and types of penalties, students should refer to Policy 71 - Student Discipline.

Grievance: A student who believes that a decision affecting some aspect of his/her university life has been unfair or unreasonable may have grounds for initiating a grievance. Read Policy 70 - Student Petitions and Grievances, Section 4.

Appeals: A student may appeal the finding and/or penalty in a decision made under Policy 70 - Student Petitions and Grievances (other than regarding a petition) or Policy 71 - Student Discipline if a ground for an appeal can be established. Read Policy 72 - Student Appeals.

Other sources of information for students:

Note for students with learning differences: The AccessAbility Services (AAS) office, located in Needles Hall Room 1132, collaborates with all academic departments to arrange appropriate accommodations for students with disabilities without compromising the academic integrity of the curriculum. If you require academic accommodations to lessen the impact of your disability, please register with the AAS office at the beginning of each academic term.

Counselling Services: Counselling Services provides free confidential counselling, in both individual and group sessions, with qualified professionals to help registered students, faculty and staff with personal concerns, educational career decisions, and strategies to studies and exams: www.adm.uwaterloo.ca/infocs, ext. 33528, NH Room 2080.

Accommodation for Illness: A medical certificate presented in support of an official petition for relief from normal academic requirements must provide all of the information requested on the “University of Waterloo Verification of Illness” form or it will not be accepted. More information can be obtained from Health Services and the form is available in pdf: https://uwaterloo.ca/health-services/student-medical-clinic/services/verification-illness. That should be submitted to Accessibility services rather than to your instructor.

The Writing Centre: Writing Centre staff offer one-on-one support in planning assignments and presentations, using and documenting research, organizing and structuring papers, and revising for clarity and coherence. Make an appointment or drop in at the Library for quick questions or feedback. To book a 50-minute appointment and to see drop-in hours, visit www.uwaterloo.ca/writing-centre
READINGS

Required Texts:


TS 689 students:

Other readings are available online through LEARN or in the library at Conrad Grebel on reserve (3 hour loan).

Choose one (an autobiographical book written from the perspective of an older person):


Selected Bibliography

AGING AND SPIRITUALITY


**SPIRITUAL CARE**


**DEMMENTIA**


**DYING**


**TALKING WITH FAMILY AND FRIENDS**

RESEARCH TOPIC IDEAS:

- Spirituality and dementia
- Spiritual maturity
- Aging and the Bible
- Wisdom
- The conscious aging movement
- Spirituality and health (physical or mental)
- Isolation and loneliness and aging
- Counselling older adults
- Spiritual care provision (in a certain context)
- Aging and an ethical and/or justice issue (poverty, institutions, abuse, resource allocation...)
- Aging in a global context (or a certain culture)
- ‘Home’ – age friendly communities
- Ageism
- Death and dying
- Aging and identity
- Storying life – spiritual autobiography, narrative gerontology
- Gender considerations in aging
- Sexuality and aging
- Developing a congregational ministry with seniors
- Or other topic/question of interest to you...