University of Waterloo
Religious Studies Department
Spring 2023

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Death and Dying RS266

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Instructor:

Office Hours: 1:00 - 2:00pm, Wednesdays - or by appointment

Lecture Hours: Wednesdays, 2:30pm - 5:30pm   May 10 to Aug 1

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COURSE DESCRIPTION

Death is a phenomenon that is often seen as a physical expiration of life. It is a source of fear, of reverence, and also intrigue. Yet death in itself is not just a physical transformation, regardless of personal beliefs. Funeral rites, bureaucratic processes, cultural and religious worldviews help shape our understandings of death, as do broader social movements. Some see death as finite, others as a shift between worlds, and others yet as a continuum. Death is physical, philosophical, and cultural.

Through this course, students will discover how the human relations to death are influenced by cultures, politics, religions, and the environments of humans. This course will touch on many of the larger religions and some diverse understandings within them. It will also include glimpses of other traditions, philosophies, and social phenomena in understanding and relating to death. Whether one is religious or not, death is the one universal that impacts us all, and conditions the world we live in.

OBJECTIVES

To provide students with an introductory survey of some cultural, social, and religious considerations of death, dying, and bereavement.

By the end of the course, students should be able to identify and explain death as a complex physical and cultural event, identify multiple views of death in various religions and cultures over time and space, give examples of contemporary social and philosophical movements and their relation to death.

Course Delivery and Structure

Given the complexity of this topic and the diversity of students in the classroom, different methods of learning, modes of presentations, participating, and assessment will be used. In addition to regular lectures, movies, videos, and other forms of media are part of the learning experience, as well as guest speakers from differing life experiences. Assessment will include various mechanisms including essay/paper writing, class participation, and weekly reflections.

At the end of the course, you should be able to:

- Identify and explain death as a complex physical and cultural event
- Explain the role of funerals/memorials/rites of passage in society
- Identify various aspects of the 'death industry'
- Explain how our views of "who we are" affect our belief in an afterlife
- Identify the views of death in various religions
- Identify new or differing ways of dealing with death and dying

REQUIRED MATERIALS

We will be reading Viktor Frankl's 1946 book, *Man's Search for Meaning*.

There are no additional required texts but a few chapters from *Death and Bereavement Across Cultures*, Second edition (edited by Parkes et al.) will be used and given as reference in the course. These are available online through the University of Waterloo library, and the Frankl book is readily available at any bookstore and also in audio book format.

All other assigned readings will be added on LEARN in the weekly modules.

TEACHING and LEARNING PROCESS

Weekly classes include lectures, discussion, learning activities, and audio-visual material. Readings will have a direct impact on the weekly lessons and discussion. Students are responsible for <u>completing the assigned readings before class</u>, and keeping a log of key terms and concepts throughout the term.

EVALUATION

1.	Attendance and regular participation are expected	(15% of grade)
2.	Weekly Class Q and A on MyLS	(15% of grade)
3.	Three Reflections (1000 words x 15% each)	(45% of grade)
4.	Final Project	(25% of grade)

KEY GUIDELINES

1. Attendance is mandatory, and along with participation during class time, will contribute directly to your final grade. If you know you will be away, please discuss it with me in advance. Many opportunities will be made possible for participation, so please make use of them.

2. Every week, please pose a question on LEARN relating to the readings, or topic at hand before class on Wednesdays. Please respond to two of your classmates' questions. There are no right/wrong questions or answers for this exercise. It is a brave space to put forth thoughtful questions, and encourage critical thinking.

   The only expectation is to be respectful of each others views and questions in your responses, even when it is challenging. Disrespect will not be tolerated.

3. Reflections must be **double-spaced**, using **12-font** format, using **Chicago Manual Style** formatting and proper (Author-Date) citations, and as a **pdf**.

   The three reflections are due by 11:58pm on the dates indicated in the LEARN dropbox and schedule below.

   Any paper submitted without in-line citations/works cited/references will <u>not be marked</u> and given a zero.

   Late papers will also <u>not be marked</u> unless arrangements have been made with the teacher at least twenty-four hours before the deadline. Please contact the teacher in any case.

4. Please do not use AI software to do writing for this course. The University has taken a strong stance on how to deal with any suspicion of using ChatGPT or any other AI software. It is not worth jeopardizing your learning journey and skill building this way. If you are struggling to write, please use the resources available to you, such as the Writing Centre.

5. The Final Project is due by 11:58pm in the LEARN dropbox on August 4th, 2023. It will be comprised of three sections including a 1000-word response in proper essay format, a 500-word reflection, and the log of key terms, names and concepts that you have kept throughout the term.

6. There will be no mid-term or final exam for this course.

7. The syllabus content and syllabus may be slightly modified by the instructor at any time during the term.

DATE	LECTURE TOPIC	THE FUN STUFF	READINGS
WK1 **May 10**	Introduction Syllabus: Course Review, assignments, and policies	Introduce ourselves to each other, including and the opportunity for AMA (Ask me anything!)	1. Gire - Cultural Influences on Conceptions of Death and Dying 2. Encyclopedia of Death and Dying - Death 3. Start *A Man's Search for Meaning (Section 1)*
WK2 **May 17**	Overview of Religion	Film/In-class exercise	1. Bauer et al. - Review of Major Religions Palliative Care 2. Sugg - The Art of Medicine
WK3 **May 24**	Buddhism Hinduism	Film/In-class exercise	1. Sumegi - Reflections on a Canadian Buddhist Death Ritual 2. Firth - End-of-life: a Hindu view
WK4 **May 31**	Judaism	Film/In-class exercise	1. Death and Bereavement Across Cultures CH6 2. Finish *A Man's Search for Meaning (Section 1)*
WK5 **June 7**	Christianity **REFLECTION 1 DUE**	Guest: Sam Wu	1. Death and Bereavement Across Cultures CH7 2. Book of Revelation
WK6 **June 14**	Sufism and Islam	Film/In-class exercise	1. Al-Shahri - Islamic Theology and Palliative Care 2. The Poetry of Yunus Emre 3. Death and Bereavement Across Cultures CH8

DATE	LECTURE TOPIC	THE FUN STUFF	READINGS
WK7 June 21	Paganism, NRM, and Pop Culture	Film/In-class exercise	1. Rethinking Cults in *Cults and New Religions A Brief History*
WK8 June 28	Spiritualism and Mediumship **REFLECTION 2 DUE**	Guest: Tracey Sebastian	1. Nartonis - Spiritualism 2. Encyclopedia of Death and Dying - Afterlife
WK9 July 5	Historical and Future Dead	Guest: Dr Carmen Celestini	1. Garrett - Doomsday Preppers and the Architecture of Dread
WK10 July 12	Pop Culture: Dark Tourism, Music and Murder Ballads	Guest: Philip Oddi	1. Experiencing Dark Heritage Live Chapter 13 in *Dark Tourism: Practice and Interpretation* 2. Newman - Murder Ballads: Nick Cave and His Approach to Killing in Song
WK11 July 19	Paranormal **REFLECTION 3 DUE**	Film/In-class exercise	1. Bader - Paranormal Subcultures CH6
WK12July 26	Pop Culture: Death in Cinema	Film/In-class exercise	1. Crooks - Zombies! They're Us! 2. Laderman - The Disney Way of Death

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FINAL PROJECT DUE AUGUST 4th by 11:58pm

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Academic Calendar

Students are encouraged to review the Academic Calendar (https://uwaterloo.ca/registrar/important-dates/calendar) for information regarding all important dates, deadlines, and services available on campus.

Intellectual Property

The educational materials developed for this course, including, but not limited to, lecture notes and slides, handout materials, examinations and assignments, and any materials other than readings posted to LEARN, are the intellectual property of the course instructor. These materials have been developed for student use only and they are not intended for wider dissemination and/or communication outside of a given course. Posting or providing unauthorized audio, video, or textual material of lecture content to third-party websites violates an instructor's intellectual property rights, and the Canadian Copyright Act.

Recording lectures in any way is prohibited in this course unless specific permission has been granted by the instructor. Failure to follow these instructions may be in contravention of the university's Student Non-Academic Code of Conduct and/or Code of Academic Conduct, and will result in appropriate penalties. Participation in this course constitutes an agreement by all parties to abide by the relevant University Policies, and to respect the intellectual property of others during and after their association with the University of Waterloo.

Academic integrity, grievance, discipline, appeals and note for students with disabilities:

Academic integrity: In order to maintain a culture of academic integrity, members of the University of Waterloo community are expected to promote honesty, trust, fairness, respect and responsibility. [Check the Office of Academic Integrity for more information.]

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. When in doubt, please be certain to contact the department's administrative assistant who will provide further assistance.

Discipline: A student is expected to know what constitutes academic integrity to avoid committing an academic offence, and to take responsibility for his/her actions. [Check the Office of Academic Integrity for more information.] 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 instructor, academic advisor, or the undergraduate associate dean. For information on categories of offences and types of penalties, students should refer to [Policy 71, Student Discipline](#). For typical penalties, check [Guidelines for the Assessment of Penalties](#).

Appeals: A decision made or penalty imposed under [Policy 70, Student Petitions and Grievances](#) (other than a petition) or [Policy 71, Student Discipline](#) may be appealed if there is a ground. A student who believes he/she has a ground for an appeal should refer to [Policy 72, Student Appeals](#).

Turnitin: Text matching and AI screening software (Turnitin®) may be used to screen assignments in this course. Turnitin® is used to verify that all materials and sources in assignments are documented. Students' submissions are stored on a U.S. server, therefore students must be given an alternative (e.g., scaffolded assignment or annotated bibliography), if they are concerned about their privacy and/or security. Students will be given due notice, in the first week of the term and/or at the time assignment details are provided, about arrangements and alternatives for the use of Turnitin® in this course.

It is the responsibility of the student to notify the instructor if they, in the first week of term or at the time assignment details are provided, wish to submit the alternate assignment.

Opting out of Turnitin

If you decide to opt out of Turnitin, you will need to complete the following requirements by the deadlines.

1 – You must notify your instructor of your intentions not to use Turnitin by the deadline specified in the Course Schedule. You will be given access to the Non-Turnitin Dropboxes.

2 – Indicate your selected topic and a point form outline listing the main theme of each paragraph. This is to be submitted to the Non-Turnitin Stage 1 Dropbox by the end of Week 8.

3 – To your outline from step 2, add the supporting textual evidence in the form of quotes and corresponding citations for each paragraph where examples will offer supporting evidence. This is to be submitted to the Non-Turnitin Stage 2 Dropbox by the end of week 9.

4 – Submit a completed rough draft of your paper in proper sentence and paragraph form to the Non-Turnitin Stage 3 Dropbox by the end of week 10.

5 – Submit your final paper to the Non-Turnitin Stage 4 Dropbox by the deadline specified in the Course Schedule.