Conrad Grebel University College
University of Waterloo
TS689/RS387: Aging and the Spiritual Life
Winter 2022

Class Time: Thursdays 1-3:50 pm
Location: Room CGR 2201
(online for the beginning of the term - Zoom Meeting ID: 987 539 708 Passcode: 050997)

Instructor: Jane Kuepfer
Office Hours: Please contact me by email to arrange a virtual or in person meeting.

Office Location: Room 2116 (working from home office – contact information below)
Phone: 519-885-0220 x 24232
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 develop, in addition, 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 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. Discussion board (on Learn) participation will also contribute to this mark. (10% of grade)

Expectations for various participants:
TS 689 students are expected to complete all readings (including Carder) and assignments.
RS 387 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.

Covid Considerations:
We plan to meet in-person for 3 hours each week, subject to public health directives. Please follow the guidelines provided by UWWaterloo. If the public health directives change, or a number of students or the instructor are isolating because of COVID-19, we may temporarily switch to a Zoom format for the in-person section of this class. The Zoom link can be found at the top of the Content page for this course in LEARN. Please always check your email before setting out for class.

- As the term begins, we plan to meet online, using Zoom, for our first 4 classes, and will begin meeting in person when UWWaterloo so advises (February 3rd is the intended first in-person class).

Required Reading Materials:


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

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>
<th>Length (Undergrad)</th>
<th>Length (Masters)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>January 13</td>
<td>Reflection Paper #1</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>4 pp</td>
<td>4 pp</td>
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<tr>
<td>February 10</td>
<td>Presentation (with partner if you choose)</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>10 min +1 p handout</td>
<td>10 min + 1 p handout</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>March 17</td>
<td>Senior Partner Journal and Reflection Paper #2</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>6 hours of visiting 7-8 pp paper</td>
<td>6 hours of visiting 8-10 pp paper</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>March 24 or 31</td>
<td>Research Paper and sharing in class</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>10-12 pp</td>
<td>15 pp</td>
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<tr>
<td>(class sharing)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>10 min to share</td>
<td>15 min to share</td>
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<tr>
<td>April 7 (paper)</td>
<td>Readings and participation</td>
<td>10%</td>
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**Written and Oral Assignments:**

**Reflection Paper #1**
A 4 page double-spaced engagement with chapter 2 (pp. 30-45 + 402-407) of the text *Spirituality, Religion, and Aging* by Holly Nelson-Becker, and the introduction to *Spirituality and Aging* by Robert Atchley.
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 of Nelson-Becker.

**Faith/Cultural Perspectives Presentation**
A 10-minute in-class presentation on aging and spirituality from a perspective of your choice; e.g. Muslim, Jewish, Christian, Indigenous, Buddhist, Hindu, Confucian, Daoist, Humanist, Black, LGBTQ2S+, etc. Two core questions will frame your presentation:
1) How is aging understood and spirituality experienced within this particular tradition/culture/identity?
2) What do I need to know about this person’s perspective and experience so that I can respect it as I offer care?
By way of introduction, briefly include enough background (history/beliefs, etc) to provide a foundation for understanding this perspective on spirituality and aging.
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 perspective you are presenting. Chapter 5 in Nelson-Becker can be a starting point for your research.
*This assignment may be completed with a partner, and/or may be submitted as a video. A sign up process will ensure that a diversity of perspectives will be covered.*

**Senior Partner Journal and Reflection Paper #2**
This learning opportunity is the experiential component of the course: Each student will meet for approximately six hours throughout the term with a person over the age of 70 who is not a relative. (Your partner must be chosen by January 27. Check with the instructor if you need help finding a partner).
*Due to the pandemic, these meetings will probably need to be online or by phone. At least 4 substantial conversations, spread out over the term, is your goal.*
- 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 sharing/discussion:
  Paper - Choose a topic in the field of spirituality and aging that is of interest to you (See list of research paper for some ideas. Topic and working bibliography should be shared with the instructor (email or meeting) by March 3.)
    RS387 students: 10-12 pages, double-spaced (2500 – 3000 words);
    TS689 students: 15 pages (4000 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.

  Each student will be given 10-15 minutes of class time to share about their topic and what they have learned. A one-page handout citing main points and primary resources is to be posted on LEARN before class. This class time will give students opportunity to learn from one another and discussion will provide feedback and encouragement toward the student’s completion of their final paper. Students who prefer not to present in class may pre-record a presentation that will be posted on Learn.

Further notes about assignments:

- Assignments are to be submitted digitally, 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 RS387 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 6  Introduction
Topics, Readings and Assignments

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

January 13  What is spirituality?
Read: Nelson-Becker, Chapter 2 (pp 30-45) and pp 402-407


- Reflection paper due (4-5 pages)

January 20  What is aging?
Read: Nelson-Becker, Chapter 4 ‘Religion and Spirituality in Theory’


January 27  Meaning, purpose and legacy


- Have you found a ‘Senior Partner?’

February 3  Spiritual needs and resources
Read: Nelson-Becker, Chapter 8 ‘Spirituality, religion, and health’

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


February 10  Faith perspectives and aging
Read: Nelson-Becker, pp. 146-149 Integration of Religious Philosophies and Aging


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

February 17  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 can be the book you use as part of your reflection paper later in the course).
February 24
Note: No class on February 24 due to Reading Week

March 3  **Spirituality and Dementia**
Read: Nelson-Becker, chapter 10 “Memory, dementia and spiritual care”

- **TS 689 students** – Carder, *Ministry with the forgotten*, Ch 1-7.

- Research paper topic and working bibliography shared with the instructor (email or meeting)

March 10  **Spiritual care and support**
Read: Nelson-Becker, chapter 7 “Religious and spiritual interventions with clients”

- **TS 689 students** – Carder, *Ministry with the forgotten*, Ch 8-13.

March 17  **Discussion of Senior Partner experience: In class reporting**

- Senior Partners Reflection Paper due

**Spirituality at the end of life/Dying and death**
Read: Nelson-Becker, chapter 11 “Spirituality at the end of life”


March 24

- Sharing and discussion of research in class

March 31

- Sharing and discussion of research in class

April 7

- **Final Research Paper Due. Submit the paper in the dropbox on LEARN.**

**Research and Writing Support**

**Theological Studies Liaison Librarian and Research Guide**
The library has created a [Theological Studies research guide](#) to help you carry out theology-related research. If you need more specialized assistance, the Theological Studies liaison librarian, Laureen Harder-Gissing ([lharderg@uwaterloo.ca](mailto:lharderg@uwaterloo.ca)), is available for consultation.
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 ASS 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.

Choose one (an autobiographical book written from the perspective of an older person). Some of the books listed in the Selected Bibliography below would also be suitable for Assignment #2:


**Selected Bibliography**

**AGING AND SPIRITUALITY**


Boyer, Mark G. (2014). *A Spirituality of Ageing*. Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock. (Coming to terms with aging is a process - stages of grief + scripture from several traditions)


**SPIRITUAL CARE**


**DEMENTIA**


DYING


Morgan, R. (2014). *At the edge of life: Conversations when death is near*. Upper Room.


**TALKING WITH FAMILY AND FRIENDS**


**AGING IN THE CHURCH (INCLUDING RESOURCES TO USE IN STUDY GROUPS)**


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
- Humour and aging
- Storying life – spiritual autobiography, narrative gerontology
- Gender considerations in aging
- Sexuality and aging
- Developing a congregational ministry with seniors
- The experience of aging as portrayed in films/media
- ‘Eldering’
- Caregiving
- Or other topic/question of interest to you...