

Course Syllabus
EMP3559 – Spiritual Care with Dying and Grieving Persons
Emmanuel College
Toronto School of Theology
Summer 2021

Instructor Information

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Course Identification

Course Number: EMP3559
Course Format: Remote (online via Zoom), synchronous, due to the pandemic
Course Name: Spiritual Care with Dying and Grieving Persons
Course Location: Remote (online via Zoom) due to the pandemic
Class Times: Thursdays, May 6-June 24, 2:00-5:00pm
Prerequisites: EMP1741H Intro to Counselling and Spiritual Care, or by permission of the instructor

Course Description

Our culture generally fears death and dying, and increasingly it attempts both to conceal and to sanitize these experiences. Likewise, the religious rituals and traditions that once gave collective meaning, form, and authority to dying and grieving practices are increasingly in flux, and the medical and scientific views that have filled this void are proving insufficient. In this situation, spiritual care providers and clergy often feel inadequate in one of the most important areas of their professional lives: supporting the dying and bereaved. This course offers students an opportunity to deepen their personal and professional understanding of death, dying and grief, and to open an emotional and spiritual space that might foster healing in themselves and others. It presumes that, in order to walk with the dying and bereaved, we must first uncover our own experiences of loss, and confront the enduring mystery of death with open eyes. Through lectures, experiential exercises, group discussion, personal journaling, and reflection on poetry and visual art, students will be encouraged to explore medical, psychological, theological, and spiritual perspectives, while reflecting on their own feelings, experiences, and cultural-religious frameworks in relation to loss, death, and grieving.

Please Note: Full attendance is mandatory for summer courses.

Course Resources

Required Course Texts

1. Atul Gawande. 2017. *Being Mortal: Medicine and What Matters in the End*. Toronto: Anchor Canada.
2. David Kuhl. 2003. *What Dying People Want: Practical Wisdom for the End of Life*. Toronto: Anchor Canada.
3. Thomas Attig. 2011. *How We Grieve: Relearning the World*. New York: Oxford University Press.
4. Francis Weller. 2015. *The Wild Edge of Sorrow: Rituals of Renewal and the Sacred Work of Grief*. Berkeley, CA: North Atlantic Books.

Course Website

- Quercus: <https://q.utoronto.ca/>

This course uses Quercus for its course website. To access it, go to the UofT Quercus login page at <https://q.utoronto.ca/> and login using your UTORid and password. Once you have logged in to Quercus using your UTORid and password, look for the **My Courses** module, where you will find the link to the website for all your Quercus-based courses. (Your course registration with ACORN gives you access to the course website in Quercus.) Information for students about using Quercus can be found at: <https://community.canvaslms.com/docs/DOC-10701> . Students who have trouble accessing Quercus should contact the Emmanuel main office.

Course Learning Objectives/Outcomes

Students successfully completing this course will be able to demonstrate:

1. A general knowledge of the basic literature and the various interpretive frameworks (medical, psychological, theological, and spiritual) that inform the experience of dying and grieving;
2. The application of these interpretive frameworks to a real life situation, verbatim conversation, critical incident, interview, film, etc., involving dying and grieving;
3. A preliminary sense of comfort and authentic presence in relating to dying and grieving persons;
4. A basic knowledge of faithful practices in spiritual care with dying and grieving persons.

Evaluation

Requirements

The final grade for the course will be based on evaluations in four areas:

(1) Participation (10%)

Full attendance is mandatory for summer courses. It is essential to the success of the course that students carefully read the required texts in advance of the class, actively listen and share in group discussion, and participate in experiential exercises.

(2) Integrative Film Review (30%)

Due: May 20th (8-10 pages, double spaced, one-inch margins, not including title page and reference list).

This paper asks students to place the film *Wit* (depicting the life and death of a terminal patient), in critical dialogue with *What Dying People Want* by David Kuhl and *Being Mortal* by Atul Gawande. Students should offer an integrated critical reflection that includes discussion of the following:

- a. Your own personal reactions and perceptions;
 - b. Relevant themes/incidents depicted in the life of Professor Bearing and others in the film *Wit*, but DO NOT simply retell the story;
 - c. Relevant principles of spiritual care practice that you would take to Professor Bearing's bedside if you were trying to offer her care and support during her dying;
 - d. Relevant critiques of the medical system's ability to care for the dying and come to terms with the full reality of death; and
- e. spiritual, theological, and/or faith questions raised by the books and the film

(3) Reflective Journal Entries (20%)

Due: Weekly on Quercus

Students will keep a personal journal to record their ongoing experience of the course. You are asked to record:

- a. your personal reflections on the readings for each week (not a summary, but rather personal reactions and reflections);
- b. your reflections on the content of each class, including group discussion, preferably recorded shortly after the class has finished; and
- c. your reflections on specific questions and journaling exercises that will be introduced in class.

Record how the course is challenging you and helping you build patterns of faithful spiritual care with dying and grieving persons. Students will submit their entries each week on Quercus. The journal is meant to be a safe place for self-discovery, creativity, and free expression. As such entries will be graded mainly on the fact that they are complete and submitted, with some consideration given to personal awareness and insight.

(4) Final Integrative Paper (40%)

Due: July 1st (8-10 pages, double spaced, one-inch margins, not including title page and reference list).

Near the end of the course, students will review and organize all of their journal entries according to themes and categories. These themes will then form the basis of the final integrative paper. Please note, I am not looking for a reporting of your original entries, but a description of some of the overarching themes and insights, followed by some reflection on why these themes and insights might have emerged, and what they mean for your own understanding of death, dying, and grieving, and your approach to spiritual care with dying and bereaved persons. (Some short quotes from your journal may be used to illustrate various points.) The paper will be evaluated based on the correlations you make between the overarching themes in your journal entries, the course readings, and the other materials presented in the course. Describe what has changed in your own self-awareness about the mystery of death and its spiritual aspects, and how this has impacted your understanding and future practice of spiritual care.

You may choose to include one or more of the following:

- a. A practical description of how you might create and facilitate an open and safe space—both physically and emotionally—in a particular context, where grief can be expressed and healing can happen;

- b. A practical description of a death, dying, or grief ritual, from a particular religious and/or spiritual context, and a description of why that ritual has particular meaning in light of your journal entries, and how it might be meaningful for the practice of spiritual care;
- c. Reflection on the process of grief work, its many unique vicissitudes, whether any generalizations can be made about this process, and a description of particular ways in which this process can be avoided or interrupted, and how it might be fruitfully facilitated;

Grading System - Basic Degree Students

1000, 2000 and 3000 level courses use the following numerical grading scale (see section 11.2 of the BD Handbook):

90-100 (A+)	Exceptional
85-89 (A)	Outstanding
80-84 (A-)	Excellent
77-79 (B+)	Very Good
73-76 (B)	Good
70-72 (B-)	Acceptable
0-69 (FZ)	Failure

Please see the appropriate handbook for more details about the grading scale and non-numerical grades (e.g. SDF, INC, etc).

Late work (BD). Basic Degree students are expected to hand in assignments by the date given in the course outline. The final deadline for all coursework in this course is July 1, 2021 at 9am. The penalty for late work is 2% (of the relevant assignment) for each day late.

This penalty is not applied to students with documented medical or compassionate difficulties or exceptional reasons (e.g., a death in the family or a serious illness); students facing such difficulties are kindly requested to consult with their faculty adviser or basic degree director, who should make a recommendation on the matter to the instructor and request an SDF. The absolute deadline for obtaining an SDF for the course is the examination day scheduled for the course or the last day of examination week, whichever is sooner. An SDF must be requested from the registrar’s office in the student’s college of registration no later than the last day of exam week in which the course is taken. The SDF, when approved, will have a mutually agreed upon deadline that does not extend beyond the conclusion of the following term. If a student has not completed work but has not been granted an SDF, a final mark will be submitted calculating a zero for work not submitted.

Course grades. Consistently with the policy of the University of Toronto, course grades submitted by an instructor are reviewed by a committee of the instructor’s college before being posted to ACORN. Grades are not official until they are posted to ACORN. Course grades may be adjusted where they do not comply with University Assessment and Grading Practices Policy found at <https://governingcouncil.utoronto.ca/secretariat/policies/grading-practices-policy-university-assessment-and-january-26-2012>, policies found in the TST joint program handbooks, or college grading policy.

Policies

Accessibility. Students with a disability or health consideration, whether temporary or permanent, are entitled to accommodation. Students in conjoint degree programs must register at the University of Toronto's Accessibility Services offices; information is available at <http://www.studentlife.utoronto.ca/as>. The sooner a student seeks accommodation, the quicker we can assist.

Plagiarism. Students submitting written material in courses are expected to provide full documentation for sources of both words and ideas in footnotes or endnotes. Direct quotations should be placed within quotation marks. (If small changes are made in the quotation, they should be indicated by appropriate punctuation such as brackets and ellipses, but the quotation still counts as a direct quotation.) Failure to document borrowed material constitutes plagiarism, which is a serious breach of academic, professional, and religious ethics. An instructor who discovers evidence of student plagiarism is not permitted to deal with the situation individually but is required to report it to his or her head of college or delegate according to the TST *Basic Degree Handbook* and the Graduate program Handbooks linked from <http://www.tst.edu/academic/resources-forms/handbooks> and the University of Toronto *Code of Behaviour on Academic Matters* <https://governingcouncil.utoronto.ca/secretariat/policies/code-behaviour-academic-matters-july-1-2019>. Normally, students will be required to submit their course essays to Turnitin.com for a review of textual similarity and detection of possible plagiarism. In doing so, students will allow their essays to be included as source documents in the Turnitin.com reference database, where they will be used solely for the purpose of detecting plagiarism. The terms that apply to the University's use of the Turnitin.com service are described on the Turnitin.com web site.

Other academic offences. TST students come under the jurisdiction of the University of Toronto *Code of Behaviour on Academic Matters* <https://governingcouncil.utoronto.ca/secretariat/policies/code-behaviour-academic-matters-july-1-2019>.

Back-up copies. Please make back-up copies of essays before handing them in.

Obligation to check email. At times, the course instructor may decide to send out important course information by email. To that end, all students in conjoint programs are required to have a valid utoronto email address. Students must have set up their utoronto email address which is entered in the ACORN system. Information is available at www.utorid.utoronto.ca. The course instructor will not be able to help you with this. 416-978-HELP and the Help Desk at the Information Commons can answer questions you may have about your UTORid and password. Students should check utoronto email regularly for messages about the course. **Forwarding** your utoronto.ca email to a Hotmail, Gmail, Yahoo or other type of email account is not advisable. In some cases, messages from utoronto.ca addresses sent to Hotmail, Gmail or Yahoo accounts are filtered as junk mail, which means that emails from your course instructor may end up in your spam or junk mail folder. Students in non-conjoint programs should contact the Registrar of their college of registration.

Email communication with the course instructor. The instructor aims to respond to email communications from students in a timely manner. *All email communications from students in conjoint programs must be sent from a utoronto email address.* Email communications from other email addresses are not secure, and also the instructor cannot readily identify them as being legitimate emails from students. The instructor is not obliged to respond to email from non-utoronto addresses for students in conjoint programs. Students in non-conjoint programs should only use the email address they have provided to their college of registration.

Course Schedule

Week 1

Thurs, May 6

Course introduction

Read for class:

Atul Gawande, *Being Mortal*, chapters 1-4

Week 2

Thurs, May 13

Death and the Medical Establishment

Read for class:

Atul Gawande, *Being Mortal*, chapters 5-9

Discussion of the Film *Wit* with Emma Thompson

Week 3

Thurs, May 20

Death and the Medical Establishment

Read for class:

David Kuhl, *What Dying People Want*, chapters 5-9

Week 4

Thurs, May 27

Grief Work

Read for class:

Thomas Attig, *How We Grieve*, chapters 1-3

Week 5

Thurs, June 3

Grief Work

Integrative Film Review Paper Due

Read for class:

Thomas Attig, *How We Grieve*, chapters 4-6

Week 6

Thurs, June 10

Grief Work

Read for class:

Francis Weller, *The Wild Edge of Sorrow*, chapters 1-3

Week 7

Thurs, June 17

Grief and the Sacred

Read for class:

Francis Weller, *The Wild Edge of Sorrow*, chapters 4-6

Week 8

Thurs, June 24

Grief and the Sacred

Read for class:

Francis Weller, *The Wild Edge of Sorrow*, chapters 7-9

Final Paper Due: July 1, 2021

Select Bibliography

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