Spiritual Care With Dying and Grieving Persons  
Emmanuel College  
Course Syllabus, Fall Term, 2018  
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EMP3559HF: Mondays, September 17th, October 1st & 15th, November 5th, 2018  
1000–1700 hours (class starts sharply at 10 am)

Spiritual Care With Dying And Grieving Persons  
Our contemporary culture fears death and dying. Many, including Spiritual care providers and  
clergy, feel inadequate in offering professional support to the dying and bereaved. And yet, of all  
the work of Spiritual and Pastoral Care professionals, caring for and supporting dying and  
grieving persons is one of the most critical. This course demonstrates an integration of the  
theory and practice of Spiritual Care to the dying and bereaved, through lecture, class exercises  
and conversation, and audio-visual presentations. Requirements: Students MUST attend ALL  
full four days; class participation, 10%; individual student field-based inquiry and reflection,  
30%; assigned paper, 30%; and final reflection paper on required journal, 30%.

Competency Profile for College of Registered Psychotherapists  
This course will add to the following competencies, as they relate to theory and practice in the areas of  
Death, Dying and Grieving, as listed in the “Entry-to-Practice Competency Profile for Registered  
Psychotherapists:” Specifically in 1. Foundations. 1.2 a, & 1.4 a, 2.1e & 3.4a; 4.2 a,b & 5.1 a.

Introduction  
Caring for and supporting dying and grieving persons is one of the most critical  
offerings of Spiritual and Religious Care Professionals. People who are otherwise skeptical of  
organized religion turn to Spiritual and Pastoral leaders for help with the deep existential issues  
associated with loss and grief. Losing a loved one tends to knock down walls and even  
foundations. In short, there is no Spiritual Care that is more publicly welcomed and performed  
regularly by such professional in a variety of settings: hospitals, congregations, long-term care,  
prisons and community agencies. In offering this kind of care, going on intuition, depending  
upon folk religion or blind copying of other practitioners will not be enough. Spiritual and  
Religious care providers do best when they have the confidence of faith, as well as experiential  
and theoretical knowledge and skills. Students taking this course require a willingness to  
examine their feelings, experiences, and attitudes toward loss, death and grieving. A  
basic premise is that we cannot adequately minister to the dying and grieving until we have  
dealt with our own losses and explored our experiential understanding of grief and loss. Building on these premises we will learn skills necessary to serve in this area. Thus, fully  
engaged by the student, an additional benefit of this course might be a time of healing and  
added strength and courage professionally to work in this area.

Course Objectives  
• To learn from the literature and life experience frameworks for understanding dying  
and grieving;
• To put at least one interpretive framework into dialogue with a real life situation, verbatim conversation, critical incident, interview(s), film, etc.;
• To become somewhat comfortable relating to dying and grieving persons;
• To develop a sense of faithful practices in Spiritual Care with dying and grieving persons.

Confidentiality
All conversations within the classroom and with conversation partners are confidential.

Participation
• students must participate in all four full classes in order to get a credit for this course;
• preparation for class: doing the readings, and assignments;
• careful listening and sharing with others in class;
• respectful attention to dying or grieving persons in our pastoral conversations;
• respectful and critical reading of the texts.

Course Evaluation
Each student will be evaluated on assignments (90%) and course participation (10%).

Required Reading (on hold on Emmanuel Library)
Read before the first class:


Read before third class:


Read before fourth class:


Recommended supplemental reading:

Read short readings posted on blackboard prior to each class

Recommended Reading and further resources:


Assignments
Summary of assignments and evaluation

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<th>Final 30% - Required</th>
<th>Journal</th>
<th>Due November 30th</th>
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<tr>
<td>Required –</td>
<td>Grief life line – instructions in class</td>
<td>October 15th</td>
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<td>class participation</td>
<td>Paper on Wit</td>
<td>October 1st</td>
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<td>10%</td>
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<td>First paper 30% -</td>
<td>Paper on your pastoral conversation</td>
<td>November 5th</td>
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<td>Second paper 30% -</td>
<td>Option a</td>
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<td>Option b</td>
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Please note: Late assignments will be subject to reduced grade as will use of electronic devices during class time.

Required Assignments
Proper footnotes and bibliography are required for all written assignments.

Final Reflection on Personal Journal, (30% of final grade) no more than 8-10 pages
Due November 20th 2017. Please submit to Emmanuel College office with self-addressed, stamped envelop, for return to you upon completion of the course.

The journal must be submitted in a hard-copy essay format with biography and footnotes. Here’s how it works:

a. Have a blank notebook, not computer, which you bring to class. Use this to record class exercises requiring reflection. Outside of class, record responses to the readings. After each class, take time to record your reactions and further responses to the readings, classroom discussions and presentations. Record how the course is challenging you and helping you build patterns of faithful Spiritual Care with dying and grieving persons.

b. Following the course: Review and organize your journal by themes or categories. Please note that I am not interested in a reporting of your original weekly responses and reactions. (Some short “quotes” from your journal may be used to make a point). I am
interested in the themes that emerged for you; why this may be so and what you have learned as a result.

c. I will evaluate on the basis of the correlations you make between the themes or categories, the readings and class materials of the course. Doing this kind of correlation is an essential practice of faithful Spiritual Care with dying and grieving persons. It is also a skillful habit that will be helpful for Spiritual Care in any circumstance.

First Assignment on Wit (30% of final grade)
8-10 pages, due October 1st, 2018
This paper is an opportunity for 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 makes use of the following:

a. your personal perceptions and reactions
b. the books’ themes in relation to dying but DO NOT retell the story
c. relevant themes/incidents depicted in the life of Professor Bearing and others in the movie Wit.
d. 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.
e. theological/faith questions raised by the books and film?

Second Assignment (30% of final grade)
8-10 pages, due November 5th, 2018
Please submit to professor with self addressed and stamped envelop for return to you following marking.

Primary Option: Pastoral Conversation Assignment: reporting on and reflecting on your interview.
Process for a Pastoral Conversation
You may be in an existing relationship with a grieving (preferable) or dying person. With care and sensitivity, asking permission and getting consent, you may be able to listen faithfully to the person's story and help them just by listening with empathy. This practice is good Spiritual Care, even if you do nothing more! But you may also have the opportunity in such a situation to build for future Spiritual Care as well. Do not pick someone from your immediate, extended family, or close friend. Consent forms for the interview will be available in class.

So here is what you do:
a. You will need to contact your prospective conversation partner two to three times in order to get what you need for reporting on the pastoral conversation.
   i. The first contact (possibly by telephone or e-mail) is simply to explain what you are doing for this paper, why a special pastoral conversation with him/her would be helpful for you, and seek permission for having this conversation. Give the person time to think it over.
   ii. Contact the person again to learn whether they agree to the pastoral conversation.
   iii. The third, and if needed, a fourth visit will be your actual conversation, in person and not by telephone.
b. In preparation for the pastoral conversation, read relevant course materials and develop an approach or framework for understanding something about death, dying and grieving.

c. Develop from your careful reading a guide for asking about and listening to the story of the person. Your pastoral conversation will need to be brief, so limit your time by preparing only two or three (at most) questions to guide the conversation. Your reading will help you ask questions that relate to the approach of the course material that you have read. **You are not there to “teach” theory, but it is an underlying guide for you.** Remember that your Spiritual Care is to listen with respect, love and care! Before your visit, take time to **write your assumptions** about them and how you think they are in relation to what has/is happening to them.

d. Here are some possible directions for your conversation: Ask the person you are conversing with some general questions about how they are doing, what have they needed most during this season of their life, and how has their religious tradition and/or spiritual care provider been most helpful to them. These are samples only. You will have lots of other ideas arising from the reading. Keep your conversation time brief, no more than 45-60 minutes on the first visit. If this proves to be too little time, you may wish to book a second 30 – 45 minutes! If your person is unwell physically, you may need to reduce the time considerably. With their permission, you are free to tape the interview.

e. After the conversation, write up a detailed and complete report of the conversation, if not recorded. You may check with your conversation partner for accuracy.

**For your paper,** Having followed the outline suggested in “Process for a Pastoral Conversation”, describing your method for getting the information, how you formed your questions, and what understanding you have gained from the answers, and how those understandings have formed or re-formed your practices of caring for a dying or grieving person. You may quote brief responses, however, this is not a verbatim. Include references to class readings that have supported your experience and understandings. Include relevant theological, theoretical and faith reflections.

**OR**

**Option for Second Assignment, ONLY with permission of the professor.** A student may wish to choose this option if they have already had extensive experiences caring for the dying or grieving such as in a hospital spiritual care position or congregation.

A paper of 7-10 pages, due November 5\(^{rd}\)
Correlate aspects of the work of Attig and Weller in relation to your professional experiences thus far in light of their theories. You may also draw on supplemental texts and readings. Based on these authors’ theoretical understandings, describe and analyze practices of Spiritual Care for the dying, ill and grieving that you would attempt to follow using cases from your professional experiences. How will their theories and stories enhance your professional practice and commitment to personal awareness and self-care. What would be the challenges in these for you? What has been the most meaningful learning as a result of this exercise, both personal and professional? Include theological, theoretical and faith reflections.
4. Participation (10%)
Based upon attendance, punctuality, openness to the class process and discussion, doing the readings, reflection and participation. Grief lifeline is mandatory, but will not be graded.

BIBLIOGRAPHY (EMP3559)

Reference Works


General Works


Haugk, Kenneth C. *Don’t Sing Songs to a Heavy Heart*, Stephen Ministries, 2004 [www.stephenministries.org](http://www.stephenministries.org)


**Families Dealing With Death and Dying**


**Grieving and Dying Children and their Families**


Racette, Kit. *Elizabeth Where Are You?*, 2014


**Related Journal Articles** by Dr. Anne Simmonds


Caring for the Dying: Choices and Decisions A paper approved for discussion in the Congregations of the United Church of Canada Prepared by Task-Group which was chaired by Rev. Anne Simmonds.


Related Websites

http://www.bereavementontariornetwork.com/
www.myadultsiblinggrief.com
http://hpc.co.ca/ Hospice Association of Ontario
http://www.virtualhospice.ca/en_US/Main+Site+Navigation/Home.aspx - Canadian Virtual Hospice
http://www.dyingwell.org/ Dying Well
http://www.time-to-care.com/ Time to Care