

RELG3559 Theology, Death and Dying

Instructor: Travis Pickell

READINGS (Subject to Change)

Thursday, January 19 Introduction – The Pornography of Death

Read: Gorer, “The Pornography of Death”

Philosophical Issues

Tuesday, January 24 Is Death Bad? The Epicurean View (vs. Desire-Frustration vs. Deprivation)

Read: Epicurus, “Letter to Menoeceus;” Nagel, “Death”

Thursday, January 26 Afterlife and Immortality

Read: Plato, Excerpt from *Phaedo*; Kant, Excerpt from *The Critique of Practical Reason*;
Badham, “Problems with Accounts of Life After Death”

Tuesday, January 31 Would Immortality Be Desirable?

Read: Williams, “The Makropulos Case”

Thursday, February 2 Death’s Difference (for the Living)

Read: Heidegger, Excerpt from *Being and Time* (NB: Focus on §§.46, 50, and 53)

Death in Religious Perspective

Tuesday, February 7 Judaism I

Read: Excerpts from Hebrew Bible/Old Testament; Levenson, “The Fact of Death and the Promise of Life”

Thursday, February 9 Judaism 2

Read: Mintz, “Religious Approaches to Death and Dying: The Jewish Approach”

Tuesday, February 14 Early Christianity

Read: Excerpts from the New Testament; The Apostles Creed and the Nicene Creed;
Cullmann, “Immortality of the Soul or Resurrection of the Dead?” (NB: You may skip the
“Afterword”)

Thursday, February 16 Christianity: Ancient and Medieval

Read: Ambrose of Milan, “On Belief in the Resurrection;” Augustine of Hippo, excerpt
from *City of God*; Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologia* IaIIae Q.4, Art. 5-6.

Tuesday, February 21 Karl Barth and the Gift of Limits

Read: Barth, “The Unique Opportunity”

Thursday, February 23 Jurgen Moltmann and the Suffering of God

Read: Moltmann, “The Passion of Christ and the Pain of God”

Tuesday, February 28 James Cone's *The Cross and the Lynching Tree*

Read: Cone, "Nobody Knows de Troubles I See," from *The Cross and the Lynching Tree*

Thursday, March 2 Islam: The Example of the Prophet

Read: "The Death of the Messenger of Allah;" Hirschkind, "The Acoustics of Death"

Tuesday, March 7: No Class - Spring Recess

Thursday, March 9: No Class - Spring Recess

Tuesday, March 14 Death in Islamic Law

Read: Sachedina, "Death and Dying"

Thursday, March 16 Death in Buddhism and Hinduism

Read: Long, "The Death the Ends Death in Hinduism and Buddhism;" Das, "A Hindu Theory of Life and Death"

Tuesday, March 21 God, Death, and Evolution

Read: Milosz, "To Mrs. Professor in Defense of my Cat's Honor and Not Only;" Peacocke, "The Cost of New Life"

Death and Culture

Thursday, March 23 Death and Religion

Read: Berger, Excerpts from *The Sacred Canopy*

Tuesday, March 28 Death and Culture

Read: Beck, excerpt from *The Slavery of Death*

Watch (in class): Flight from Death: The Quest for Immortality

Thursday, March 30 Death in Modernity

Read: Aries, "Tamed Death;" Walter, "The Two Strands of Revival"

Tuesday, April 4 Death Awareness Movement

Read: Kubler-Ross, "On the Fear of Death;" Harris, "Discussing Death over Dinner"

Thursday, April 6 American Funeral Industry

Read: Mitford, "The American Way of Death;" Lynch, "Jessica, the Hound, and the Casket Trade"

Tuesday, April 11 Funeral Sermons

Read: Bregman, "The Triumph of the Biographical"

Death and Religious Ethics

Thursday, April 13 Determining Death

Read: Moran, “When Medicine and Faith Define Death Differently;” Dorff, “End-of-Life: Jewish Perspectives;” Cardinal Renato Martino, “Statement on Terri Schiavo”

Tuesday, April 18 Killing and Self Killing

Read: Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologia* IIa.IIae. Q64. Art. 4; Bresnahan, “Catholic Spirituality and Medical Interventions in Dying;” Verhey, “A Protestant Perspective on Ending Life”

Thursday, April 20 The Goals of Medicine

Read: Gawande, “Letting Go”

Tuesday, April 25 Transhumanism

Read: Mann, “The Coming Death Shortage;” Thiel, “Against Edenism;” Redding, “Why Christians Should Support Radical Life Extension”

Death and Literature

Thursday, April 27 Death in Children’s Literature

Read: Roiphe, “The Wildest Rumpus”

Listen: <http://www.npr.org/2011/12/29/144077273/maurice-sendak-on-life-death-and-childrens-lit>

Tuesday, May 2 Death, Memoir, and Lament

Read: A memoir of your choice. Some options include:

- Nicholas Wolterstorff, *Lament for a Son*
- C.S. Lewis, *A Grief Observed*
- Richard Lischer, *Stations of the Heart*
- Joan Didion, *The Year of Magical Thinking*
- Joan Didion, *Blue Nights*
- Paul Kalanithi, *When Breath Becomes Air*
- Meghan O’Rourke, *The Long Goodbye*
- Christopher Hitchens, *Mortality*

Exam Date: TBD