

PHILLIPS THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY SYLLABUS DISCLAIMER

The following syllabus is the teaching and learning guide for the last time this course was taught. It will give you a good idea of the descriptions of the course, how it was taught, the reading, the papers and other assignments, the intended outcomes, and the workload. By examining this syllabus and others, you will be able to form an impression of what graduate theological education at Phillips Theological Seminary requires of students.

Due to periodic curriculum revisions, course names and/or numbers may be different on this syllabus than what the name and/or number of the current offered course may be.

This syllabus is provided for your information only. The faculty reserves the right to revise the curriculum, and each professor reserves the right to decide how best to meet the learning goals of the curriculum. Therefore, the following syllabus is an historical artifact rather than a promise of how the course will be taught in the future, or that the course will be taught again.

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PT 567 Caring in Depth: Death and Dying

Phillips Theological Seminary, Spring 2016

Syllabus

Through their stories, the ill create empathic bonds between themselves and their listeners. These bonds expand as the stories are retold. Those who listened then tell others, and the circle of shared experience widens. Because stories can heal, the wounded healer and the wounded storyteller are not separate, but are different aspects of the same figure.

But telling does not come easy, and neither does listening.

*-Arthur Frank, *The Wounded Storyteller* (p. xii)*

Professor: Dr. McGarrah Sharp

mindy.mcgarrah.sharp@ptstulsa.edu

Phillips Theological Seminary

Office phone: (918) 610-8303

Course Meets: February 25-27 and April 7-9*

Thurs: 2:30pm – 6:30pm; Fri: 8:30am – 5:00pm; Sat: 8:30am – 5:00pm

*Students who attend the first weekend earn 1.5 credit hours;

Students who attend both weekends earn 3.0 credit hours

Course Description: Each human holds and beholds narratives of loss throughout life experiences. Leaders in ministry have the special responsibility to hold and behold our own stories while also leading persons and communities in our care through intersecting narratives of grief. This course provides an opportunity for careful study of caring in depth around the broad topic of death and dying. This course will help equip leaders in ministry—in a variety of forms—to hone practicing attention to and remaining presence in the midst of death, dying, illness, loss, and grief. The course places these dynamics of communal life in a narrative frame that attends to both theological and psychological aspects. We will read narratives of loss and learn practices of story-ing and re-storying narratives of loss as a way to participate in healing.

Course Objectives: This course is designed to facilitate a process in which course objectives and assignments are layered, each learning objective building on and expanding the previous one. We will

- Consider death and dying in narrative frames. *This objective will be assessed through reading and discussing narrative memoirs and course pre-work.*
- Consider the ambiguity surrounding death and dying. *This objective will be assessed through class participation and the “Paradox of Death” pre-work paper and presentation.*
- Prepare to speak about death as a public theologian. *This objective will be assessed through class participation, class leadership, and the “Speaking of Death” project.*
- Cultivate self-awareness and practice self-care in the sacred practice of attending to death, dying, illness, loss, and grief. *This objective will be assessed through class participation and accountability.*
- Practice ministry as partnership in care with shared leadership in order to cultivate holding environments for sacred pastoral presence. *This objective will be assessed through participation and leadership.*
- Create an in-depth study of Complicated Grief. *This objective will be assessed through the “Speaking of Complicated Grief Project” (students enrolled in 3.0 credit hours only)*

Course Requirements:

1. Attendance and Attentive, Respectful Participation (30% of grade earned)

- Attendance at all course sessions
- Evidence of prepared, engaged, and in-depth presence in class sessions
- Participation in any field trips/attention to guest speakers

Note that Schedule of Class Sessions will be distributed the first weekend of the course.

2. Reading and Pre-Work before the First Weekend (25% of grade earned)

- Self-Reflection Brief Paper
- Participation Covenant
- “Paradox of Death” Paper and accompanying Artifacts

See detailed “Pre-Work” description posted in the moodle course site.

3. Writing and Creative Projects (45% of grade earned)

- “Speaking of Death” Paper (for students enrolled in 1.5 credit hours)
- “Speaking of Complicated Grief” Project (for students enrolled in 3.0 credit hours)

Detailed assignment guidelines will be distributed and discussed the first weekend of the course.

Required Texts:

For First Weekend:

- Chast, Roz, *Can't We Talk about Something More Pleasant? A Memoir* (Bloomsbury, 2014, ISBN: 978-1608198061)
- Wolterstorff, Nicholas, *Lament for a Son* (Eerdmans, 1987; ISBN: 978-0802802941)
- Kelley, Melissa, *Grief: Contemporary Theory and the Practice of Ministry* (Fortress, 2010; ISBN: 978-0800696610)
- Additional E-Reserve article by Dr. Jeff Bishop posted on Moodle

Resource Book for Course Assignments:

- Jacobs, Martha R., *Clergy Guide to End-of-Life Issues* (Pilgrim Press, 2010; ISBN: 978-0829818598)

For Second Weekend:

- Powery, Luke A., *Dem Dry Bones: Preaching, Death, and Hope* (Fortress, 2012; ISBN: 978-0800698225)
- Swain, Storm, *Trauma and Transformation at Ground Zero: A Pastoral Theology* (Fortress, 2011; ISBN: 978-0800698058)
- Choice of Reading on the topic of Death and Immigration
 - A set of Moodle e-reserve articles, OR
 - Danticat, Edwidge, *Brother, I'm Dying* (Vintage, 2008; ISBN: 978-1400034307)

Note: Additional E-Reserves resources may be posted on Moodle to support the course.

PTS Institutional Resources

In addition to informal counseling provided by members of the faculty and staff, the seminary provides access to licensed professional counselors and spiritual directors on a limited basis. Funds available through student fees provide confidential counseling services free of charge for individual students. For more information, contact the Chaplain or the Associate Dean for Admissions and Student Services. PTS is committed to providing equal access to its programs of graduate professional education for all qualified students with learning, physical, medical, and/or psychological disabilities. The Seminary aims to provide reasonable accommodation for qualified individuals with a disability (based on clinical documentation) to ensure their access and participation in Seminary programs. For details, see “Disabilities Policies and Procedures” in the Student Handbook.

PTS Policies Regarding Participation and Assignments

Professional Confidentiality: The class space is intended to be a “safe space” where we can navigate complex and at times personally taxing questions of ethics within a supportive community of learning. To this end, we will follow the canons of professional confidentiality for all personal disclosures and case deliberations. When you are referring to someone outside of the class (*i.e.*, in your church or other experiences), please remove names and identifying information (whenever possible) from your reflections, writing assignments, and in-class discussions. Reporting laws of the State of Oklahoma will be followed with respect to child abuse and neglect, homicide, or suicide. See “Safe Space and Professional Behavior” in the PTS Catalog.¹

Inclement Weather Policy: Occasionally on campus courses are cancelled by the Dean because of inclement weather. Check your email and the Moodle page as soon as possible for a plan to meet the contact hour requirement of the Association of Theological Schools and the Department of Education. See the complete policy posted on the course Moodle page in the “Syllabus” folder.

Academic Integrity: Do not plagiarize. Make sure that you understand plagiarism in all its forms. Pay careful attention to PTS policy on “Academic Misconduct.”

Language: Always use inclusive language and think critically about your use of language, particularly in relation to gender, race, ethnicities, cultures, differently-abled bodies, and theological differences. For example, use ‘he’ and ‘man’ when you want to refer to males or to be truthful to the sexist language of a text (with [sic])—these terms can no longer be assumed to denote all humans. If you choose to use male pronouns to denote the Divine, footnote your use with theological rationale and recognition of the harmful nature of this choice for some in your congregation or ministry setting.

Attendance: According to PTS policy, any student who misses 20% or more of the class contact hours for a course, for any reason, cannot pass or successfully audit that course. The intention of this policy is not to be punitive, but to recognize that students should retake courses for credit if they miss a significant number of the class contact hours. (1) Missing any course sessions, (2) speaking only at the beginning or only at the end of the discussion every week, (3) always or never speaking in class, or (4) disrespectful or uninformed class participation will also result in reduction in the overall participation grade earned.

Submitting Assignments: Submit electronic or paper copies of assignments. I accept drafts of written assignments up to a week before the due date. It can be helpful to send even an outline or opening paragraph for review and feedback.

¹ Adapted from professional confidentiality statement by Dr. Carrie Doehring.

Extensions and Late Assignments: Turn in assignments on time. Extensions are not automatic and must be justified. Please discuss as soon as possible any need you foresee for an extension for a particular assignment. Extensions will be considered up to three days prior to an assignment due date. Grade deduction for late assignments is a half letter grade a day.

Incompletes: I discourage taking an incomplete for this course. According to PTS policy, an incomplete may be granted for extenuating circumstances, but the approval is not automatic and must be justified. Approval must be requested on required forms and granted prior to the announced deadline.

May Graduation: If you are graduating in May, please note that your final grades will be submitted to the registrar just before the end of the class. Therefore, earlier due dates with no extensions apply to assignments in May.