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Pastoral Care in Times of Grief and Loss

Instructor

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Institution

Memphis Theological Seminary (A Cumberland Presbyterian Seminary)

Enrolment and Last Year Taught

15 students; Fall Semester, 1998

Course Description

This course will explore in depth the ministry of pastoral care in times of grief and loss. To do so, we will examine personal and cultural understandings of death, grief, and loss. We will seek the theological and scriptural understandings of death that inform our approach to pastoral care. The role of pastoral empathy, rituals and funerals, and congregational care will inform our discussion. The many faces of grief will appear before us as we attempt to peer into the changing patterns of "normal" and "abnormal" responses to loss. Hopefully, the course will give to student and teacher a more comprehensive understanding of one's own feelings about death and dying, a richer appreciation of the church's ministry of pastoral care in times of loss, and greater familiarity with the resources that are available to us as pastors who are daily acquainted with grief and sorrow.

The course will be conducted as a seminar, emphasizing discussion and shared leadership among students and the teacher. As a seminar, each student will be responsible for leading the class once during the semester and will present a final research project to the class.

Requirements

1. Each student is expected to read all the required assignments for the class and to come to each session prepared to discuss the material for the week and participate in all classroom endeavors. Each student will be responsible for helping lead the class once during the semester, beginning the second week of class. Prepare a reaction to the weekly readings and a way to guide the class towards engagement with the topic(s) of the week. For example, you might prepare discussion questions, offer comparisons to other texts, give current event examples, share your reflections on the material or personal experience with the situation or feelings that are being discussed. Additionally, you will need to conclude the class by sharing some kind of liturgical resource that addresses grief and loss. For example, a prayer, a hymn, poem, psalm, silence, excerpt from a sermon. (grading, 25%).
2. Write a 5 page review of either the Oates or Mitchell and Anderson textbooks. The review should include your own analysis of the author's work, your assessment of the books strengths and weaknesses, and why you agree or disagree with the theories and opinions of the author. This is not simply a summary of the book but your response to it and critical engagement with it. (grading, 25%) **(Due, October 8, Mid-term)**.
3. A final project of your design that helps you deepen your understanding of pastoral care in times of

grief and loss. Projects will be presented in class the last three weeks and written up for the instructor (10-20 pages). You may choose to expand on one of the topics covered by the course (e.g. life stages and loss, scriptural views of death, abnormal and normal grief, rituals and grief, dying well, etc.) or you may choose to fashion your own topic. These projects may be experientially based or theoretically derived. They should indicate your ability to synthesize and expand upon the material of the course. (grading, 50%). (**Written Projects, Due Dec. 10**).

Required Texts

Wayne Oates, *Grief, Transition, and Loss*

Herbert Anderson and Kenneth R. Mitchell, *All Our Losses, All Our Grievs*

Therese A. Rando, *Grief, Dying, and Death: Clinical Interventions for Caregivers*

Ira Byock, *Dying Well: The Prospect for Growth at the End of Life*

Optional Texts

Rod Hunter, ed. *Dictionary of Pastoral Care and Counseling*

Course Outline and Weekly Readings

9/3 Week 1: Introduction. Pastoral Care in times of Grief and Loss. Cultural and personal attitudes about death and loss. The experience of grief.

Therese A. Rando, *Grief, Dying, and Death*, intro-chap.1

9/10 Week 2: Pastoral Theology, Death, and Grief

Herbert Anderson and Kenneth R. Mitchell, *All Our Losses, All Our Grievs*, 29-31, 100-103, 137-138, 163-73

Wayne Oates, *Grief, Transition and Loss*, chap. 6

Dictionary of Pastoral Care and Counseling, "Death, Meaning of"

J.A.T. Robinson, "Preaching Death" (Hand-out)

9/17 Week 3: Loss, Grief, and Bereavement: Definitions and Types of Loss

Anderson and Mitchell, 15-19, 35-60,

Oates, 19-25, 55-82

Rando, 15-18

DPCC, "Grief and Loss"

9/24 Week 4: Psycho-Social Dimensions of Grief; Normal and Abnormal Grief

Erich Lindemann, "Symptomatology and Management of Acute Grief"

Anderson and Mitchell, 20-29, 61-103

Rando, 18-74, 113-117

10/1 Week 5: Life Cycle and Grief; Families and Children

Video, "Ordinary People"

Oates, 33-54

Rando, 119-172, 367-415

DPCC, "Dying Child and Family"

DPCC, "Grief and Loss in Childhood and Adolescence"

10/8 Week 6: No Class (Midterms) First Paper Due.

10/15 Week 7: The Grief Ministry of the Pastor and the Congregation

Anderson and Mitchell, 107-138

Rando, 75-117, 316-322

Liston Mills, "Pastoral Care of the Dying and Bereaved"

Thomas C. Oden, "Pastoral Care of the Dying" (chap. 18, in *Pastoral Theology*)

DPCC, "Dying, Pastoral Care of"

10/22 Week 8: The Dying Patient; Hospice Care; Ethical Considerations

Ira Byock, *Dying Well*, intro-chap. 3, chap 12 (and anything else you wish to read in the text)

Rando, 199-363

DPCC, "Dying, Moral Dilemmas In"

Sally B. Geis and Donald E. Messer, eds. "Physician Provided Medication

For Termination of Life" (chap. 4 in *How Shall We Die?*)

Guest Lecturer: Rev. Eyleen Farmer (Methodist Alliance Hospice)

10/29 Week 9: Funerals and Rituals at times of loss

Oates, 26-32

Anderson and Mitchell, 94-96, 115, 139-162

Rando, 104-108, 173-197

Joseph W. Mathews, "The Time My Father Died"

Edward P. Wimberly, "Pastoral Care and Support Systems," (37-48,

In *African American Pastoral Care*).

DPCC, "Funeral;" "Funeral, Child's;" "Funeral Director;" "Mourning
Customs and Rituals"

11/5 Week 10: Caring for Our Own Grief

Rando, 417-443.

DPCC, "Pastor, Pastoral Care of;" "Prayer and Worship Life, Pastor's"

Guest Lecturer: Chaplain Charlie Crouthers

11/12 Week 11: Final Projects

11/19 Week 12: Final Projects

11/26 Week 13: No Class. Thanksgiving.

12/3 Week 14: Final Projects

12/10 Week 15: Written Version of Final Projects Due. Conclusion of the Class.

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http://www.wlu.ca/~wwaar/syllabi/pastoral_care-ramsey.html

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