This course examines the interplay of themes of religion, love, and death in selected strands of Asian and Western sources. Examining both theoretical and narrative sources, this course places these sources within the larger framework of narrative and self, paying particular attention to the role of cultural stereotypes as well as structures and motifs of self-narratives of religion, love, and death. Within this narrative framework, the course examines the diverse dimensions of love and death: love in relation to family, sexuality, society, nature, and the religious dimensions of the divine, dharma, and dao; social, psychological, physical, and religious significations of death. These are set against the background of a range of themes including class, gender, and sexuality.

Requirements

1. Attendance: Required. Students can have one unexcused absence without penalty. Each class missed thereafter without prior permission will result in 1/2 grade penalty for the course grade. Attendance at weekly discussion sections is mandatory.
2. Short exams: Two in-class exams, based on materials from the readings, lectures, and course web site.
3. Shorter papers: Three shorter papers based on the required readings, of two to four pages each.
4. Presentation: Students will make a presentation on the readings for one of the section meetings. The presenter should NOT summarize the reading but should use the presentation to discuss why the selected ideas/passages in question are important for understanding the reading and proceed to explain and well as raise questions about these ideas/passages. Students will prepare handouts with questions and quotations from relevant passages from the required texts. Presentation guidelines will be provided on the course web site.
5. Medium-length paper: Each student will hand in a medium length final paper of 4-7 pages double-spaced at the end of the course. Suggested topics will be provided. Students may choose to create their own topics with the consent of their section leader. In the case of the latter, a one-paragraph description of the topic must be submitted by email to the instructor one week prior to the due date.
6. Late policy on written assignments: Three grace days total will be allotted excluding the medium-length paper for which no extensions will be given. For all other assignments, a cumulative total of three late days will be allowed without penalty. Thereafter, each late day will result in a two-point deduction from the course grade. Weekends are not counted against the grace days.

Grades

- Exam A 10%
- Exam B 10%
- Presentation 15%
- Discussion participation 10%
- Shorter paper I 10%
- Shorter paper II 10%
- Short paper III 10%
- Medium-length paper 25%

Required Texts (Information listed here is given in footnote/endnote format.)

5. Course Reader, REL 253 Religion, Love, and Death: East and West
Available at the Copy Shop, 539 E. 13th Street, Eugene, OR 97401, TEL 485 6253
Week 1 – Introduction: Stories of Religion, Love & Death

9/24 Mon. Introduction: Syllabus; The Storied Self: Religious Narrativity
9/26 Wed. Paul Brockelman, Time and Self: Phenomenological Explorations, 7-17, 71-83 (CR1); Jerome Bruner, “The “Remembered Self”,” 41-51 (CR2); Michel Foucault, “What Is an Author?” 101-120 (CR3);

Week 2 – Broken Stories of the Self: Ruptures, Secrets, and Contradictions

10/1 Mon. Elspeth Graham et al, “Pondering All These Things in Her Heart,” 51-71 (CR5); Hilde L. Nelson, Damaged Identities, Narrative Repair, 1-35, 176-188 (CR4).

Week 3 – Archetypes of Self Narratives: Augustine and Freud


Week 4 – Self Beyond Self: Dao Beyond Dao in the Zhuangzi

10/19 Fri. Public Lecture (Recommended): 7:00 p.m.-9:00 p.m., Lawrence 177 The Storied Self: Buddhist Narrativity. Keynote Speakers, Dr. Jason Wirth, Seattle University, Dr. Willoughby Britton, Brown University.

Week 5 – Many Faces of God: Spirit, Heart, and Body in the Color Purple


Week 6 – The Seer and the Seen: the Bible and the Buddha in Jacob’s Ladder

10/31 Wed. Film: Jacob's Ladder. Exam A in class.

Week 7 – The Zen Heart of Love: Pure Heart, Pure Enlightenment

11/7 Wed. Maura O’Halloran, Pure Heart, 150-312 (RT). Katsuki Sekida, Zen Training, 108-146 (CR16);

Week 8 – Love Unto Death: An Interrupted Life


Week 9 – Who Defines the Love of Death, the Death of Love? Buddhist, Christian, Atheist

11/19 Mon. Maggie Callanan and Patricia Kelley, Final Gifts, 171-183, 211-237 (CR20);

Week 10 – Whence and Whither the Self: Religion, Love, and Death

11/26 Mon. Comparative Insights; Discussion of paper topics
11/28 Wed. Final lecture. Final papers due in class.
Course Reader, REL 253 Religion, Love, and Death: East and West


