

Death and Afterlife

Religion 112, Section 1

Tuesday and Thursday 3:50 – 5:10PM

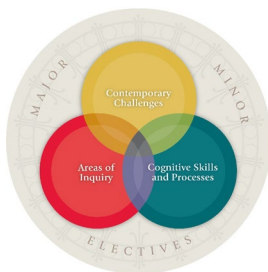
Spring 2024

Professor: Dr. Ernest B. Brewster (Department of Religion)
Phone: 848-932-6849; 848-932-9640 (Department Administrator)
E-Mail: ebrewster@rutgers.edu
Location: Dr. Ruth M. Adams Building, Room 208
Office Hours: Tuesdays and Thursdays 12:45-1:45 PM in Hickman Hall, Room 130. Please let me know, in advance, when you will be coming in during office hours. Zoom appointments will be available upon request.

Course Description:

This course deals with a variety of issues and concerns related to the process of dying, death, and what comes after. We will focus on medical, psychological, religious, and philosophical perspectives on death and dying, as well as the experiences of loss, grief, bereavement, and remembrance. We will alternate our course of study between analyzing the current conditions around death and dying in the United States, and exploring various religious and philosophical views on the survival of death and the existence of the afterlife. This course will attend to questions regarding the existence of God, and the existence of ultimate reality, as well as address questions related to personal identity and post-death existence.

PLEASE NOTE: Using critical analysis, this course will address emotionally sensitive issues. If you recently have experienced the death of someone close to you, you may find this course helpful in understanding your experience; however, if you have experienced a recent loss, you may find this course stressful. If you think the latter may be the case, please consider taking this course at a later time.



This course fulfills the following core curriculum learning goals of Rutgers University: [AHo]

Philosophical and Theoretical Issues: Arts and Humanities

Students will examine critically philosophical and other theoretical issues concerning the nature of reality, human experience, knowledge, value, and/or cultural production.

Required Texts: (Available through the campus bookstore and as noted below.)

Johnston, Mark. 2010. *Surviving Death*. Princeton University Press. ISBN-13: 978-0691130132

Kübler-Ross, Elizabeth. 2014 (reissue). *On Death and Dying: What the Dying Have to Teach Doctors, Nurses, Clergy and Their Own Families*. Scribner. ISBN-13: 978-1476775548

Recommended Texts:

Doughty, Caitlyn. 2017. *From Here to Eternity: Traveling the World to Find the Good Death*. W.W. Norton. ISBN: 978-0-393-35628-1

Lewis, C.S. 2015. *A Grief Observed*. HarperOne. ISBN: 978-0060652388 (Any version of this text is fine.)

Neumann, Ann. 2016. *The Good Death: An Exploration of Dying in America*. Beacon Press. ISBN:978-0-8070-7699-6 (paperback). Also available as e-book: ISBN: 978-0-8070-8063-4 (This text may be viewed online through Rutgers Libraries, there are limited number of copies of the text available in the library system).

Schedule of Topics, Readings and Assignments:

Readings and papers are DUE on the dates listed.

Jan. 16 th	Course Introduction: From <i>Ars Moriendi</i> to <i>Death with Dignity</i>	
Jan. 18 th	On the Fear of Dying and Death Required Reading: "On the Fear of Death," Chapter 1 in Kübler-Ross	
Jan. 23 rd	Attitudes Toward Dying and Death Required Reading: "Attitudes Toward Death and Dying," Chapter 2 in Kübler-Ross	
Jan. 25 th	First Stage of the End-of-Life: Denial and Isolation Required Reading: "First Stage: Denial and Isolation," Chapter 3 in Kübler-Ross	ICQ Response #1
Jan. 30 th	Second Stage of the End-of-Life: Anger Required Reading: "Second Stage: Anger," Chapter 4 in Kübler-Ross	
Feb. 1 st	Third Stage of the End-of-Life: Bargaining Required Reading: "Third Stage: Bargaining," Chapter 5 in Kübler-Ross	

Feb. 6 th	Fourth Stage of the End-of-Life: Depression Required Reading: "Fourth Stage: Depression," Chapter 6 in Kübler-Ross	ICQ Response #2
Feb. 8 th	Fifth Stage of the End-of-Life: Acceptance Required Reading: "Fifth Stage: Acceptance," Chapter 7 in Kübler-Ross	
Feb. 13 th	Coping with Loss: Changes in the Household and Effects on the Family Required Reading: "The Patient's Family," Kübler- Ross (Chapter 9)	
Feb. 15 th	Introduction to Surviving Death Required Reading: "Is Heaven a Place We Can Get To?" Johnston (Chapter 1, pp. 1-20)	
Feb. 20 th	Is Heaven a Place We Can Get To? Required Reading: "Is Heaven a Place We Can Get To?" Johnston (Chapter 1, pp. 20-47)	
Feb. 22 nd	Is Heaven a Place We Can Get To? Required Reading: "Is Heaven a Place We Can Get To?" Johnston (Chapter 1, pp. 47-68)	ICQ Response #3
Feb. 27 th	Is Heaven a Place We Can Get To? Required Reading: "Is Heaven a Place We Can Get To?" Johnston (Chapter 1, pp. 68-98)	
Feb. 29 th	Is Heaven a Place We Can Get To? Required Reading: "Is Heaven a Place We Can Get To?" Johnston (Chapter 1, pp. 98-125)	
Mar. 5 th	The Impossibility of My Own Death Required Reading: "The Impossibility of My Own Death," Johnston (Chapter 2, pp. 126-154)	
Mar. 7 th	The Impossibility of My Own Death Required Reading: "The Impossibility of My Own Death," Johnston (Chapter 2, pp. 154-188)	ICQ Response #4
Mar. 12 th	SPRING RECESS	
Mar. 14 th	SPRING RECESS	

Mar. 19 th	From Anatta to Agape Required Reading: "From Anatta to Agape," Johnston (Chapter 3, pp. 189-208)	
Mar. 21 st	From Anatta to Agape Required Reading: "From Anatta to Agape," Johnston (Chapter 3, pp. 208-240)	
Mar. 26 th	What is Found at the Center? Required Reading: "What is Found at the Center?" Johnston, Chapter 4 (pp. 241-274)	ICQ Response #5
Mar. 28 th	What is Found at the Center? Required Reading: "What is Found at the Center?" Johnston, Chapter 4 (pp. 274-304)	
Apr. 2 nd	A New Refutation of Death Required Reading: "A New Refutation of Death," Johnston, Chapter 5 (pp. 305-324)	
Apr. 4 th	A New Refutation of Death Required Reading: "A New Refutation of Death," Johnston, Chapter 5 (pp. 324-348)	
Apr. 9 th	A New Refutation of Death Required Reading: "A New Refutation of Death," Johnston, Chapter 5 (pp. 348-377)	
Apr. 11 th	End-of-Life Choices and Disability Rights Required Reading: Neumann: Chapter 7, The Most Vulnerable	ICQ Response #6
Apr. 16 th	Death and Punishment Required Reading: Neumann: Chapter 8, Dying Inside	
Apr. 18 th	A Modern Ars Moriendi? Required Reading: Neumann: Chapter 9, A Good Death	
Apr. 23 rd	Modern Funerals and Cremation Required Reading: Doughty, Chapter 2, "Colorado" (pp. 1-41)	
Apr. 25 th	Course Conclusion/Review	

Course Requirements:

Requirement 1 - Attendance and Class Participation:

Attendance. Good attendance demonstrates a solid commitment to learning the material covered in class and will positively influence your grades and overall experience of the course. Please note that some of the material covered in lectures and in class discussion will not be found in the textbooks. Also note that specific details regarding assignments may be given only in class. As such, it is in your best interest to attend each class. If you are sick, or have an emergency, please use the University absence reporting website (<https://sims.rutgers.edu/ssra/>) to report the date and reason for your absence. An email recording your absence will be automatically sent to me. You may also email me directly at ebrewster@rutgers.edu to discuss an absence.

Please do your best to attend class consistently. You will be allowed two absences without a penalty, regardless of the reason. It may be helpful to think of this like paid time off (PTO) with an employer. Other than religious holidays and documented university events, all absences count against the allowance of two unpenalized absences. If you need to miss more than two classes, please email--**within one week** of your absence--a paragraph in which you respond to the reading(s) assigned for the class(es) you missed. This paragraph should include any thoughts and ideas on the reading(s) that you would have contributed had you attended the class in person. Please note that a failure to submit your paragraph will result in a one increment drop (e.g. from an A to A-) in your attendance grade for each absence beyond the two allowed. If you are absent on a day that we have a quiz or thought brief, you will simply not earn participation credit for that assignment.

Please do your best to be on time. Arriving late or leaving early are disruptive to your colleagues. Excessive tardiness and/or leaving class early will be tracked and added to your absences.

Because we are meeting in person, most classes will not be recorded. If you are not able to attend a class, please connect with one or two other students who can help you get caught up; you, in turn, can help them if they are unable to attend a class.

Class Participation. Good class participation includes completing the assignments before each class, arriving on time (with the assigned text at hand), taking notes, actively listening, and engaging in class discussions. How and what you learn from listening to a lecture, reading a textbook, doing research, etc., is exponentially enhanced when you have immediate access to the perspectives of your fellow classmates. Therefore, it is important to share your perspectives so that others may benefit from what you have to say. For those who may be reticent about sharing with the class as a whole, please note that there will be opportunities for sharing in small groups, and for writing spontaneous, directed “minute papers” during class. It should go without saying that your contributions should be respectful of the thoughts, feelings, beliefs, and values of others. Please remember to bring note paper with you to class.

General criteria for assessment of attendance and class participation:

In general, you should think of participation being assessed according to the following standards:

- A: You have completed all assigned work before each class session and consistently play an active role in discussions. Your comments reflect excellent preparation and a solid commitment to the learning goals of the course. Your contributions indicate a deep and serious engagement with the subject matter. You build upon the comments of others and pose insightful, critical questions that foster further discussion and advance the level and depth of the conversation. You complete all quizzes and thought briefs successfully, with mostly perfect scores, within the allotted time frame.
- B: You have completed your assigned work before most class sessions and often play an active role in discussions. Your comments reflect good preparation and a desire to learn. Your contributions are mostly on target and demonstrate that you are paying attention to the contributions of other students. You complete most of the quizzes and thought briefs, with mostly high scores, within the allotted time frame.
- C: Your preparation is inconsistent, and you only occasionally engage in discussions. Your comments reflect adequate preparation when you do contribute. You complete only some of the quizzes and/or thought briefs.
- D: You are often unprepared and almost never contribute to discussions or complete the quizzes -and/or- your comments reflect a lack of interest, engagement, or focus.
- F: You never contribute or participate at all; your participation disrespects others; or you use electronic devices for purposes other than note-taking.

PLEASE NOTE: Use of electronic devices such as cell phones, laptops and tablets must be for purposes related to the course, specifically taking notes. Using devices for any other purpose is unacceptable. The burden of proof will be on you to demonstrate that you are not using devices for any purpose other than note-taking. There is ample research to support that writing notes by hand improves engagement, comprehension, and retention of course material. Simply put, taking notes by hand facilitates learning.

Requirement 2 - Interests, Challenges and Question (IQC) Response Papers

IQC Response Papers. IQC papers are written responses to the readings concerning death, dying, and/or afterlife as indicated on the syllabus. ICQ papers should be **one page maximum**, typed double-spaced in 12-point (**or smaller**) font with 1" margins (**or less**) all around. ICQ papers are succinct, analytical responses to the assigned reading for the day. In each ICQ paper, you should begin with something in the reading that most **Interests** you, quoting from the text and explaining why it is of interesting to you. You should then follow this with something in the reading that **Challenges** your thinking in some way, again quoting from the text and demonstrating how it is expanding your thinking. (Note: this is not you challenging the author.)

Finally, you should raise a **Question** from your reading of the text. This can take the form of a question regarding something you encounter in the text that you feel needs more explanation or analysis -or- something that you think is not generally well- understood in society based on your reading of this text. Please do not waste space for a heading; you will be submitting the ICQ

papers via Canvas. Once you have logged in, you can begin your text on the first typed line.

Your ICQ responses should be written in first-person, consist of more than one paragraph, fill the page, and demonstrate, beyond a shadow of a doubt, that you did the entire reading and thought carefully about it. Although you should read all of the required readings and prepare for all in-class discussions, you must complete a total of five ICQ from the six that are assigned.

Each of the five ICQ papers contribute to 8% of your grade.

ICQ assignments will be graded according to the following scale.

- 10.....Extraordinary work. Thorough. Effective critical thinking. Rare but possible.
- 9.5.....Excellent work – well above and beyond expectations
- 9 Insightfully completed as expected and written very well.
- 8.5 This is the typical grade for meeting the minimum requirements.
- 8.....Not quite up to expectations, for one reason or another, and/or writing problems.
- 7.5 Falls short in length and/or critical thinking.
- 7.....Falls short as above and/or too much summary without analysis.
- 6.5.....These grades and below are compounding the problems mentioned above.

Each ICQ Response paper is due at the start of class, as indicated on the class schedule above. Each day a paper is late, 0.5 out of 10 points will be deducted. For example, a paper rated at 8.5 will be rated 8.0 if it is a day late and 7.5 if it is two days late. Please note that while late written assignments will be penalized as described above, you will be allowed one late paper (one class period) without a penalty. Please note that if you attend class even without submitting your ICP, your attendance that day will signify that you have benefited from the discussion and factored favorably into your overall grade for attendance and participation.

Requirement 3 - Movie review or book report (due on Thursday May 2nd)

For this assignment you may choose a documentary movie from a list to be provided, read *A Grief Observed* by C.S. Lewis, or read selected chapters from *From Here to Eternity: Traveling the World to Find the Good Death*, by Caitlyn Doughty. After studying the material, you will be asked to write an essay based on prompts related to specific elements of the course. The prompts for the final assignment will be provided later in the semester.

The final paper should be three-pages minimum, typed double-spaced in 12-point (no larger) Times New Roman font with 1" margins (or less) all around. Again, please do not waste space for a heading; you may begin your text on the first typed line. Each paper will be graded on the same 1-10 numbered scale used for the ICQ responses. Your grade will drop a half-number for each 24-hour period the paper is late. There is no page limit for this assignment. You will be required to submit an acknowledgment that no AI was used in the writing of this paper.

General criteria for assessment of IQC and movie review or book report:

All written assignments will be evaluated for:

- ✓ accuracy and precision of scholarship
- ✓ clarity of oral and written expression
- ✓ progress in critical thinking skills, especially with regard to your own assumptions
- ✓ completion of assignments and readings on due dates
- ✓ thoroughness, creativity, originality and contribution to field of inquiry

Overall course assessment will be based on the following formula:

Attendance and Participation	25%
IQC Response Papers (5 of 6 required, each worth 8%)	40%
Movie Review or Book Report.....	35%

Please take care to remember that if you EVER consult an outside source for something you are writing, you MUST acknowledge it through an appropriate citation. Portraying the ideas or work of someone else is plagiarism. Any student found plagiarizing will receive an F for the entire course. (<http://academicintegrity.rutgers.edu/academic-integrity-policy/>)

AI Policy Statement:

In concert with Rutgers' code of conduct, which mandates "that all work submitted in a course, academic research, or other activity is the student's own and created without the aid of impermissible technologies, materials, or collaborations," the use of AI tools is allowed only for the ICQ Response Papers. This assignment has been designed to help you develop knowledge and gain emerging skills that will be useful to you as workplace professionals.

Although you may use search engines, spell-check, and simple grammar-check in crafting your movie review or book report, you will need to submit the following with the paper: "I certify that this assignment represents my own work. I have not used any unauthorized or unacknowledged assistance or sources in completing it, including free or commercial systems or services offered on the internet or text generating systems embedded into software."

Be aware of the limits of AI tools like ChatGPT, such as the following:

- * If you provide minimum-effort prompts, you will get low-quality results. You will need to refine your prompts in order to get good outcomes. This will take work.
- * Don't trust anything it says. If it gives you a number or fact, assume it is wrong unless you either know the answer or can check with another source. You will be responsible for any errors or omissions provided by the tool. It works best for topics you understand.
- * Bot-generated text tends toward summary and generality with little or no quotation; when prompted to provide quotations, bots often deliver quoted material that is fabricated or incorrect. Sometimes it creates rather than alleviates work.

Whenever you use AI tools as an aid in the creative process, you should do so with the understanding that this should be accompanied by critical thinking and reflection. As a general rule, you should always document what tool(s) were used, how they were used, and how the results from the AI were incorporated into the submitted work.

Be aware of some of the ethical problems associated with emerging AI tools, such as:

- * Amplification of bias and "malignant" stereotypes
- * Copyright infringement, lack of consent, surveillance, and privacy concerns
- * Environmental footprint
- * Misinformation through "hallucinations" and conspiracy theories/misconceptions
- * Political economy, concentration of power, lack of transparency and accountability

If you have any concerns/reservation about using AI, the assignment can be adapted by extending your own ICQ analysis and attaching the acknowledgment that you did not use any AI tools.

Special Needs and Disability Statement:

If you have any special needs or a disability that requires any special accommodation to fulfill any course requirements, you need to provide acceptable documentation to the Office of Disability Services. That office will then make arrangements as needed with me.

Be sure to take advantage of the many academic support services Rutgers offers through a variety of Learning Centers. Go to <https://rlc.rutgers.edu/about-us> for more information. If, at any point, you experience anything impacting your performance or ability to participate in this class, please reach out to me. Please also see the academic, health, and mental wellness resources searchable at <https://success.rutgers.edu/> for further support.

Consult this syllabus regularly. It contains all the foundational information you need to know. It is also very important that you keep up regularly with all materials on Canvas, especially any announcements I may post from time to time. Please set your notifications appropriately so that you do not miss anything. Consult with the OIT Help Desk (833-648-4357) for Canvas help.