

**San José State University  
Humanities Department  
GERO/HUM/RELS 099 – Sec. 81  
DEATH, DYING, AND RELIGION, Spring 2021**

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<b>Office Hours:</b>	TH 10:15–11:30 AM and by appointment
<b>Class Days/Time:</b>	TTH 9:00 – 10:15 AM
<b>Classroom:</b>	Virtual

**Canvas – Learning Management System**

Messages related to class activities and course assignments will be posted to Canvas.

**Course Description**

Our course begins with a survey of case studies focused on terminal illness, palliative care, and end-of-life ethics. We'll explore the psycho-social dimensions of caregiving and the healing arts in relation to a dynamic sense of 'personhood' achievable at any given point in one's life. We then survey various religious traditions and spiritual practices to consider how death and dying is conceptualized both as a one-time bio-physical event at the end of life and as an ongoing process of personal growth and spiritual transformation throughout one's life. Judaism, Christianity, Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism, and the Lakota Sioux shall constitute the primary traditions under investigation.

**COURSE GOALS AND STUDENT LEARNING OBJECTIVES**

**General Education Goals**

Students will understand themselves as integrated physiological, social, and psychological entities who are able to formulate strategies for lifelong personal development. Courses shall address challenges confronting students who are entering the complex social system of the university, so that students can employ available university resources to support academic and personal development.

**GE Learning Outcomes**

Upon the successful completion of this course students will be able to:

**GEL01** recognize the physiological, social/cultural, psychological, and spiritual influences on their well-being (this will be assessed through class discussions, completion of Personal Death Profiles, and Diagnostic Surveys);

**GEL02** recognize the physiological, social/cultural, psychological, and spiritual factors on their development across the total lifespan (this will be assessed through class discussions, selection of a health care proxy, Starting 'The Conversation' Interview Project, and the Three Faces of Death Art Project, and Final Paper);

**GEL03** use appropriate social skills to enhance learning and develop positive interpersonal relationships with diverse groups and individuals (this will be assessed in class discussions, Personal Death Profiles, and class participation in small group activities); and

**GEL04** reflect on themselves as persons undergoing a particular stage of human development, how their well-being is effected by the university's academic and social systems, and how they can facilitate their development within the university environment (this will be assessed through Death Meditation exercises and an Introspectus)

### **Additional information about GE Content**

The course will include a writing component of 1500 words as well as content on issues of diversity related to matters of death, dying, and religion. In order to support students in acquiring the competencies described in the GE Learning Outcomes, the course will include the following in relation to matters of death, dying, and religion over the course of the lifespan:

- a focus on the interdependence of the physiological, social/cultural, and psychological factors that contribute to the process of human development and determine the limitations, potential, and options of the individual across the lifespan;
- an understanding of the university as a learning center for the integrated person, an introduction to its resources, and an appreciation for the intellectual and social vitality of the campus community;
- an inventory and evaluation of university-level learning skills (e.g. methods of inquiry, critical thinking, study skills, research skills, information literacy), and an exploration of the application of these skills to the student's academic and personal development and;
- an understanding of ethics and integrity in academic and non-academic settings.

### **Course Content Learning Outcomes**

Upon successful completion of this course, students will be able to:

**CLO1** recognize and articulate the importance of death, dying, and religion over the course of the human life span (this will be assessed primarily through exams, final paper, and quizzes based on lectures and assigned readings);

**CLO2** demonstrate a basic understanding of the three-fold concept of death (Physical Death, Psychological Death, and Spiritual Death/Rebirth) and be able to produce and curate an art exhibition on death (this will be assessed through discussion of relevant readings, submission of an 'images of death' art project).

## Required Texts

1. Childs, Geoff. 2004. *Tibetan Diary* (Free access: **King Library eBook**)
2. Mathieu, David. 2013. *Way of Wakan: Reflections on Lakota Spirituality and Grief*, n.p.
3. Ostaseski, Frank. 2017. *The Five Invitations: Discovering What Death Can Teach Us About Living Fully*. New York: Flatiron Books.
4. Perreira, Todd, ed. 2021. *Death, Dying, and Religion: Course Reader*. San José, CA: Maple Press.
5. Prabhupāda, A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami. 1979. [1972]. *Beyond Birth and Death*, Los Angeles, et al: The Bhaktivedanta Book Trust. (Free access: [http://prabhupadabooks.com/pdf/Beyond\\_Birth\\_and\\_Death-Original\\_1974\\_edition\\_scan.pdf](http://prabhupadabooks.com/pdf/Beyond_Birth_and_Death-Original_1974_edition_scan.pdf))
6. Tolstoy, Leo. 2017. *The Death of Ivan Ilyich and Other Stories*, Kirsten Lodge, editor and translator, Ontario: Broadview Press.
7. Volandes, M.D., Angelo E. 2016. *The Conversation: A Revolutionary Plan for End-of-Life Care*, New York: Bloomsbury.

**Order Required Texts:** <https://sjsu.bncollege.com/shop/sjsu/page/find-textbooks>

**Order Course Reader:** <https://maplepress.net/readers/product/humanities-99-02-perreira/>

## Library Liaison

Silke Higgins, Humanities Librarian, King Library <https://libguides.sjsu.edu/humanities>

Email contact: [silke.higgins@sjsu.edu](mailto:silke.higgins@sjsu.edu)

## Course Requirements and Assignments

SJSU classes are designed such that in order to be successful, it is expected that students will spend a minimum of forty-five hours for each unit of credit (normally three hours per unit per week), including preparing for class, participating in course activities, completing assignments, and so on. More details about student workload can be found in University Policy S12-3 at <http://www.sjsu.edu/senate/docs/S12-3.pdf>.

## Classroom Protocol

Participate in all in-class activities and take the quizzes or your grade will suffer. It is expected that when you log onto class you will give the instructor, your peers, and the material your undivided attention. Since this class is on Zoom, you are encouraged to keep your video on so that you can be seen, particularly during group and class discussions. Your mic should be muted until you need to speak. Ensure that the background visible from your webcam is suitable for a professional setting. Please strive to ensure that distractions in your environment are kept to a minimum. If you need to take a break, leave the video on and mute the mic. Text the instructor that you are leaving and when you will return. Do not engage in any behavior that will detract from a positive learning environment for other students. To develop a collegial working environment, students may address me as “Prof. Perreira” or simply as “professor.”

## Assignments and Grading Policy

Personal Death Profiles and Diagnostic Surveys, quizzes, in-class activities, final paper, and final exam are required. Participation in discussions on reading assignments is an essential part of the course. Paper requirements are covered in assignment postings on Canvas. More guidelines on grading information and class attendance can be found from the following two university policies:

- [University Syllabus Policy S16-9](http://www.sjsu.edu/senate/docs/S16-9.pdf) (<http://www.sjsu.edu/senate/docs/S16-9.pdf>)
- [University policy F15-12](http://www.sjsu.edu/senate/docs/F15-12.pdf) (<http://www.sjsu.edu/senate/docs/F15-12.pdf>)

## Determination of Grades

	<b>Up to</b>
1. Orientation Activities	12 pts
2. Personal Death Profiles, Diagnostic Surveys, & Health Care Proxy Form	120 pts
3. Class Participation (See "In-Class Activities & Reflections" below)	(up to) 105 pts
4. Quizzes	90 pts
5. Final Paper	100 pts
6. Final Exam	100 pts
<b>COURSE GRADE</b>	<b>(up to) 527 pts</b>

Letter grades will be assigned in line with these percentages:

A 94-100, A- 90-93, B+ 87-89, B 84-86, B- 80-83, C+ 77-79,

C 74-76, C- 70-73, D+ 67-69, D 64-66, D- 60-63, F 0-59.

## In-Class Assignments

Throughout the semester you will be invited to participate in various in-class activities and reflection assignments. Some of these will be peer-collaborative activities conducted in-class and others while the reflections will be completed outside of class. Both aim to help improve your understanding and comprehension of the lecture and reading material.

There are no make-ups for missed in-class exercises or past-due reflection assignments. These are incorporated into your final grade as "class participation."

## UNIVERSITY POLICIES

The Office of Graduate and Undergraduate Programs maintains university-wide policy information relevant to all courses, such as academic integrity, accommodation, etc. You may find all syllabus related University Policies and resources information listed on GUP's Syllabus Information web page at <http://www.sjsu.edu/gup/syllabusinfo/>

## CLASS SCHEDULE: Lecture Topics and Assigned Readings

Students should complete each reading assignment prior to the class meeting date and participate in all sessions. This schedule is subject to change at instructor's discretion.

(CR) = Course Reader

Week	Date	Topics, Readings, Assignments, Deadlines
1	01/28	<b>Course Introduction</b> <b>REVIEW:</b> Canvas Home Page, Course Syllabus, first assignment.
2	02/02	<b>Terminal Illness: Case Study</b> <b>READ:</b> Perreira, "Death and the Possibility for Real Living" <b>WATCH in-CLASS:</b> Begin <i>Tuesdays with Morrie</i>
2	02/04	<b>Learning How to Live with Dying</b> <b>READ:</b> Volandes, Ch: 1-3 <b>WATCH in-CLASS:</b> Conclude <i>Tuesdays with Morrie</i> <b>DUE:</b> Personal Death Profile & Diagnostic Survey MANDATORY
3	02/09	<b>Three Faces of Death: Physical, Psychological, &amp; Spiritual</b> <b>READ:</b> Ostaseski, Ch. 6 (focus on pp. 86-91); Volandes, Ch. 4-6 <b>WATCH outside of CLASS:</b> <i>Extremis</i> on Netflix (24-min)
3	02/11	<b>Palliative Care</b> <b>READ:</b> Ostaseski, Ch. 1 & 3; Coberly, "A Broader View of Healing." (CR 1-9) <b>WATCH in-CLASS:</b> <i>On Our Own Terms:</i> "A Different Kind of Care"
4	02/16	<b>Healing While Dying?</b> <b>READ:</b> Tolstoy's <i>The Death of Ivan Ilyich</i> ; Ostaseski, Ch. 8 <b>DUE:</b> California Advance Health Care Directive

Week	Date	Topics, Readings, Assignments, Deadlines
4	02/18	<b>Transforming the Person: Three Commitments &amp; Five Stages</b> <b>READ:</b> Imara, "Dying as the Last Stage of Growth" (CR 11-19) <b>WATCH in-CLASS:</b> <i>The Simpsons</i> – "One Fish, Two Fish, Blow Fish, Blue Fish" (K-R seg.) <b>DUE:</b> Ivan Ilyich and the Three Faces of Death
5	02/23	<b>Personhood &amp; Spirituality in Relation to Death and Dying</b> <b>READ:</b> Morgan, "Violence is the Dark Side of Spirituality" (CR 20-25) and Ostaseski, Ch. 5. <b>DUE:</b> Images of Death: Physical, Psychological, and Spiritual Death/Rebirth
5	02/25	<b>The Art of Living in Antiquity</b> <b>READ:</b> Seneca, "On the Shortness of Life." (CR 26-38)
6	03/02	<b>Foucault on the Care of the Self in Late Antiquity</b> <b>QUIZ 1:</b> goes live online (Covers Weeks 1-5)
6	03/04	<b>Judaism: Biblical Origins of Life and Death</b> <b>READ:</b> Genesis 1-3 (CR 57-58)
7	03/09	<b>Judaism: Biblical Origins of Life and Death</b> <b>READ:</b> Genesis 1-3 (CR 57-58)
7	03/11	<b>Judaism: Why Do the Hebrew Scriptures Lack an Eschatology?</b> <b>READ:</b> Gillman, "Judaic Doctrines of Death and Afterlife." (CR 39-56)
8	03/16	<b>Jewish Eschatology &amp; Caregiving for the Dying and the Dead</b> <b>READ:</b> 2 Maccabees 7:1-23 (CR 66) and selections from Diamant's <i>Saying Kaddish</i> : "Confession by the Gravely Ill"; "Viddui"; "Why We Say Kaddish" (CR 67-79) <b>WATCH in-CLASS:</b> <i>The Art of Jewish Caregiving (part four): Death and Dying According to Jewish Law</i>
8	03/18	<b>Christianizing Death</b> <b>READ:</b> Gospel of John 1:1-14; Keck, "Death and Afterlife in the New Testament" (CR 80-87) and Obayashi, "Death and Eternal Life in Christianity." (CR 88-95)
9	03/23	<b>Christian Theology of Illness and Death</b> <b>READ:</b> Selections from Verhey's <i>The Christian Art of Dying</i> (CR 107-123)
9	03/25	<b>Ars Moriendi: The First and Second Death in Christianity</b> <b>READ:</b> Main, "Death: The Inner Journey" (CR 124-130)
10	03/29-04/02	<b>SPRING BREAK</b>
11	04/06	<b>Islam: The Three Stages of Religion</b> <b>READ:</b> Michon, "The Spiritual Practices of Sufism" (CR 131-145)
11	04/08	<b>Dhikr ('Remembrance'): The Sufi's Path to Allah</b> <b>READ:</b> Selections from Al-Ghazzālī's "The Remembrance of Death and the Afterlife" (CR 146-158)
12	04/13	<b>Death and the Human Life Cycle in Islam</b> <b>READ:</b> Sakr, "Death and Dying: An Islamic Perspective." (CR 159-172) <b>WATCH in-CLASS:</b> <i>Islamic Mysticism: The Sufi Way</i> (Houston Smith)
12	04/15	<b>Hindu Embryology and Samsāra</b> <b>READ:</b> Doniger O'Flaherty, translator, "Creation Hymn" ( <i>Rig Veda</i> ), "Birth" and "Death" ( <i>Markandeya Purana</i> ) (CR 173-177) <b>DISCUSS:</b> Guidelines for Final Paper <b>QUIZ 2:</b> goes live online (Covers Weeks 6-12)
13	04/20	<b>Hindu Paths to Liberation</b> <b>READ:</b> Medley, "Hindu Models of Enlightened Death" (CR 178-198)

Week	Date	Topics, Readings, Assignments, Deadlines
13	04/22	<b>Bhakti Yoga: The Truth to be Realized</b> <b>READ:</b> A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda, <i>Beyond Birth and Death</i> <b>WATCH in-CLASS:</b> <i>Your Ever Well-Wisher</i> (segment on rebirth)
14	04/27	<b>Buddhist Cosmology: The Bhavacakra ('Wheel of Becoming')</b> <b>REVIEW:</b> Diagram of bhavacakra and a chart summarizing the Buddha's analysis of dependent origination (CR 199-200) <b>READ:</b> Childs, Ch. 3 & 9 and Ostaseski, Ch. 12 <b>WATCH in-CLASS:</b> Scenes from <i>The Little Buddha</i>
14	04/29	<b>Impermanence and No-Self ('anicca' and 'anattā')</b> <b>READ:</b> Ostaseski, Ch. 13 <b>WATCH in-CLASS:</b> Scenes from <i>The Little Buddha</i>
15	05/04	<b>Travels Through the Tibetan Bardö &amp; Buddhist Death Meditation</b> <b>READ:</b> Childs, Ch. 10; Ostaseski, Ch. 2 <b>REVIEW:</b> Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta ("The Foundations of Mindfulness") and Maraṇassati Sutta ("Mindfulness of Death") (CR 201-205) <b>WATCH outside of CLASS:</b> <i>The Tibetan Book of the Dead</i> , Part 2: "The Great Liberation"
15	05/06	<b>Lakota Spirituality: Bigfoot Memorial Ride</b> <b>READ:</b> Powers, "Wiping the Tears: Lakota Religion in the Twenty-first Century" (CR 206-215) and Mathieu, <i>Way of Wakan</i> , pp. 14-62. <b>WATCH in-CLASS:</b> <i>Wiping the Tears of Seven Generations: The Bigfoot Memorial Ride</i>
16	05/11	<b>Lakota Spirituality: Seven Sacred Rites</b> <b>READ:</b> Ostaseski, Ch. 10 & 16 and Mathieu, <i>Way of Wakan</i> , pp. 63-108 <b>QUIZ 3:</b> goes live online (Covers Weeks 12-16)
16	05/13	<b>Forgiveness: <i>Finis coronat</i> (The End Crowns the Work)</b> <b>READ:</b> Ostaseski, Ch. 4 & 7. <b>DUE:</b> Final Paper
17	05/20	<b>FINAL EXAMINATION (TH) 7:15 AM – 9:30 AM</b>