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

Professor: Todd Perreira ทอดด์ เบอร์เรียรา
Office Location: Virtual
Voice Mail: 408-924-4795
Email: Todd.Perreira@SJSU.edu
Office Hours: TH 10:15–11:30 AM and by appointment
Class Days/Time: TTH 9:00 – 10:15 AM
Classroom: 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

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

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)
- University policy F15-12 (http://www.sjsu.edu/senate/docs/F15-12.pdf)
**Determination of Grades**

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<tr>
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<th>Up to</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Orientation Activities</td>
<td>12 pts</td>
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<tr>
<td>2. Personal Death Profiles, Diagnostic Surveys, &amp; Health Care Proxy Form</td>
<td>120 pts</td>
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<tr>
<td>3. Class Participation (See “In-Class Activities &amp; Reflections” below)</td>
<td>(up to) 105 pts</td>
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<td>4. Quizzes</td>
<td>90 pts</td>
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<td>5. Final Paper</td>
<td>100 pts</td>
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<td>6. Final Exam</td>
<td>100 pts</td>
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**COURSE GRADE**

(up to) 527 pts

Letter grades will be assigned in line with these percentages:


**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/](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.

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Topics, Readings, Assignments, Deadlines</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>01/28</td>
<td><strong>Course Introduction</strong>&lt;br&gt;<strong>REVIEW:</strong> Canvas Home Page, Course Syllabus, first assignment.</td>
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<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>02/02</td>
<td><strong>Terminal Illness: Case Study</strong>&lt;br&gt;<strong>READ:</strong> Perreira, “Death and the Possibility for Real Living”&lt;br&gt;<strong>WATCH in-CLASS:</strong> Begin <em>Tuesdays with Morrie</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>02/04</td>
<td><strong>Learning How to Live with Dying</strong>&lt;br&gt;<strong>READ:</strong> Volandes, Ch. 1-3&lt;br&gt;<strong>WATCH in-CLASS:</strong> Conclude <em>Tuesdays with Morrie</em>&lt;br&gt;<strong>DUE:</strong> Personal Death Profile &amp; Diagnostic Survey MANDATORY</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>02/09</td>
<td><strong>Three Faces of Death: Physical, Psychological, &amp; Spiritual</strong>&lt;br&gt;<strong>READ:</strong> Ostaseski, Ch. 6 (focus on pp. 86-91); Volandes, Ch. 4-6&lt;br&gt;<strong>WATCH outside of CLASS:</strong> <em>Extremis</em> on Netflix (24-min)</td>
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<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>02/11</td>
<td><strong>Palliative Care</strong>&lt;br&gt;<strong>READ:</strong> Ostaseski, Ch. 1 &amp; 3; Coberly, “A Broader View of Healing.” (CR 1-9)&lt;br&gt;<strong>WATCH in-CLASS:</strong> <em>On Our Own Terms:</em> “A Different Kind of Care”</td>
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<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>02/16</td>
<td><strong>Healing While Dying?</strong>&lt;br&gt;<strong>READ:</strong> Tolstoy’s <em>The Death of Ivan Ilyich</em>; Ostaseski, Ch. 8&lt;br&gt;<strong>DUE:</strong> California Advance Health Care Directive</td>
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| 4    | 02/18 | **Transforming the Person: Three Commitments & Five Stages**  
READ: Imara, “Dying as the Last Stage of Growth” (CR 11-19)  
WATCH in-CLASS: *The Simpsons* – “One Fish, Two Fish, Blow Fish, Blue Fish” (K-R seg.)  
**DUE:** Ivan Ilyich and the Three Faces of Death |
| 5    | 02/23 | **Personhood & Spirituality in Relation to Death and Dying**  
READ: Morgan, “Violence is the Dark Side of Spirituality” (CR 20-25) and Ostaseski, Ch. 5.  
**DUE:** Images of Death: Physical, Psychological, and Spiritual Death/Rebirth |
| 5    | 02/25 | **The Art of Living in Antiquity**  
| 6    | 03/02 | **Foucault on the Care of the Self in Late Antiquity**  
**QUIZ 1:** goes live online (Covers Weeks 1-5) |
| 6    | 03/04 | **Judaism: Biblical Origins of Life and Death**  
READ: Genesis 1-3 (CR 57-58) |
| 7    | 03/09 | **Judaism: Biblical Origins of Life and Death**  
READ: Genesis 1-3 (CR 57-58) |
| 7    | 03/11 | **Judaism: Why Do the Hebrew Scriptures Lack an Eschatology?**  
READ: Gillman, “Judaic Doctrines of Death and Afterlife.” (CR 39-56) |
| 8    | 03/16 | **Jewish Eschatology & Caregiving for the Dying and the Dead**  
READ: 2 Maccabees 7:1-23 (CR 66) and selections from Diamant’s *Saying Kaddish*: “Confession by the Gravely Ill”; “Viddui”; “Why We Say Kaddish” (CR 67-79)  
WATCH in-CLASS: *The Art of Jewish Caregiving (part four): Death and Dying According to Jewish Law* |
| 8    | 03/18 | **Christianizing Death**  
| 9    | 03/23 | **Christian Theology of Illness and Death**  
READ: Selections from Verhey’s *The Christian Art of Dying* (CR 107-123) |
| 9    | 03/25 | **Ars Moriendi: The First and Second Death in Christianity**  
READ: Main, “Death: The Inner Journey” (CR 124-130) |
| 10   | 03/29-04/02 | **SPLING BREAK** |
| 11   | 04/06 | **Islam: The Three Stages of Religion**  
READ: Michon, “The Spiritual Practices of Sufism” (CR 131-145) |
| 11   | 04/08 | **Dhikr (‘Remembrance’): The Sufi’s Path to Allah**  
READ: Selections from Al-Ghazzālī’s ”The Remembrance of Death and the Afterlife” (CR 146-158) |
| 12   | 04/13 | **Death and the Human Life Cycle in Islam**  
READ: Sakr, “Death and Dying: An Islamic Perspective.” (CR 159-172)  
WATCH in-CLASS: *Islamic Mysticism: The Sufi Way* (Houston Smith) |
| 12   | 04/15 | **Hindu Embryology and Samsāra**  
READ: Doniger O’Flaherty, translator, “Creation Hymn” (Rig Veda), “Birth” and “Death” (*Markandeya Purana*) (CR 173-177)  
DISCUSS: Guidelines for Final Paper  
**QUIZ 2:** goes live online (Covers Weeks 6-12) |
| 13   | 04/20 | **Hindu Paths to Liberation**  
READ: Medley, “Hindu Models of Enlightened Death” (CR 178-198) |
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<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>04/22</td>
<td><strong>Bhakti Yoga: The Truth to be Realized</strong>&lt;br&gt;READ: A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda, <em>Beyond Birth and Death</em>&lt;br&gt;WATCH in-CLASS: <em>Your Ever Well-Wisher</em> (segment on rebirth)</td>
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<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>04/27</td>
<td><strong>Buddhist Cosmology: The Bhavacakra (‘Wheel of Becoming’)</strong>&lt;br&gt;REVIEW: Diagram of bhavacakra and a chart summarizing the Buddha’s analysis of dependent origination (CR 199-200)&lt;br&gt;READ: Childs, Ch. 3 &amp; 9 and Ostaseski, Ch. 12&lt;br&gt;WATCH in-CLASS: Scenes from <em>The Little Buddha</em></td>
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<td>14</td>
<td>04/29</td>
<td><strong>Impermanence and No-Self (‘anicca’ and ‘anattā’)</strong>&lt;br&gt;READ: Ostaseski, Ch. 13&lt;br&gt;WATCH in-CLASS: Scenes from <em>The Little Buddha</em></td>
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<td>15</td>
<td>05/04</td>
<td><strong>Travels Through the Tibetan Bardō &amp; Buddhist Death Meditation</strong>&lt;br&gt;READ: Childs, Ch. 10; Ostaseski, Ch. 2&lt;br&gt;REVIEW: Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta (“The Foundations of Mindfulness”) and Maraṇassati Sutta (“Mindfulness of Death”) (CR 201-205)&lt;br&gt;WATCH outside of CLASS: <em>The Tibetan Book of the Dead</em>, Part 2: “The Great Liberation”</td>
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<td>16</td>
<td>05/11</td>
<td><strong>Lakota Spirituality: Seven Sacred Rites</strong>&lt;br&gt;READ: Ostaseski, Ch. 10 &amp; 16 and Mathieu, <em>Way of Wakan</em>, pp. 63-108&lt;br&gt;QUIZ 3: goes live online (Covers Weeks 12-16)</td>
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<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>05/13</td>
<td><strong>Forgiveness: <em>Finis coronat</em> (The End Crowns the Work)</strong>&lt;br&gt;READ: Ostaseski, Ch. 4 &amp; 7.&lt;br&gt;DUE: Final Paper</td>
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<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>05/20</td>
<td><strong>FINAL EXAMINATION (TH) 7:15 AM – 9:30 AM</strong></td>
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