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Religion W343 Death and Dying. Spring 1997. TUCC section

This course divides into two halves. The first half deals with dying in the context of contemporary culture. We will examine psychological and philosophical perspectives on the process of dying, on care for the dying, on bereavement and funerals.

The second half of the course deals with death and immortality, from the point of view of the world's religious traditions. Does personal identity persist after death? What beliefs about the nature of God, reality and persons are tied to ideas of death and post-death existence? What are some of the mourning practices followed by different religions?

This class is Writing Intensive. That means that the process of writing will be a way to learn the basic content and concepts of the course. All students will have the opportunity to correct and re-submit their papers. Some students must re-write and resubmit papers. All re-written papers will be due 1 week after the first version has been returned to students. Late papers will be penalized. Except in cases of personal emergency, papers more than one week late will not be accepted at all.

Assignments: 3 short papers on issues covered in Carroll and Tolstoy, and an interview project. The short papers will be "position papers" that ask you to state your own opinions, and support these with arguments. Each paper will be 2 pages long. There will be 1 interview project, about 5 pages long. Instructions for this project will be distributed separately. There will also be a final examination, based on the class readings. For final grading, each short paper will count approximately 15%, the interview project about 35% and the final exam about 20%. However, attendance and class participation will also be considered in grading. More than 3 unexcused absences may result in a lower grade. The instructor may give unannounced quizzes or brief in class writing tasks at any time; these will be based on the reading, and will be factored into the final grade.

Books to buy: Carroll Living with Dying, Tolstoy, The Death of Ivan Ilich and Kramer The Sacred Art of Dying.

Snow policy: When the Philadelphia public schools are closed due to snow, Rel. W343 will not meet.

Schedule of Readings

Wk 1 1/27 Introduction.

Wk. 2 2/3 Carroll Ch. 1 "Talking with the Dying about Death" and Ch. 2 "Coming to Terms with Death"

Wk 3 2/10 Ch. 3 "The Experience of Dying"

1st paper due 2/10

Wk 4 2/17 Tolstoy "The Death of Ivan Ilich".

Wk. 5 2/24 Chs. 12 & 13 Funerals and Bereavement.

2 nd paper due: 2/24

Wk. 6 3/3 Ch. 5 "The Rights of the Patient"

SPRING BREAK

Wk. 7 3/17 Chs. 6-7 Children and Death.

3rd paper due: 3/17

Wk. 8 3/24 Kramer Chs. 1 & 2 (Intro., Hinduism)

Wk. 9 3/31 Kramer Chs. 3-5 Buddhism.

Wk. 10 4/7 Kramer Chs. 7 & 8. Death in Ancient Cultures

Wk. 11 4/14 Kramer Ch. 9 Judaism

Wks. 12 4/21 Ch. 10 Christianity

Interview Project due: 4/21

Wk. 13 4/28 Islam Ch. 11

Wk 14 5/5 Conclusion.

Final exam: 5/12

Some advice to students:

1. This course deals with emotionally sensitive issues. If you have recently experienced a death of someone close to you, you may find that this course will help you understand your experiences. But it may also be very stressful for you. Since the course is offered every semester, you may want to take Rel. 343 at a later time.
2. If you are sick, or have an emergency, please let instructor know at the time. Do not wait until the end of the semester to inform instructor of such circumstances.
3. Remember that there are deadlines for withdrawal from courses. Please do not ask instructor for permission to withdraw after these deadlines have passed
4. No grades of "Incomplete" will be given except in cases of major emergency.