

Dear Ministry Praxis Participant,

We are now less than a month away from the Funerals Praxis and we are reaching out with a revised version of the letter that is posted on the course Canvas page. Though nothing is due to be posted earlier than Feb 10th a few of you have already begun to post. Please be sure that you have looked carefully at the advanced readings and activities as there will not be time to complete them if you put this off until a few days before they are due. They are outlined below for your convenience.

Planning this praxis that it has brought up many of the experiences in our lives related to the death and funerals of loved ones, and students from past years report that this was true for them as well. The discussions and role playing may elicit similar connections to your own histories. You will want to be aware that the course may have a strong emotional impact on you. We invite you to think in advance about your own experiences with death and loss and encourage you to plan accordingly and be sure that you have space and/or companionship to process the day on Friday and Saturday evenings.

We are looking forward to our time together on February 19 and 20, for IST 2061 Ministry Praxis: Funerals. The class will meet Friday afternoon, 1:00-4:30 p.m. and Saturday from 9:00 a.m. -4:30 p.m. on the Iliff campus. We will take a one hour break for lunch.

A praxis course is designed to provide experiential education in the practices of ministry that students at Iliff are likely to engage in their professional lives. They are an occasion to work on the integration of theory and practice in a specific area of ministry, in this case ministry at the end of life. In this praxis we hope to engage actual practices of ministry involved in accompanying the dying and bereaved, such as meeting with the family, planning a service, providing pastoral care, conducting the funeral using the ritual of your tradition, etc.

In this course, we will be making use of a variety of learning styles including reading and discussion, field research and role play in order to allow participants to have embodied experience with various ministry encounters that may arise at the time of death. It will be important for all the participants to engage in the full range of learning styles. Please note that there are three advanced assignments that you need to complete between now and our gathering on February 19 and 20th. There is not a post seminar paper to write, so your successful completion of this Ministry Praxis depends on your engaged participation and completing the advanced assignments.

**Work in Advance of the Praxis:**

In preparation for the class, we ask that you:

1. read the following material and come prepared for discussion during the praxis:
   1. *The Good Funeral: Death, Grief, and a Community of Car*e, Thomas G. Long and Thomas Lynch, Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2013. ISBN 10: 066423853X or ISBN 13: 978-0664238537 (T*he Good Funeral* alternates chapters by its two authors and can be a little redundant. Read both chapters in the sections “Why We Do this,” “Caring for the Dead” and the concluding section “The Grieving.” Read one of the two chapters in sections “Funeral Directors and Clergy” and “The Funeral.”)
   2. Read the section of your denomination/tradition’s book of worship resources for the time of death and funerals (e.g. *The United Methodist Book of Worship*, The UCC *Book of Worship*, etc.). The book may have more theologically-oriented terms for this section, such as memorial, thanksgiving, or death and resurrection. Please bring this text to the praxis, as you will likely have opportunity to utilize it in the role playing exercises.
   3. After finishing these readings, by Wed. Feb 10, post on Canvas a 200-400 word reflection on your most profound learning from the readings. By Wed, Feb 17, read and respond to several of your colleagues’ postings.
   4. Read the two chapters of *Preaching Funerals in the Black Church*, Peter Wherry, 2013, which are posted on Canvas. Respond to the discussion question no later than Friday, Feb 12, with a 100-250 word Canvas reflection.
2. Visit a funeral related site (such as a funeral home, a crematorium, a cemetery, a burial society, or columbarium), take and post photos of the site and write about 150-250 words on what the space taught you. Due: Wed Feb 17.
3. Talk to a professional at the funeral related site or an experience practitioner in your tradition (in person if possible, or by Skype or phone) who has done multiple funerals about their experience. Some possible interview questions are posted on Canvas.

After the conversation, post 150-250 words on Canvas reflecting on your most profound learning from the conversation. Due: Wed. Feb 10.

**Grading:** The praxis is graded on a pass/fail basis. In order to receive a passing grade, you will need to complete the preparatory reading and other assigned activities in advance of the praxis, be present for the two-day praxis event and participate fully in the events, including role plays and conversations.

If you have questions about any part of the praxis, please feel free to contact Val Jackson (303-765-1147) ([vjackson@iliff.edu](mailto:vjackson@iliff.edu)) or Jeffrey Mahan (303-765-3192) [jmahan@iliff.edu](mailto:jmahan@iliff.edu). We look forward to spending this time together,

Jeffrey Mahan Val Jackson