

December 13, 2018

Dear Ministry Praxis Participant,

Welcome to IST 2061 Ministry Praxis: Funerals, Winter Quarter 2019. The course has two parts: research assignments and online discussions (various due dates), and the in-person gathering, on the Iliff campus Friday, March 1, 1:00-4:30 p.m., and Saturday, March 2, 9:00 a.m. -4:30 p.m. (with a one hour lunch break).

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. It is 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 you will engage in practice and reflection on ministry amid accompaniment of the dying and bereaved. This will include role plays such as meeting with the family, providing pastoral care, planning and conducting a service, and making use of ritual resources of your tradition.

Regardless of your faith practice or religious tradition, providing comfort at the time of death, and leading those who are grieving in a time of ritual observance are among the most frequent responsibilities that ministers undertake. For me, planning this praxis stirs professional and personal memories of death and loss, and the course’s readings, discussions, and role plays may elicit similar connections with your own histories; it often did for students who took the praxis previously. This praxis might have a strong emotional impact on you, and I encourage you to plan accordingly, both for the advance work, and for our time together on March 1 and 2 so that you have the space and the support you need for processing what might emerge.

Please be sure that you have looked carefully at the advanced readings and assignments 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.

There are advanced assignments that you need to complete between now and our March 1, 2 gathering. 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 in person portion of the Praxis:**

1. Read the following material and post as:
	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. Give particular attention to Chapters 2,3,4, 7-10. T*he Good Funeral* alternates chapters by its two authors and contains redundant material.
	2. Read the two chapters of Peter Wherry’s *Preaching Funerals in the Black Church*, 2013, that are posted on Canvas.
	3. After finishing these readings, post brief responses to the discussion questions in the fourth through sixth weeks of the quarter as indicated on Canvas. As time permits, further discussion will be held during the in-person gathering.
	4. 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 services of death and resurrection, and so on. **Please bring this text to the praxis**, as you will likely have opportunity to utilize it in the role playing exercises.
2. Complete one of the three following assignments:
	1. Talk with an experienced 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 significant gleanings from the conversation. Some possible interview questions will be posted on Canvas. Due by Tues. Feb. 19 *or,*
	2. Visit a funeral related site (such as a funeral home, a crematorium, a cemetery, a burial society, or columbarium), and speak with a professional at that site. Take and post photos of the site. Post 150-250 words about what you learned. Some possible interview questions will be posted on Canvas. Due by Tues. Feb. 19. *or,*
	3. Read When Breath Becomes Air, and write a summary of how you would approach planning and leading a memorial service/funeral for the author. Additional instructions will be posted on Canvas. Due by Tues. Feb. 19.

I hope that all three options will be represented in course participant selections as this will enrich our class discussion. However, there is no maximum number of participants per option.

**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 me, pcampbell@iliff.edu, 720-347-8080.

Peace,

Phil

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