**IST 2061 - Ministry Praxis: Funerals (update)**

Fall 2021 (Online)

September 13 – October 16 (5 Weeks)

**INSTRUCTOR**:

Eunjoo Mary Kim ([ekim@iliff.edu](mailto:ekim@iliff.edu))

Office Hours: By Appointment

**ZOOM MEETINGS:** Week 2-Mon. (9/20), 10:00-Noon; Week 5-Mon. (10/11), 10:00-Noon

**COURSE DESCRIPTION:**

A praxis course is designed to provide experiential education in the practices of ministry that Iliff students are likely to engage in their professional lives. It is an occasion to work on the integration of theology, theory, and practice in a specific area of ministry.

In this course, the ministry praxis is funerals. It aims to encourage the students to reflect upon their theologies of death and engage in actual practices of the ministry involved in accompanying persons making plans for funerals, such as meeting with the bereaved to provide pastoral care and help planning and conducting funerals while honoring the ritual(s) of their traditions, theologies, and values.

**COURSE OBJECTIVES:**

This course is designed to be a learner-centered course with each student responsible

for maximizing their own experience. The instructional responsibility is to create a welcoming

environment where different views, opinions, critiques, and expertise are valued and

respected. In order to allow students to have embodied experiences with funerals, various pedagogical approaches, including reading, class discussion, field research, and writing a funeral rite, will be utilized. The students are expected to engage in the full range of learning styles to achieve the following goals:

1. To deepen the theological meaning of death.
2. To be confident in conducting various funerals.
3. To be competent to provide the bereaved with pastoral counseling.

**DEGREE LEARNING GOALS:**

Theology and Religious Practices (PR): engage in analyzing contemporary religious traditions and institutions to assess, design, and perform meaningful leadership practices with sensitivity to contextual realities and relationships (*Master’s Student Handbook)*.

**COURSE READINGS** (All books are available at the library):

1. Kalanithi, Paul (2017). *When Breath Becomes Air*. Random House. ISBN: 9781784701994.
2. Long, Thomas (2017). *What Happens When We Die?*. Church Publishing. ISBN: 0898692334.
3. Long, Thomas (2013). *Accompany Them with Singing: Christian Funerals.* Westminster John Knox Press. ISBN: 0664239706.
4. Long, Thomas & Thomas Lynch (2013). *The Good Funeral: Death, Grief, and the Community of Care*. Westminster John Knox Press. ISBN: 066423853X.
5. McFarlane, D.M (2007), *Funerals with Today’s Families in Mind: A Resource for Pastors*. Pilgrim Press, 2008. ISBN: 0829817867.
6. Searl, Edward (2000). *In Memoriam: A Guide to Modern Funeral and Memorial Services.* Skinner House Books. 2nd Edition. ISBN: 155896407x (a UU resource).
7. Ven, Hong Yang (2012). *Buddhist Funeral Service* (Chinese Buddhism Book 1). Kindle Edition. ASIN: B00AKD6KKQ.
8. Wherry, Peter (2013). *Preaching Funerals in the Black Church: Bring Perspective to Pain*. Judson Press. ISBN: 978-0-8170-1735-4. Chapters 2 & 3 (available on Canvas).
9. Sections 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, services of death and resurrection, and so on.  Alternately, if you are not part of a tradition that produces such resources, search online or elsewhere for materials of interest to you.

**COURSE SCHEDULE & REQUIREMENTS:**

Regular attendance of all online classes is required. You are required to read the assigned readings and post your assignments in a timely manner. All the assignments will be posted on the Discussions board so that you may learn from other classmates by reading and replying to their posts. When replying, you are free to reply in one word or one sentence. But you are required to respond to at least three classmates’ posts with your profound comments in **no fewer than 100 words**. Please make sure that all students have replied before commenting on the posts that already have responses. You do not have to respond to the late posts.

The instructor will provide her comments on the students’ assignments by replying to the posts on the Discussions board within a week. Please read her replies to other students’ posts as well as your own as learning opportunities.

The instructor should be informed in advance of any necessary absences or delays in posting assignments and Zoom classes. If you cannot participate in weekly discussions for more than a week, you cannot pass the course. If you cannot attend Zoom classes, please contact the instructor to discuss make-up classes or make-up assignments.

**Week 1** **(9/13 - 9/17): Introducing Yourself/Theologies of Death**

* Readings: Kalanithi; Long, *What Happens When We Die?*; Long, *Accompany Them with Singing*, Introduction & Chapters 3 & 5; your denominational or religious resources on death.
* Assignments:

1. Getting Acquainted: Post your videotape introducing yourself (e.g., your program at Iliff, denomination or religious background, ministerial setting, leadership experience in worship and other rituals, plan after graduation, why taking this course, etc.) by Wed. (9/15), 11:59 p.m. (MT).
2. Questions about the Syllabus: If you have any questions about the course syllabus, post them on the Discussions board by Wed. (9/15), 11:59 p.m. (MT).
3. **An Essay on a Theology of Death (Requirement #1)** (2-3 pages, double-spaced, 12-point, Times New Roman or 500-750 words): After critically reflecting on this week’s readings and recollecting your experiences with death (you may also remember some movies and stories that deal with the issues on death and funerals), write an essay focusing on the following questions:
4. What is your understanding of death and the afterlife? You may cite biblical passages, other literature, your faith tradition, or artworks representing your understanding of death.
5. Based on your understanding of death, what do you think is the purpose of a funeral?

Post your essay on Canvas by attachment by **Wed. (9/22), 11:59 p.m. (MT),** and respond to at least three classmates’ essays (no fewer than 100 words) by Fri. (9/24), 11:59 p.m.(MT). The essay should include appropriate footnotes or a list of works cited with page numbers.

**Week 2 (9/20-9/24): Zoom Class** (9/20, 10:00-Noon)

* Readings: Long & Lynch; your denominational worship book on funerals.
* Assignments:

1. **Research and learn about laws and regulations on funerals in your state (e.g., Colorado:** <https://www.us-funerals.com/funeral-guide/colorado/#.YL6nAvlKg2w>**).**
2. **Become familiar with Long & Lynch’s** book and **your denominational worship book on funerals (if your faith tradition does not have resources for funerals, you may search books and other religious and cultural resources through books, the internet, etc.), prepare your answers to the following questions and be ready to share them in the Zoom Class:**
3. What is a “good” funeral for you?
4. What are the strengths and challenges of your denomination's worship resources for funerals?

**Week 3 (9/27-10/01): Listening to Professionals/Practitioners**

* Readings: Wherry, Chapter 2 & 3; McFarlane, Parts One and Two.
* Assignments:

1. **Interview Report** **(Requirement #2)** (2-3 pages, double-spaced, 12-point, Times New Roman or 500-750 words): Interview an experienced practitioner or professional who has done multiple funerals (e.g., pastors, chaplains, funeral directors). Ask about their experiences with the bereaved and of planning and conducting funerals. Your interview can be done in person, via video, or by phone. (Note: the instructor for this course is not eligible for this interview). **If you are stumped about how to start this conversation, he**re are some of the kinds of questions you might ask of the person you can speak with:
2. What are your practices or first steps when you get a request for a funeral? What is your entire process for planning and conducting a funeral?
3. What do you know now that you wished you had known when you first started presiding funerals?
4. What are your goal and your concern in planning funerals? What are you trying to accomplish?
5. How have your practices changed over time?
6. What do you do when the family has very different theological and religious understandings about death and the funeral service from what you or your tradition would advocate?

After the interview, write your report focusing on the following two questions, in addition to the summary of the interview process:

1. What are the most profound learning points from this conversation?
2. What did you hear that you did not expect?

Post your report on Canvas by attachment by September 29 (Wed.), 11:59 p.m. (MT), and reply to at least three classmates’ posts by October 1 (Fri.), 11:59 p.m. (MT).

**Week 4 (10/04-10/08): Case Study**

* Readings: McFarland, Part Three, Ven.
* Assignments:

1. **Case Study (Requirement #3)**: Examine the cases in the “Cases of Difficult Funerals” posted on Canvas. Please choose one of them for this assignment and write your responses to the questions based on what you have learned from the class readings, other resources, and your personal and communal experiences.

Post your case study by attachment by October 6 (Wed.), 11:59 p.m. (MT), and reply to at least three classmates’ posts by October 8 (Fri.), 11:59 p.m. (MT).

**Week 5 (10/11-10/15): Zoom Class & Final Project**

* Readings: Long, *Accompany Them with Singing*, Chapter 8; McFarlane, Part Four; Searl; your denominational resources.
* Zoom Class:

1. Planning funerals
2. Final project: Q & A

* Assignments:

1. **Final Project (Requirement #4)**: Prepare the order of service for a funeral with a written rationale. If you do not have a real case, you may choose one of the cases in the “Cases of Difficult Funerals” (If necessary, you may consult with the instructor on the phone or via Zoom.) The service must demonstrate your pastoral sensitivity, cultural relevance, and theological appropriateness. You may use any prepared resources, such as your denomination’s worship book, in designing the service. Please be sure that you cite the sources.

The order of service must include the full texts (or links) of spoken and sung words (prayers, songs, a sermon outline or manuscript, and other ritual words). If you had a chance to officiate at a funeral by using this assignment before the submission date, you may videotape the service and submit it instead of the written texts.

The written rationale (2-3 pages, single-spaced or 900-1350 words) should include (1) a summary of the particular situation and setting for the funeral, (2) your theological understanding of death and your purpose(s) of the funeral service for this specific case, (3) why you designed the service as it is, and (4) how and why you selected those ritual elements.

Post your project by attachment by October 18 (Mon.), 11:59 p.m. (MT). You are required to review at least three classmates’ assignments and provide them with your feedback in no fewer than 200 words/each by October 20 (Wed.), 11:59 p.m. (MT).

**COURSE EVALUATION:**

Students can take the course using their P/F option. To receive the grade of “P,” the students must complete the six requirements listed in the Requirements section. The students who want to contract for a grade of P/F must email a note to the instructor by the **second week** of the course. For a letter grade, a normal school grading system is used. In order to ensure accountability and fairness, the following grading system will be applied:

Two Zoom Classes…………………...………………………....20% (10% x 2)

Requirement #1…… . . . . . . . . . . . .………………..………….. 15%

Requirement #2 …..…………………...……………………......15%

Requirement #3……………………………………...………….15%

Requirement #4……………………………………………….. .35%

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Total 100%

The Iliff grading system is a five-letter system from A through F with pluses and minuses. In computing grade point average (GPAs), grades are assigned the following numerical values (*The Master’s Student Handbook*). Assignments will earn an A for *exceptional* quality; A- for very good quality; B+ when it *meets and fulfills* all of the requirements; B or B- when there *are minor to moderate* shortcomings; C or lower with *significant shortcomings*:

A : 4.00 (100 − 96%)

A-: 3.75 (95 – 91%)

B+: 3.25 (90 – 86%)

B : 3.00 (85 – 81%)

B-: 2.75 (80 − 76%)

C+: 2.25 (75 – 71%)

C : 2.00 (70 – 66%)

\*Both unexcused and excused late submissions will result in lowering your grade (-1/each). In addition, late submissions may not receive written comments from the instructor.

\*The deadline for late submissions is October 22 (Fri.). The instructor may review all the late assignments after this date.

\*If you do not reply to at least three classmates’ posts, you will lower your grade (-1/each for Requirements 1, 2, 3; -2/each for Requirement 4).

\*The use of inclusive language is strongly urged in all discussions and writings.

**Incomplete Policy:** Students are responsible for following the procedures outlined in the *Master’s Student Handbook.*

**ADA Policy:** Iliff engages in a collaborative effort with students with disabilities to reasonably accommodate student needs. Students are encouraged to contact their assigned advisor to initiate the process of requesting accommodations. The Advising Center can be reached at advising@iliff.edu or by phone at 303.765.1146.