



CH 621: Death and Dying  
**Hartford International University for Religion and Peace**  
**Summer 2024**

**DRAFT SYLLABUS**

**Instructor:**

Janet Fuller, D.Min., Co-Director, MA in Chaplaincy [jfuller@hartfordinternational.edu](mailto:jfuller@hartfordinternational.edu)

Cell: (540) 556 3809

**Office Hours:**

Dr. Fuller teaches from her office in Virginia except for the face-to-face schedule of this particular class. She may be “visited” via Zoom or phone on Mondays 3-4 p.m. and Tuesdays 2-3 p.m. Other times are available by appointment made by email or text.

**Course Format:**

In person and face to face June 3-6, 9 am – 5 pm.

**An additional 8 hours** of asynchronous learning are required before the course begins on June 3. There is ONE meeting on zoom prior to our face-to-face class time on May 28 7:00-8:15 p.m. (Eastern time). It is expected that this work will be completed before we gather in person. A final project to bring together the work of the summer is Due August 1. The class is intensive!

There are assignments to complete before the face-to-face course begins, and after we conclude our work together.

The Canvas website will provide the most accurate and up-to-date instructions for all aspects of the course. If you have difficulty accessing or navigating the site, call the Canvas Support Hotline: (877) 249-4494.

If you have questions about course content, contact your professor at [jfuller@hartfordinternational.edu](mailto:jfuller@hartfordinternational.edu)

### **Course Description and Goals:**

Death is a constant presence in human life. The chaplain's role, whatever the context, will inevitably include care of the ill and the dying, their families, and those who are grieving loss. It will be necessary to understand the religious and traditional rituals, beliefs, and practices around death in various religious and secular contexts, and in the experience of caring for those from a variety of spiritual backgrounds. The chaplain must understand their own theological or personal perspectives, experience, and intentions around care in these moments, and what spiritual healing means in these contexts, and what religious or spiritual resources are available to us in our chaplaincy care.

Completion of this course will enable the student to:

### **Program outcomes (from BCCI)**

- Articulate an approach to spiritual care, rooted in one's faith/spiritual tradition that is integrated with a theory of professional practice. ITP1
- Incorporate the spiritual and emotional dimensions of human development into one's practice of care. ITP3
- Be self-reflective, including identifying one's professional strengths and limitations in the provision of care. PIC1
- Articulate ways in which one's feelings, attitudes, values, and assumptions affect professional practice. PIC2
- Attend to one's own physical, emotional, and spiritual well-being. PIC3
- Establish, deepen and conclude professional spiritual care relationships with sensitivity, openness, and respect. PPS1
- Provide effective spiritual support that contributes to well-being of the care recipients, their families, and staff. PPS2
- Provide spiritual care that respects diversity and differences including, but not limited to culture, gender, sexual orientation and spiritual/religious practices. PPS3
- Triage and manage crises in the practice of spiritual care. PPS4
- Provide spiritual care to persons experiencing loss and grief. PPS5
- Provide religious/spiritual resources appropriate to the care recipients, families, and staff. PPS6
- Facilitate theological/spiritual reflection for those in one's care practice. PPS8
- Facilitate group processes, such as family meetings, post trauma, staff debriefing, and support groups. PPS0
- Formulate and utilize spiritual assessments, interventions, outcomes, and care plans in order to contribute effectively to the well-being of the person receiving care. PPS10

## **Learning outcomes**

The course will offer an opportunity for students to create spiritual care plans, to create and lead group rituals around loss, and to practically enter the practices around dying and grief, notably:

To have a working knowledge of primary and secondary literature in the field, and for chaplains

To examine and interrogate interreligious, theological and scriptural, psychological, social, and ethical issues pertaining to death and loss

To examine trauma and complicated loss

To be reflective and self-reflexive around the tasks of mourning, as well as their uses and misuses, in interreligious, sociological, and psychological contexts

To practice and demonstrate listening, presence, and the spiritual care skills around loss and grief

To articulate a personal theology of death, mourning, and bereavement, as well as of the meaning of a limited life

And to examine one's own experience with loss—personally as it prepares and impinges on spiritual care giving--and to assess and sharpen one's professional experience and practice, and to connect the personal and professional perspectives while also creating sensible boundaries for chaplaincy.

## **Required Textbooks [students are expected to purchase these]**

Matlins, Stuart M, ed. *The Perfect Stranger's Guide to Funerals and Grieving Practices: A Guide to Etiquette in Other People's Religious Ceremonies*. Skylight Paths Publishing, 2000. ISBN: **1893361209**.

Gawande, Atul. *Being Mortal: Medicine and What Matters in the End*. Picador, 2014. **978-1250076229**.

Al-Haddad, Imam Abdallah Ibn Alawi. *The Lives of Man*. Quilliam Press, 2019. This is available as a kindle book.

O'Connor, Mary-Frances. *The Grieving Brain: The Surprising Science of How We Learn from Love and Loss*. Harper One, 2022. ISBN: **978-0062946249**.

## **Other materials and articles:**

Abu-Rabi, Ibrahim M. *Theodicy and Justice in Modern Islamic Thought*. Taylor & Francis Group, 2010. Chapter 11

Bonanno, G. A. *Loss, Trauma, and Human Resilience: Have We Underestimated the Human Capacity to Thrive After Extremely Aversive Events?* *American Psychologist*, 59, Part 1 (2004): 20-28.

*Christian bioethics: Non-ecumenical Studies in Medical Morality*, 2024, 30

Jordan, John R & McIntosh, John L. *Grief After Suicide: Understanding the Consequences and Caring for Survivors*. Routledge, 2010. ISBN: **9780203886045**

McClintock, Karen. *Trauma informed pastoral care: How to Respond when Things Fall Apart*. Fortress Press, 2022. ISBN: **978-1506480718**

Peterson, Michael. *Monotheism, suffering, and evil*. Cambridge Elements – Religion and Monotheism, 2022. Sections 5-6.

Sanders, Cody J and Parsons, Mikeal C. *Corpse Care: Ethics for Tending the Dead*. Fortress Press, 2023. ISBN: **978-1506471310**

Singh, Kathleen Dowling. *Grace in Dying: how we are transformed spiritually as we die*. Harper One, 1998. ISBN: **978-0062515650**

Warraich, Haider. *Modern Death: How Medicine Changed the End of Life*. St Martin's Press, 2017. **978-1250160843** This book is available in paperback and kindle

Weller, Francis. *The Wild Edge of Sorrow: Rituals of Renewal and the Sacred Work of Grief*. North Atlantic Books, 2015. ISBN: **978-1583949764**.

Other required items are provided on this course's Canvas site.

## **COURSE STRUCTURE**

Topics and materials are organized in modules (units). As will be apparent when you visit the "Modules" portion of our course-site, each module has a theme. Each module's content includes reading assignments, and interactive assignments (including an opportunity to post a closing summary reflection of the module as a whole). Here is the module slate. More full details on the last pages of this syllabus.

### **MODULE 1: Preparation for our Meetings**

**Theme:** The Limits of Life

### **MODULE 2: First meeting June 3**

**Theme:** Ethics around Death and Bereavement

### **MODULE 3: June 4**

**Theme:** Sociology and Psychology of Bereavement

### **MODULE 4: June 5**

**Theme:** Scripture and Theology in Death and Bereavement

**MODULE 5: June 6**

**Theme:** Chaplaincy skills and institutions in Bereavement

**MODULE 6: Your work after our intensive class meetings**

**Theme:** Pulling it together for yourself

**Course Requirements:**

In person **participation** in the course 4 days face to face, participation in the asynchronous aspects of the course which includes one evening on May 28 7:00-8:30 p.m. If you are unable to join the zoom meeting for this one class, you must inform the instructor. If your camera is off I will mark you ABSENT.

**Writing:** you will be required to write a full and brief reflection on each of the asynchronous aspects of the course: the videos, the Coletti presentation and facilitation, and the readings.

**Most Readings** can be done at your own pace, except for what is due before classes, noted below and in Canvas. A journal entry is required for each of the readings and all of those are due three weeks before the final paper, July 11. You may submit them earlier.

Your **final paper** is a research paper on one specific aspect of death, dying, bereavement, mourning. You may not repeat a subject you have written about for another course. Your topic should be discussed with the instructor and approved before you launch your research. Due August 1.

Assessment

**Class participation** 25% of final grade

This category features evaluation of in-class interaction with lectures, materials, reading, interaction with and learning from other students, and the concluding conversation.

If you are on zoom and your camera is off, then I will mark you ABSENT for class.

**Reflections** 25% of final grade

This category features end-of-module posting and commenting, as well as responses to the the asynchronous aspects of the course.

**Reading Journals** 25% of final grade

Each of the readings for the class will require a written response in the form of a journal entry. More instructions will be posted on Canvas in the form of a specific prompt.

**Final Research Paper:** 25% of the final grade

## Hartford International University Grading Scale

- A (95-100) Demonstrates excellent mastery of the subject matter, a superior ability to articulate this, and provides helpful connections to daily life or contemporary issues. Exceeds expectations of the course.
- A- (90-94) Demonstrates mastery of the subject matter, ability to articulate this well, and makes connections to daily life or contemporary issues. Exceeds expectations of the course.
- B+ (87-89) Demonstrates a very good understanding of the subject matter, able to articulate lessons learned in the assignment well. Meets course expectations.
- B (83-86) Demonstrates an understanding of the subject matter and the ability to articulate lessons learned. Meets expectations of the course.
- B- (80-82) Demonstrates an understanding of the material at hand, has some difficulty articulating this, and basic connection of the material to daily life or contemporary issues/life. Meets basic expectations for the course.
- C+ (77-79) Demonstrates a basic comprehension of the subject matter, weak articulation and connections. Does not meet expectations for the course.
- C (70-76) Demonstrates a minimal comprehension of the subject matter and has difficulty making connections. Does not meet expectations of the course.
- F (below 70) Has not met the basic requirements of the course.

## HIU Values of Collaborative Teaching and Learning

Showing mutual appreciation and respect for others—modeling the privilege to learn from and partner with each other.

Engaging in cross-disciplinary content and teaching.

Paying attention to the whole personhood or another—history, race, religion, knowledge, gender, and rank.

Demonstrating how to disagree respectfully and well.

Embodying mutuality—learning to construct ideas and skills and experiences together.

## Plagiarism and Academic Integrity

Academic honesty and integrity are expected of all students. Plagiarism exists when: a) the work submitted was done, in whole or in part, by anyone other than the one submitting the work, b) parts of the work, whether direct quotations, ideas, or data, are taken from another source without acknowledgement, c) the whole work is copied from another source [especially a web based source], or d) significant portions of one's own previous work used in another course.

## Inclusive Language

Hartford International University is committed to a policy of inclusion in its academic life and mission. All members of the community are expected to communicate in language that reflects

the equality of genders, openness to diverse cultural and theological perspectives, and sensitivity to one another's images of God.

### Special Circumstances

If you encounter circumstances that delay your work or prohibit your engagement with the class, please reach out to the instructor immediately. Do not wait until your assignments are due or late. Chaplains are expected to be able to give **and** also ask for assistance.

### Accommodations

The Americans with Disabilities Act ensures equal access to qualified individuals with disabilities, and prevents discrimination on the basis of a disability. It is Hartford International University policy to provide reasonable accommodations on a case-by-case basis, which may mean working with outside social and governmental agencies to provide the necessary range of services for student success. Students with disabilities who wish to receive accommodations must contact the Student Services Coordinator. Students with disabilities are eligible for disability support services when they are enrolled in courses and they have disclosed their disability and requested related accommodations during enrollment and/or before the start of each semester. All students seeking accommodation must fill out the Request for Disability Accommodations form.

### Official Handbooks

For all other questions you might have regarding policies or procedures, please see HIU's student handbook and statement of academic policies—both available online.

### Communication and Technology

Students are expected to use their Hartford International University email for communication regarding the course. All students will need to log into the course site several times per week in order to take part in discussions and to access readings, videos, mini-lectures and other course materials. Within Canvas, the Announcements feature will be used to convey information for the whole class.

### **About CANVAS:**

This course's Canvas website is your primary roadmap for this course.

- Be sure to explore the site thoroughly before you begin.
- If you have difficulty navigating or operating any aspect of the site, do take advantage of the "Help" button (indicated by a question mark). The "live chat" feature works very well; you can expect prompt and clear responses to your questions. You may also phone the Canvas Support Hotline: (877) 249-4494.
- If you have questions about course content (or you tried Canvas Help but are still mystified), please do email or text-message your professor right away. If the situation is better addressed voice-to-voice, request a specific time for a phone or Zoom

conversation. (Making an appointment ensures that your professor is ready to talk with you seated at her desk rather than walking her dogs or cooking a meal.

### Attendance

This is a graduate class. All students are expected to be “in class” and to participate. We will expect cameras to be on through the duration of the class on May 28. Lack of engagement with the Canvas website for seven days in a row constitutes “absence” from the course and can lead to failure. Students who believe they have a legitimate reason for such disengagement must discuss this with the professor—preferably in advance. Failure to submit an assignment or perform a required activity on time is tantamount to absence from class. If you fall behind, skip ahead to the next module so that you can stay current with your classmates in discussions. Later on, you can return to an earlier module to fill in what you missed. Late submissions are permitted, but for fewer points.

### Email Policy

The instructor will use the university’s official student email addresses for all course communications. Please check your hartfordinternational.edu email account regularly.

## **MODULE 1: Preparation for our Meetings**

**Theme:** The Limits of Life

Before course begins 8 hours of asynchronous work:

3 hour segments on companioning the grieving with Joe and Louise Colletti

1. Prepare your loss inventory form. Instructions on 3-minute video. **This loss inventory is required for both the course and the retreat. Bring a copy with you since it will not be posted online.**
2. Watch two videos: Being a True Helper and Companioning Grief and Loss
3. Attend the participatory session with Joe and Louise Coletti on May 28 at 7 pm
  - a. This session is required. If you cannot attend on May 28, let the instructor know. The session will be recorded and posted later for your reflection and catching up.
4. Write: Due Before June 3
  - a. A response to preparing the loss inventory
  - b. A response to Being a True Helper video
  - c. A Response to Companioning Grief and Loss video and session with the Colettis.

5. Read

Warrach, *Modern Death Chapters on cell death and Resuscitation*

*How cells die pp. 1-23*

*How we learned not to resuscitate pp. 57-91*

*#When Death is Shared pp. 267-278*

Gawande, *Being Mortal*

Al-Haddad, *The lives of man: a guide to the human states: Before Life, in the World, After Death*

6. Writing on these and all readings: keep a reading journal. You can post in Canvas at any point May 20-August 1.
7. Bring two verbatims with you TO THE RETREAT. These need to be prepared in advance and uploaded to Canvas before the class begins

Prepare for class by reading the articles for the day we use them.

### **MODULE 2: First meeting June 3**

**Theme:** Ethics around Death and Bereavement

1. Read Kathleen Dowling Singh, *The grace of dying*, 2000 pp. 3-18 Living, dying, and transformation, and 215-267 The nearing death experience
2. Read To whom is the chaplain beholden? Jordan Mason 2024
3. Read Corpse Care, Sanders & Parsons, 2023. pp 83-112
4. Read Warraich pp 1-23, 57-91

Guest speakers: Sheikh Jamir Meah  
Rabbi Joseph Ozarowski

Write a reflection on the subjects we covered today

### **MODULE 3: June 4**

**Theme:** Scripture and Theology in Death and Bereavement

1. Abu-Rabi, Ibrahim M. *Theodicy and Justice in Modern Islamic Thought*. Taylor & Francis Group, 2010. Chapter 11
2. Read Peterson, Michael. *Monotheism, suffering, and evil*. Cambridge Elements – Religion and Monotheism, 2022. Sections 5-6.

Lunch with President Lohr  
Guest speaker: Sheikh Jamir Meah

Write a reflection on the subjects we covered today

### **MODULE 4: June 5**

**Theme:** Sociology and Psychology of Bereavement

1. Read: from the *Grieving Brain*, Chapters 1-2
2. Read Bonanno pp 20-28
3. Read: Jordan Ch 2 pp. 19-42
4. Read: McClintock pp. 1-42

Guest Speaker Rameya Shanmugavelayutham

Write a reflection on the subjects we covered today

**MODULE 5: June 6**

**Theme:** Chaplaincy skills and institutions in Bereavement

1. Read about your own tradition and one other tradition of your choice in *The Perfect Stranger's Guide to Funerals and Grieving Practice*
2. Read Weller, *The Wild Edge of Sorrow*, Chapters 4 & 8

Guest Speaker Rabbi Neal Loevinger

Write a reflection on the subjects we covered today

**MODULE 6: Your work after our intensive class meetings**

**Theme:** Pulling it together for yourself

Write a reflection on each day we have met face to face (total of four reflections). What did you learn that was new? What do you still need to know and learn? Reflect on our class time and speakers for that day. How will you apply this learning to your specific context.

Vulnerable, specific, thorough.

Research one specific area of death, dying, bereavement, or mourning that has caught your attention and passion. Write a paper (8-10 pages) of your learning. Check the subject of your research with the instructor before proceeding. Use materials required for class as well as other books, journals, and resources of different genres 6-8 resources, at minimum.

Everything is subject to change! Check Canvas for the latest details.