

HEALTH & HEALING, DEATH & DYING: TECHNOLOGIES OF INSPIRATION & EXPIRATION

Winter 2019 ■ Wednesday, 9 October 2019 1pm-5pm & Thursday, 10 October 2019 8am-12pm ■ Iliff School of Theology

JENNIFER S. LEATH, Ph.D.
OFFICE HOURS: BY APPOINTMENT
jleath@iliff.edu

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This class engages resources addressing the physical, spiritual, emotional, and social health of diverse communities from a variety of perspectives with an emphasis on African and Afro-Diasporic sources. Through this course, students will encounter a variety of perspectives on the nature, morality, justices, and injustices of health, healing, death and dying. Alternative healing technologies emphasized in this course include diverse forms of advocacy and social protest against medical neglect, abuse, and discrimination in Western medicine – as well as proactive deployments of spirituality and faith.

This course also takes a close look at the nature of dying and death as these function in relationship to one another and in relationship to the life as it relates to health and healing. Students will also critically engage the ways that health, healing, death, and dying function differently among different communities – and the social and experiential factors that mediate such differences. Through interdisciplinary materials, this course invites students to consider how to pursue health, healing, death, and dying with respect to themselves, their communities, and social policies with reason and clarity about justice with respect to human existence.

COURSE OBJECTIVES

1. To clarify working definitions of health, healing, death, and dying that are true to transnational diversities.
2. To learn the breadth and depth of health, healing, death, and dying disparities existing between diverse communities – especially with respect to race, gender, sexuality, and faith.
3. To identify, articulate, and analyze forms of advocacy and social protest that directly object to these disparities and the social injustices these disparities conceal, while promoting alternative normative frameworks for health and healing.
4. To identify, articulate, and analyze deployments of religion that directly object to health, healing, death, and dying disparities and the social injustices these disparities conceal, while promoting alternative normative frameworks for health and healing.
5. To develop interdisciplinary analytic reading skills especially across the genres of fiction literature and religious, sociological, anthropological, medical, and historical scholarship.
6. To discern intersections between advocacy and social protest and deployments of faith, spirituality, and religion with respect to health, healing, death, and dying.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

- **COMPLETION OF READING ASSIGNMENTS PRIOR TO THE FIRST CLASS MEETING OF THE WEEK FOR WHICH THE READINGS ARE ASSIGNED.**
- **ACTIVE PARTICIPATION AND PUNCTUAL ATTENDANCE FOR THE CLASS SESSIONS.**
- **RESPONSE PAPERS DUE AT 9PM VIA EMAIL ON THE FOLLOWING WEDNESDAYS DURING THE TERM (4 PAGE, DOUBLED-SPACED, 12 POINT FONT): WEEK 3, 6,**

& 9. Each paper should: (1) identify and explain one technology of healing that emerges from the course readings, (2) explain how this technology of healing impacts social and/or individual health, dying, and death, (3) and explain how this technology of healing does or could engage social protest and spiritual praxis, (4) explain what makes this technology of healing compelling and/or problematic for an ethic of physical, spiritual, and social wellbeing.

- **GROUP PRESENTATIONS.** Groups will be formed in the fourth week of class. Each group will select one transnational health challenge. This health challenge will provide a foundation for the presentation that should: (1) demonstrate thorough research of the health challenge and its transnational impact; (2) identify and evaluate several technologies of healing that are presently used to respond to this health challenge; (3) imagine and evaluate alternative technologies of healing that might be used to respond to this health challenge; (4) identify the ways that each of these technologies of healing – present and imagined – already do or could integrate civic engagement and faith consciousness; (5) utilize and incorporate the interdisciplinary course materials; (6) creatively engage the classroom. **Each group should be prepared to present for thirty (30) minutes during the in-person meeting of the class mid-quarter.**

EVALUATION

- You will be graded according to Iliff standards on a letter grading scale. For more information see: www.iliff.edu
- Your grade will be determined according to the following distribution:
 - Preparedness, Participation, Attendance: 20%
This includes weekly engagement with posted lecture material via Canvas discussion.
 - Three Response Papers: 20% each
 - Group Presentation: 20%

OTHER IMPORTANT MATTERS

1. **DO NOT plagiarize!** If you have any questions about whether or not what you are doing is plagiarism, go to www.iliff.edu. If you are still unsure, ask before submitting your work.
2. If you are unable to complete the assignments due to physical or mental health reasons, please notify me.
3. Pick a form of citation. Indicate which form you will use. Use it consistently. For more information: www.iliff.edu.
4. I am glad to meet to discuss your written work. However, I will not be able to review full drafts of written assignments.

COURSE READINGS

(Texts marked with an asterisk are included in the course pack that will be available through embedded links or via PDF; all other texts will be available for purchase at the college book store)

Stories of Origin

Week One

Fett, Sharla. *Working Cures: Healing, Health, and Power on Southern Slave Plantations*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2002.

Week Two

Masuzawa, Tomoko. *In Search of Dreamtime: The Quest for the Origin of Religion*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993.

Stories of Health

Week Three

Somé, Malidoma. *Of Water and the Spirit: Ritual, Magic, and Initiation in the Life of an African Shaman*. New York: Putnam, 1994.

Week Four

Nelson, Alondra. *Body and Soul: The Black Panther Party and the Fight Against Medical Discrimination*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2011.

Stories of Healing

Week Five

Fadiman, Anne. *The Spirit Catches You and You Fall Down: A Hmong Child, Her American Doctors, and the Collision of Two Cultures*. Later Printing edition. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2012.

Week Six

Gawande, Atul. *Complications: A Surgeon's Notes on an Imperfect Science*. 1st edition. New York: Picador, 2003.

Stories of Necropolitics

Week Seven

Hatzenbuehler, Mark L., Anna Bellatorre, Yeonjin Lee, Brian K. Finch, Peter Muennig, and Kevin Fiscella. "Structural Stigma and All-Cause Mortality in Sexual Minority Populations." *Social Science & Medicine* (1982) 103 (February 2014): 33–41.

Lorde, Audre. *The Cancer Journals: Special Edition*. San Francisco: Aunt Lute Books, 2006.

Mbembe, J. "Necropolitics." *Public Culture* 15, no. 1 (January 1, 2003): 11–40.

Townes, Emilie. "Searching for Paradise in a World of Theme Parks: A Womanist Ethic of Care and Healing." In *Breaking The Fine Rain of Death: African American Health Issues and a Womanist Ethic of Care*, 168–186. Eugene: Wipf & Stock Publishers, 2006.

Stories of Futures

Week Eight

Farmer, Paul, and Jonathan Weigel. *To Repair the World: Paul Farmer Speaks to the Next Generation*. 1 edition. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2013.

Week Nine

Harding, Rosemarie Freeney, and Rachel Elizabeth Harding. *Remnants: A Memoir of Spirit, Activism, and Mothering*. Durham: Duke University Press Books, 2015.

Alexander, M. Jacqui. "Pedagogies of the Sacred: Making the Invisible Tangible." In *Pedagogies of Crossing: Meditations on Feminism, Sexual Politics, Memory, and the Sacred*, 287–332. Durham: Duke University Press, 2005.