

SANTA CLARA UNIVERSITY

TESP 137 *Theology of Death*

FALL 2008 PROF. PARRELLA

SYLLABUS

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course is to assist the student in reflecting theologically, philosophically, and personally on the mystery of life and death. The meaning of life makes little sense unless a person also reckons with the mystery of death—of the self, of loved ones, of time and opportunity, and of the race. It seeks to help the student discover the deeper meaning of Christian symbols concerning human destiny: dying as a human activity, judgment, heaven, hell, purgatory, resurrection, and the return of all creation to God through Jesus the Christ and the Spirit. Intended for the mature individual, the course should allow the student to delve more deeply into a specific theological topic while ideally serving as a synthesis of other courses in religious studies.

THE THIRD COURSE IN THE RELIGION, THEOLOGY, AND CULTURE CURRICULUM

• Goals

The goals of the third course in Religion, Theology, and Culture are these four: critical thinking, ethical reasoning, religious reflection, and perspective on the self, the culture, and the world.

• Objectives

(1) The student should be able to identify diverse perspectives and evaluate ethical positions on contemporary questions

(2) The student should be able to evaluate and apply insights from the study of religion to open-ended questions facing contemporary society.

As the last substantive core curriculum course for most undergraduates, the third course should serve as a “capstone,” giving students the opportunity to bring together their core, disciplinary, and interdisciplinary knowledge, their acquired analytic skills, the intellectual challenge of current issues, and the “meta-questions” that will invoke ethical and ontological concerns.

REQUIRED READING

Metropolitan Anthony Bloom. “On Death.” *Sobernost* 1, 2 (1979): 8-18. (In packet).

Mitch Albom. *Tuesdays with Morrie*. New York: Doubleday, 1997.

David Steindal-Rast, “Learning To Die,” in *Parabola* 2, 1 (1977): 22-31. (In packet).

Joseph T. Kelley. *101 Questions on the Four Last Things*. New York: Paulist Press, 2006.

Dermot Lane. *Keeping Hope Alive: Stirrings in Christian Theology*. New York: Paulist Press, 1996.

Reprint: Eugene, Oregon: Wipf and Stock, 2005.

_____. “A Theology of the Paschal Mystery,” in *Christ at the Centre* (New York: Paulist, 1991): 103-129. (In packet).

Ladislaus Boros. *The Mystery of Death. The Human Person in the Final Encounter*, translated by Gregory Bainbridge. New York: Herder and Herder, 1965. (In packet).

Paul Tillich. "Symbols of Faith." In *Dynamics of Faith*, 41-54. New York: Harper and Row, 1957. Reprinted in *Main Works*, vol. 5, *Writings on Religion*, edited by Robert Scharlemann, 250-256. Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1988. (In packet.)

_____. "Symbols of Eternal Life." (The Ingersol Lecture, 1962) *Harvard Divinity Bulletin* 26, 3 (1962): 1-10. (In packet.)

_____. "Forgetting and Being Forgotten," in *The Eternal Now* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1963): 26-35. (In packet.)

Frederick J. Parrella. *Theology of Death*, Unpublished manuscript, Santa Clara University, 2002-2008.

ASSIGNMENTS

• Four papers are required for the course in the form used in the *Chicago Manual of Style*; the most recent edition is this: *A Manual for Writers of Research Papers, Theses, and Dissertations: Chicago Style for Students and Researchers* by Kate L. Turabian, Wayne C. Booth, Gregory G. Colomb, Joseph M. Williams. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007. This contains all the information on the mechanics of a term paper: capitalization, footnotes or endnotes, spelling, punctuation, bibliographies, typing, etc. Also recommended for style and good writing is William Strunk and E. B. White, *The Elements of Style*, 3rd ed., New York: Macmillan, 1979 (1935). This classic work contains chapters on elementary rules of usage, principles of composition, formation of style, matters of form, and words and expressions commonly misused in writing. There will be no examination.

PAPER ONE

An essay, six (6) pages minimum, on the personal meaning of death, using the story of Morrie, Judy's Story, and the readings from Bloom and Steindl-Rast. You may also correlate the readings to a personal experience of death, if you have had one. How do the readings resonate with your experience of life? What do you think is our culture's reaction to the wisdom in the texts? You must refer to the texts extensively in developing your essay. Citations must appear in foot/endnotes.

Paper due: Monday, Monday, 13 Oct. 2008.

PAPER TWO

An essay, six (6) pages minimum, on the meaning of eschatology, either individual or corporate, based on your readings from Lane and Boros. You may choose one or more of Boros's philosophical arguments for the final decision in death from *The Mystery of Death*; select a theme from the chapters assigned of Lane's *Keeping Hope Alive* and/or Kelly's book.

• *Regardless of your topic, you must use some of Boros's ideas in your paper.*

Paper due: Monday, 3 November 2008.

PAPER THREE

A theological essay, minimum six (6) pages, on death and the four last things, based upon Tillich, Boros, Kelly, and Lane. Select a theological question such as the meaning of death or the symbols of judgment, hell, heaven, or purgatory. Tillich's interpretation of symbols and myths is essential here.

Paper due: Monday, Wednesday, 3 December 2008.

PAPER FOUR

A theological essay, minimum six (6) pages, on a topic of your own choice from the reading material assigned in the course or from additional reading suggested on the bibliography. Since the course is theological in nature, include some theological perspective of the readings.

- From a Christian perspective, you may want to connect the Eucharist and the Paschal Mystery to the eschatological destiny of humankind. You may develop a theme from Boros or Lane that answers a specific theological question you have raised in your own life.
- If you are from another religious tradition, or have no particular tradition, you may want to explore the meaning of death in another religions such as Hinduism, Buddhism, Islam, or Judaism. Perhaps a comparative methodology will be helpful, comparing and contrasting the ideas from the course with the other tradition you have chosen. There are books on your bibliography that examine death in other religious and cultural traditions.
- You may also include psychological, sociological, historical, philosophical, and personal perspectives that you find helpful. Consider an interdisciplinary paper:
 - an English major may want to examine death in literature
 - a fine arts major may want to explore death by considering the major Requiems (music), or death in iconography (art), or the theme of death in plays (theatre).
 - a science major may want to compare and evaluate the religious/theological understandings of death with medical/ scientific interpretations.
 - a sociology or psychology major may want to consider death from these disciplines
 - ETC: you get the idea.

Whether your focus is purely theological or not, you must reveal to the reader an in-depth knowledge of the assigned readings in the course.

- Please consult with me—in person, on the phone, or by email—to help you with this final paper.

A SECOND ASSIGNMENT OPTION

Upon consultation, it is possible to combine papers three and four, so that the student will submit a thoughtful, reflective, and scholarly 12-page paper (minimum). This option is not for every student but for those who want to create a more in-depth, focused, and scholarly piece of work.

Anyone choosing this option must submit a proposal by email with the topic and a brief outline or summary of your paper by Monday, Dec. 1.

Paper due: *No later than* Wednesday, 10 December 2008 at 12 PM.

NOTE WELL ABOUT PAPERS

On form:

- (1) Be sure to number the pages of your paper.
- (2) No bibliography or “works cited” page is required. All the information is contained in the footnotes. Learn to do footnotes in the proper manner. For this, consult the writing guides in your reading packet at the very beginning of the packet.

On deadlines:

- (1) The first three papers must be received by the last scheduled class of the Fall quarter, Wednesday, 3 December, 2008. *No exceptions can be made.*

Note well: there are deadlines and there are consequences if the student does not submit his or her paper on time. Very late papers may be returned with a grade but without comment.

- (2) The final paper is due no later than **Wednesday, 10 December at Noon.**

ATTENDANCE

A student is expected to attend **all** classes and the material covered and announcements are the student's responsibility. There are often reasons a student *cannot* or *does* not attend class. Failure to attend class means that the student will be unfamiliar with the assigned reading material as well as ideas presented and discussed in class for the required papers. This cannot but help have a negative impact upon the student's final grade. Classes are given only once: if you miss class, it is your responsibility to keep up to date with the course.

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

Cheating can take many forms. Please be aware that if you are caught in a situation of academic dishonesty, you will receive an F in the assignment or the exam. The most common form of cheating is plagiarism. Note carefully: *whenever you use the precise words or paraphrase the ideas of another, you must give a complete reference (author, title, city, publisher, date, page number) to your source text either in a footnote or endnote.*

At the same time, it is perfectly legitimate, even desirable, for students to talk over their topics, exchange ideas, and edit each other's papers. This is an important part of the process of learning: sharing your creative ideas with your peers. This presumes that all students collaborating with others both give and receive from such fruitful collaboration.

PROFESSIONAL CONDUCT

Please observe the following rules of professional conduct in a class:

- Students should make every effort to arrive at the classroom *on time and suitably dressed for an academic forum.*
- No one is permitted to leave the class without permission of the professor until the class has been dismissed *except for a serious medical emergency.* Restroom facilities are available before and after the class, *not during* the class.
- Please be sure your cell phone is turned off, off your desks, and out of sight. You would NEVER want your cell phone to ring in my class. The consequences are too dire to put into written form! Thank you.

GRADING POLICY

(1) Grades will be based on two factors: (1) the papers required for the course—90%; (2) class attendance and participation—10%. Papers will be evaluated on the basis of the student's ability: (a) to reveal to the reader his/her command of the assigned readings in both depth and breadth; (b) to develop a clear and coherent argument of the student's choosing based upon the required readings. *References to the texts—citations or direct quotations—are essential to a successful grade in all of the papers.*

(2) The grade of Incomplete will be given out only under special and unusual circumstances. Any student requesting an "I" must submit a signed copy of the Student Records Office "contract" which contains the reason for the request and the work remaining in the course. For students who receive a grade of *Incomplete*: All work required for the course must be submitted no later than the beginning of the fourth week of the next term. Failure to do so means that the grade will automatically be turned over to an "F" by the Office of Student Records at the beginning of the fifth week.

(3) Students who do not attend class on a consistent basis—so that they are known by the professor and other students to be a member of the course in good standing—and who fail to contact the professor with the reason for missing class: if you do not withdraw before the end of the 9th week, you will **not** receive a passing grade or suffer a severe reduction in your grade, whether you submit any work at the end of the term or not.

DISABILITY ACCOMMODATION POLICY

To request academic accommodations for a disability, students must contact Disability Resources located in the Drahmann Center in Benson, room 214, (408) 554-4111; TTY (408) 554-5445. Students must provide documentation of a disability to Disability Resources before receiving accommodations.

SCHEDULE OF READINGS

The quarter is ten weeks long. The following is a tentative reading schedule so you will know how to plan your reading intelligently. For the *week* of:

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| 22 Sept. 2008 | Bloom; Albom; Steindl-Rast; Judy's Story |
| 29 Sept. | Bloom; Albom; Steindl-Rast; Lane, <i>Keeping Hope Alive</i> , chapters 1-4. |
| 6 Oct. | Boros, Part I; Tillich, "Symbols of Eternal Life" |
| 13 Oct. | Lane, <i>Keeping Hope Alive</i> , chapters 4-8; Boros, Part II; Tillich, "Symbols of Faith" |
| 20 Oct. | Boros, Part II; Kelley |
| 27 Oct. | Boros, Part III; Kelley; Lane, <i>Keeping Hope Alive</i> , chapters 9-11; |
| 3 Nov. | Boros, Part III; Kelley; Tillich, "Forgetting and Being Forgotten"; Lane, "The Paschal Mystery" |
| 10 Nov. | Lane, <i>Keeping Hope Alive</i> , chapters 12-13. |
| 17 Nov. | Review Tillich, Lane's book and chapter; Boros |
| 24 Nov | Thanksgiving Week: Boros and additional readings for your final paper |
| 1 Dec. | Work on final paper |
| 8 Dec. | Exam week: the final paper due on Wednesday, 10 Dec. at Noon. |

CONSULTATION

My office is in **Kenna Hall, Suite 300 H**. If you wish to consult with me at any time about your papers or any other issue related to the course, please make an appointment after class or by phone for a mutually convenient time. You may call me at home on any day of the week with questions you have. Be sure to leave your telephone number if you reach my voice mail or answering machine.

Office telephone: 408.554.4714

Home telephone: 408.259.8225

Email: fparrella@scu.edu

A final word: this is a very personal course and you will find it valuable only as far as you apply yourself to the readings, attend class faithfully, and submit your papers in a timely manner.

**"When I shall be dead, tell the kingdom of the
earth that I have loved it much more than I have
ever dared to say."**

