

RELS 350: PHNEOMENOLOGY OF RELIGION:
DEATH AND AFTERLIFE

Dr. June McDaniel
Spring, 2010

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Texts: Kerrigan, *The History of Death*
Dante's *Inferno*
The Tibetan Book of the Dead
Johnson and McGee, *How Different Religions View Death and Afterlife*

Goals: This class will explore a variety of understandings about life, death, and afterlife. The papers will have both creative funerals and critical analyses of modern media, and study the issue of death according to a variety of religious traditions and themes.

Grading: Grades will be based upon 3 tests and 2 papers, each will be worth 1/5 of the total class grade. Test #3 will be the final. Class participation and homework will be counted into your grade.

The passing grade is D-, or 60. Grades are not curved. They range as:

A	94 and over
A-	90-93
B+	87-89
B	84-86
B-	80-83
C+	77-79
C	74-76
C-	70-73
D+	67-69
D	64-66
D-	60-63
F	below 60

Attendance: There will be FIVE allowed absences. On the fifth absence, I shall note a warning on the attendance roster, that one more missed class will cause a student to be dropped. If you have any excused absences (illness, emergency), please let me know and I will cross them off. An additional point is given on the total grade for perfect attendance.

Papers: Papers should be based on ideas and approaches covered in class, and should be at least 6 full pages in length, typed (longer papers are fine, but shorter papers will have points deducted). Papers should also have a title page with the paper title, your name, the class and section, and the date.

Paper #1 due February 24

Paper #2 due April 16

PAPER #1- Design your own funeral. Include an obituary (information on your birth, death, and major life events) and a eulogy (what you wish for others to remember about you, what is important about your life). The funeral is imagined, and it can occur this year, or at any time in the future. It can be describe your real life, or for the life you would like to lead. Include a ritual of at least two pages- it can involve any religion, or if it is secular, include statements of your beliefs about life and death. You can include special environments, images, music or foods, and a will, if you wish.

PAPER #2- This will be your term paper, which will be a part of a group class presentation on popular culture. It should focus on one of the listed topics (or you can choose another topic, with the permission of the instructor). The paper should address these topics in modern media: films, television, music, visual art, poetry, novels. Groups should have about three people each, and will have a class to present their findings in various films and novels.. Topics will be:

1. The living dead (zombies, vampires, etc)
2. Ghosts, possession and exorcism
3. Reincarnation and/or enlightenment
4. Heaven worlds
5. Hell worlds
6. End of the world, apocalypse, and Armageddon
7. Religion and the process of death (hospice, grief counseling)
8. Death rituals (funerals, chants, etc)

Your paper should address these questions about popular culture: Does the media express traditional religious beliefs about death and afterlife? Is it trying to be accurate to the religious tradition? Or is the writer/artist trying to say something new and original?

Academic Integrity and the Honor Code: There is a zero-tolerance policy toward plagiarism or any other form of academic dishonesty in this course. This means that anyone caught taking credit for work that is not his or her own, or cheating in any other way, will receive a failing grade for the entire course, which will show up on the transcript as an XF grade. Students are expected to follow the Honor Code of the College.

SYLLABUS

Date	Topic	Assignment
1/11	Introduction	
1/13	What is a soul? When does life begin?	http://8e.devbio.com/article.php?id=162
1/15	Understandings of death Eros and thanatos	Kerrigan, Introduction
1/18	MLK Day (no class)	
1/20	Sociology of death (guest speaker)	
1/22	Indigenous religions and shamanism	Kerrigan, pp. 98-102
1/25	Maya religion (guest speaker)	
1/27	Day of the Dead- film Aztec and Mexican religion	Kerrigan, pp. 110-112, 135-136
1/29	Native American religion (guest speaker)	
2/1	Ancestors	Kerrigan, chapter 4
2/3	Voodoo and the Dead	Kerrigan, chapter 5
2/5	Egyptian religion (guest speaker)	Kerrigan, chapter 2, pp. 43-56
2/8	Norse religion (guest speaker)	Kerrigan, pp. 21-24
2/10	Ancient Greece and Rome	Kerrigan, chapter 2, pp, 57-67
2/12	TEST #1	

2/15	Zoroastrianism	Kerrigan, chapter 3, pp. 73-75 Johnson, Zoroastrianism
2/17	Judaism	Johnson, Judaism
2/19	Roman Catholicism Heaven, Hell, Purgatory, and the Limbos	Johnson, Roman Catholicism
2/22	Dante, the Inferno	Inferno, first half
2/24	Dante, the Inferno	Inferno, second half PAPER #1 DUE!
2/26	Protestant denominations	Johnson, Baptist, Lutheran, Presbyterian, United Methodist
3/1	Mormonism	Johnson, Church of Latter Day Saints
3/3	Pentecostal and Millenial thought Islam	Johnson, Assemblies of God Johnson, Islam
3/5	Hinduism- Vedanta and Yoga, reincarnation	Johnson, Hinduism
3/8	Spring break	
3/10	Spring break	
3/12	Spring break	
3/15	Hinduism, bhakti, Shiva and Kali	
3/17	Buddhism, Theravada Mahayana, Vajrayana	Johnson, Buddhism <i>The Tibetan Book of the Dead</i>
3/19	Vajrayana Buddhism Reincarnation and Bardo	<i>The Tibetan Book of the Dead</i>
3/22	Library day Research help on papers	(Addlestone 122)

3/24	Chinese Religion: gods, ghosts and ancestors (guest speaker)	
3/26	TEST #2	
3/29	Popular Culture section: Vampires and the Living Dead	
3/31	Ghosts, possession, exorcism	
4/2	Reincarnation, enlightenment	
4/5	Heavens	
4/7	Hells	
4/9	End of the World/ Armageddon	
4/12	Religion and the dying process	
4/14	Death rituals	
4/16	Spiritualism and Theosophy	TERM PAPERS DUE!
4/19	Near Death Experience (guest speaker)	
4/21	Gullah in the Lowcountry, Halloween as holiday	
4/23	Martyrdom and Religious Suicide (general, and Shi'ite) http://www.cqpress.com/incontext/terrorism/links/epr_martyrdom.html http://www.al-islam.org/al-serat/concept-ezzati.htm	
4/26	Death and Modern Bioethics Kubler Ross, Cryogenics	Johnson, Christian Science