

Course Syllabus
**TRP2671 – A Christian Ending to Our Life:
Dying and Death in Orthodox Tradition**
Trinity College
Toronto School of Theology
September to December (Fall) 2018

Instructor Information

Instructor: Rev Fr Geoffrey Ready and Dr Nicole Roccas
Office Location: Larkin Building, Office 325
Telephone: (647) 567-8955
E-mail: geoffrey.ready@utoronto.ca
Office Hours: By appointment

Course Identification

Course Number: TRP2671
Course Format: *In-class or Online*
Course Name: A Christian Ending to Our Life: Dying and Death in Orthodox Tradition
Course Location: Larkin Building, Room 213
Class Times: Thursdays 7pm to 9.30pm
Prerequisites: None

Course Description

This course will explore through classroom lectures and seminar discussions the Orthodox Christian theological and pastoral tradition surrounding dying and death. This tradition will be contextualised within the thought and praxis of the Scriptures and early church, as well as the treatment of dying and death in different epochs of western civilisation over the past 2,000 years – as reflected in philosophy, literature, art and community life – culminating in the “death-denying” culture of the 20th century and the crises and ethical dilemmas surrounding death in the early 21st century. Students should emerge from the class able to articulate a thoughtful Orthodox Christian response – both in terms of theology and pastoral practice – to issues of human life, dying and death today.

Students will be evaluated on their class participation, a critical review of a scholarly article or cultural artifact, and a feature, a series of blog articles or an audio or video podcast contributing towards a collective web resource on dying and death in Orthodox tradition. *For the online section, classroom lectures and seminars will be recorded and made available to view on the course portal. Participation will be via online discussion forums.*

Course Resources

Required Books

The following books should be acquired for this course as they will be read in their entirety. Copies will also be placed on reserve (short term loan) at Trinity College Library.

- J. Mark and Elizabeth J. Barna, *A Christian Ending: A Handbook for Burial in the Ancient Christian Tradition* (Divine Ascent, 2011)
(Supplemented by website and blog: <http://www.achristianending.com/blog/>)
- Alexander Schmemmann, *The Liturgy of Death* (SVS, 2016)

Required Course Readings

Further required readings – patristic texts, articles and book extracts – will be provided via the course portal, which students can choose to view online or download and print.

These will include excerpts from:

- Philippe Ariès, *Hour of Our Death*
- Koslovsky's *Reformation of the Dead: Death and Ritual in Early Modern Germany*
- Drew Gilpin Faust, *This Republic of Suffering: Death and the American Civil War* (2008)
- Elizabeth Kubler-Ross, *On Death and Dying*

Course Website(s)

- Quercus: <https://q.utoronto.ca/>

This course uses Quercus for its course website. To access it, go to the UofT Quercus login page at <https://q.utoronto.ca/> and login using your UTORid and password. Once you have logged in to Quercus using your UTORid and password, look for the **My Courses** module, where you'll find the link to the website for all your Quercus-based courses. (Your course registration with ACORN gives you access to the course website in Quercus.) Information for students about using Quercus can be found at: <https://community.canvaslms.com/docs/DOC-10701> . Students who have trouble accessing Quercus should ask Sydney Yeung (divinity@trinity.utoronto.ca) for further help.

Course Learning Objectives/Outcomes

Basic Degree Level Outcomes

(A) IN RESPECT OF GENERAL ACADEMIC SKILLS

Students successfully completing this course will be able to demonstrate the following learning outcomes:

- the ability to distinguish primary sources from secondary sources
- the ability to provide a plausible analysis of a primary source in theological studies according to its genre, purpose, assumptions or tendency, and intended audience
- the ability to give an accurate summary of the substance of a secondary source in theological studies, to give a plausible account of its place in the discussions or controversies of an academic or faith community, and to evaluate whether its approach to solving a problem is appropriate

- the ability to pose a clear substantial question for reflection or research in Biblical studies, history, and doctrine
- the ability to gather information in theological studies
- the ability to apply learning from one or more areas outside theological studies
- an understanding of the limits to his or her own knowledge and ability, and an appreciation of the uncertainty, ambiguity and limits to knowledge and how these might influence analyses and interpretations
- qualities and skills necessary for ministry, further study, and community involvement
- the ability to exercise initiative, personal responsibility, and accountability in both personal and group contexts
- the ability to work effectively with others
- the ability to manage his or her own learning
- behaviour consistent with academic integrity and social responsibility

(B) IN RESPECT OF THE UNDERSTANDING OF THE CONTENT OF ONE OR MORE THEOLOGICAL DISCIPLINES

Students successfully completing this course will be able to:

- describe the evolution of Jewish and Christian thought regarding dying and death in Scriptural and early church tradition, as the basis of an Orthodox theological, liturgical and pastoral framework for understanding and responding to death
- categorise and explain the major epochs in cultural attitudes towards death
- analyse contemporary society's attitude – as expressed in literature, art, and ritual practice – to dying and death and infer and locate its cultural, historical and philosophical underpinnings

(C) IN RESPECT OF PERSONAL AND SPIRITUAL FORMATION

Students successfully completing this course will be able to:

- identify and explain the central ethical and pastoral issues concerning dying and death in our contemporary society (including palliative care, physician-assisted death, funeral rites and practices, environmental concerns, death and the digital world)

(D) IN RESPECT OF MINISTERIAL AND PUBLIC LEADERSHIP

Students successfully completing this course will be able to:

- develop and write an Orthodox Christian response – both in terms of theology and pastoral practice – to issues of human life, dying and death today

Evaluation

Requirements – Classroom Section

The final grade for the course will be based on the following areas:

- **Class participation (20%):** most sessions will include a period of discussion of primary or secondary sources. All students are expected to read all texts thoroughly. Students will be assigned a grade based upon their preparedness for and participation in these sessions.
- **Seminar paper and presentation (40%):** students will write a short 500-700 word critical review of a chosen reading or cultural artifact, and lead a 20-minute seminar presenting and leading discussion on it.
- **Written contributions for collective web resource (40%):** students will work collaboratively on a web resource on dying and death from an Orthodox perspective. Each student will write a feature article or series of blog articles (in total, approximately 2,500 words in length) or create an audio or video podcast.

Requirements – Online Section

The final grade for the course will be based on the following areas:

- **Online class participation (20%):** most sessions will include a period of discussion of primary or secondary sources. Online students must ensure to participate in these discussions, whether during class sessions (via Zoom videoconference), in the portal discussion forums, or by attending separate online tutorial sessions. All students are expected to read all texts thoroughly. Students will be assigned a grade based upon their preparedness for and participation in these sessions.
- **Seminar paper and presentation (40%):** students will write a short 500-700 word critical review of a chosen reading or cultural artifact, and lead a 20-minute seminar (during class or an online tutorial session) presenting and leading discussion on it.
- **Written contributions for collective web resource (40%):** students will work collaboratively on a web resource on dying and death from an Orthodox perspective. Each student will write a feature article or series of blog articles (in total, approximately 2,500 words in length) or create an audio or video podcast.

Grading System - Basic Degree Students

1000, 2000 and 3000 level courses use the following numerical grading scale (see section 11.2 of the BD Handbook):

90-100 (A+)	Exceptional
85-89 (A)	Outstanding
80-84 (A-)	Excellent
77-79 (B+)	Very Good
73-76 (B)	Good
70-72 (B-)	Acceptable
0-69 (FZ)	Failure

Please see the appropriate handbook for more details about the grading scale and non-numerical grades (e.g. SDF, INC, etc).

Late work (BD). Basic Degree students are expected to hand in assignments by the date given in the course outline. [The instructor should stipulate the penalty for late work.] The absolute deadline for the course is the examination day scheduled for the course or the last day of exam week for the semester in which the course is taught, whichever is sooner.

This penalty is not applied to students with documented medical or compassionate difficulties or exceptional reasons (e.g., a death in the family or a serious illness); students facing such difficulties are kindly requested to consult with their faculty adviser or basic degree director, who should make a recommendation on the matter to the instructor and request an SDF. The absolute deadline for obtaining an SDF for the course is the examination day scheduled for the course or the last day of examination week, whichever is sooner. An SDF must be requested from the registrar's office in the student's college of registration no later than the last day of exam week in which the course is taken. The SDF, when approved, will have a mutually agreed upon deadline that does not extend beyond the conclusion of the following term. If a student has not completed work but has not been granted an SDF, a final mark will be submitted calculating a zero for work not submitted.

Course grades. Consistently with the policy of the University of Toronto, course grades submitted by an instructor are reviewed by a committee of the instructor's college before being posted to ACORN. Grades are not official until they are posted to ACORN. Course grades may be adjusted where they do not comply with University Assessment and Grading Practices Policy found at www.governingcouncil.utoronto.ca/Assets/Governing+Council+Digital+Assets/Policies/PDF/grading.pdf, policies found in the TST conjoint program handbooks, or college grading policy.

Policies

Accessibility. Students with a disability or health consideration, whether temporary or permanent, are entitled to accommodation. Students in conjoint degree programs must register at the University of Toronto's Accessibility Services offices; information is available at <http://www.accessibility.utoronto.ca/>. The sooner a student seeks accommodation, the quicker we can assist.

Plagiarism. Students submitting written material in courses are expected to provide full documentation for sources of both words and ideas in footnotes or endnotes. Direct quotations should be placed within quotation marks. (If small changes are made in the quotation, they should be indicated by appropriate punctuation such as brackets and ellipses, but the quotation still counts as a direct quotation.) Failure to document borrowed material constitutes plagiarism, which is a serious breach of academic, professional, and Christian ethics. An instructor who discovers evidence of student plagiarism is not permitted to deal with the situation individually but is required to report it to his or her head of college or delegate according to the TST *Basic Degree Handbook* and the Graduate program Handbooks (linked from <http://www.tst.edu/academic/resources-forms/handbooks> and the University of Toronto *Code of Behaviour on Academic Matters* <http://www.governingcouncil.utoronto.ca/AssetFactory.aspx?did=4871>). A student who plagiarizes in this course will be assumed to have read the document "Avoidance of plagiarism in theological writing" published by the Graham Library of Trinity and Wycliffe Colleges http://www.trinity.utoronto.ca/Library_Archives/Theological_Resources/Tools/Guides/plag.htm.

Other academic offences. TST students come under the jurisdiction of the University of Toronto *Code of Behaviour on Academic Matters* <http://www.governingcouncil.utoronto.ca/policies/behaveac.htm>.

Back-up copies. Please make back-up copies of essays before handing them in.

Obligation to check email. At times, the course instructor may decide to send out important course information by email. To that end, all students in conjoint programs are required to have a valid utoronto email address. Students must have set up their utoronto email address which is entered in the ACORN system. Information is available at www.utorid.utoronto.ca. The course instructor will not be able to help you with this. 416-978-HELP and the Help Desk at the Information Commons can answer questions you may have about your UTORid and password. *Students should check utoronto email regularly* for messages about the course. **Forwarding** your utoronto.ca email to a Hotmail, Gmail, Yahoo or other type of email account is not advisable. In some cases, messages from utoronto.ca addresses sent to Hotmail, Gmail or Yahoo accounts are filtered as junk mail, which means that emails from your course instructor may end up in your spam or junk mail folder. Students in non-conjoint programs should contact the Registrar of their college of registration.

Email communication with the course instructor. The instructor aims to respond to email communications from students in a timely manner. *All email communications from students in conjoint programs must be sent from a utoronto email address.* Email communications from other email addresses are not secure, and also the instructor cannot readily identify them as being legitimate emails from students. The instructor is not obliged to respond to email from non-utoronto addresses for students in conjoint programs. Students in non-conjoint programs should only use the email address they have provided to their college of registration.

Course Schedule

For the online section, the recorded lecture and seminar discussion will be available on the day following the classroom session. Responses to the readings and themes will take place in the online forums during the remainder of the given week.

Week 1 – Introduction / Sources of Death in Orthodox Tradition

- Course introduction
- Death in the Old Testament in the context of ancient cultures

Week 2 – Sources of Death in Orthodox Tradition

- In Light of the Resurrection: death in New Testament and early church

Week 3 – Living with Death: Death in the Middle Ages

- Critical reading of Ariès's first two epochs: "Tamed Death" and "One's Own Death" (excerpted readings)
- Death in mediaeval art and literature
- Problematics of death in mediaeval theology (west and east)

Week 4 – Distancing of Death: Death in the Reformation and Enlightenment

- Critical reading of Ariès's third epoch: "Thy Death" (excerpted readings)
- Death at the time of the reformation – Koslovsky, *Reformation of the Dead*
- Further problematics of death in reformation and enlightenment theology

Week 5 – Distancing of Death: Death in the 19th Century

- Death in Romantic / Victorian literature and art
- Death and the American Civil War – Faust, *This Republic of Suffering*
- Comparative discussion on distancing of death and impact on modern society

Week 6 – Denying Death: Death in the 20th Century

- Critical reading of Ariès's fourth epoch: "Forbidden Death" (excerpted readings)
- World Wars I and II, holocaust, and the civic memorialisation of the dead
- Death in early 20th century literature and art

Week 7 – New Approaches: Dying and Grief

- Kübler-Ross, *On Death and Dying* (excerpted readings) and Documentary: *Facing Death*
- Shift from funerals to corpse-less celebrations of life
- Death in late 20th century literature and art

Week 8 – New Approaches: Palliative Care

- Dame Cicely Saunders and the development of hospice movement and palliative care
- Contemporary issues concerning care for the dying
- Death in early 21st century literature and art
- Mark and Elizabeth Barna, *A Christian Ending*, pp 1-33

Week 9 – New Challenges: Dying with 'Dignity'

- Rise of euthanasia, physician-assisted death/suicide
- Contemporary legal issues and ethical problems
- Other contemporary concerns: natural death/eco-friendly funeral movement, death and the digital world
- Mark and Elizabeth Barna, *A Christian Ending*, pp 34-57

Week 10 – Assessing our Epoch and Orthodox Practice Today

- Review of new trends and new ritualisation: critical consideration of a fifth epoch for Ariès's model?
- Weaknesses and problems in contemporary Orthodox approach to dying and death
- Schmemmann, "Development of Christian Funeral Rites" from *The Liturgy of Death*, pp 19-56

Week 11 – Renewing Orthodox Tradition Today

- Drawing on sources of Orthodox Christian tradition to provide pastoral care and moral guidance to contemporary world

- Schmemmann, “Liturgy of Death and Contemporary Culture” from *The Liturgy of Death*, pp 143-183
- Mark and Elizabeth Barna, *A Christian Ending*, pp 58-110

Week 12

- Course review
- Presentation of features and articles for web resource

Please note that this syllabus is subject to change in accordance with the regulations in the TST *Basic Degree Handbook*.