Course Profile

Course # and Title: ML-406 Caring for the Dying and Bereaved
Instructor: Kathleen D. (Kadi) Billman
Semester/Year: Spring 2020

Course Rationale and Description: (Why do we offer this course? Which of LSTC’s degree program learning competencies does it address?):

ML-406 is one of the pathway courses in ministerial leadership that enables assessment of competency in pastoral care. It is designed to contribute to capacity and skill-building at every level of competency described in the pastoral care section of the “Learning Competency 4, by Ministry Areas” rubric found the in the Masters Programs Manual.

- For learners with limited experience in pastoral ministry with the dying and bereaved, this course will help prepare seminarians for Clinical Pastoral Education by giving opportunities to further deepen the capacity to listen with understanding, especially with persons living with bereavement or life-threatening illness; identify and discuss the cultural, psychological, and theological contexts that shape their responses to loss and death; and engage in the action/reflection model of learning that is core to the CPE experience, including giving skilled feedback to the work of peers.

- For learners with more experience in pastoral care, the course provides an opportunity to develop processes for equipping lay ministries of care in times of grief and death, envision how ancient Christian practices of ars moriendi (the art of dying) may be taught in a new century, and create projects that demonstrate a creative interface between pastoral care and other aspects of ministry (e.g., rituals, preaching) in anticipation of internship or first call.

- All learners will have the opportunity to develop and converse about their own end-of-life choices, in preparation for assisting others (in CPE and other ministry contexts) to complete important decision-making documents (e.g., Power of Attorney for Health Care, DNR, Five Wishes, etc.)

Although the course is described in relation to one set of competencies in pastoral care, a foundational conviction underlying this course is that it is in the practices of Christian life and ministry that so much of what the theological curriculum is designed to nourish—a deep faith informed by theological, historical, and biblical knowledge; leadership ability; contextual and cultural competency in its wide-ranging forms; personal integrity and spiritual depth—comes to embodied expression.

Course Learning Outcomes/Competencies: (What difference will this course make to students’ knowledge, skills, attitudes, and practices?):

By the end of the course, students who have successfully completed the readings and assignments will be able to:

1. Articulate informed perspectives on issues facing those who experience life-threatening illness and bereavement (their own or a family member), including:
   a. End-of-life decision-making challenges, e.g., advance directives and decisions about how to die, disposition of one’s material gifts, funeral and burial arrangements.
   b. The implications of recent research for (i.) understanding the cultural and interfaith contexts in which families suffer, die, and grieve; (ii.) reconceiving what is “normal” vs. “abnormal” grief; and (iii.) practices of remembering/honoring the dead (funerals and other rituals).
c. Theological and biblical perspectives that influence human hopes, fears, and questions as they face death and loss.
d. Pastoral care for persons and communities who have experienced traumatic events in personal and civic life.

2. Demonstrate abilities that hopefully are always in process of growing and deepening, including the ability to:
a. Conduct a meaningful conversation with a person who is experiencing life-threatening illness or bereavement; bring interdisciplinary reflection to reflection on that experience.
b. Strengthen the ability to listen in ways that convey understanding and sacred presence.
c. Formulate helpful questions that assist colleagues to engage their work.
d. Relate insights from the readings/presentations offered in the course to the real conversations members submit for discussion.

Strategies for Learning (How shall we go about achieving these competencies?):

1. Through engaging in and reflecting on a recorded conversation with someone who has experienced/is experiencing bereavement or life-threatening illness (Guidelines, Training, and Consent Form provided in advance).
2. Through demonstrations and practice, and occasional short assignments focused on the subject of the day.
3. Through exploring the spirituality of reflecting on our own advanced directives, important bequests, and initial funeral and burial arrangements, and writing our own eulogies, and through conversations with classmates and instructors about the impact of our own life experiences of loss and change on our faith and on relationships with colleagues and people with whom we minister.
4. Through reflecting and reporting on a resource that furthers the competency levels one is personally seeking to demonstrate in a particular area of interest (e.g., ministry with grieving/dying children or youth, ministry with families living with extended dying such as Alzheimer’s disease, pastoral care and preaching/conducting rituals for the dying and bereaved, ministry in the face of catastrophe and traumatic loss).

Assessment (How shall we know if we—students and instructors—have been successful in achieving the outcomes?):

1. Through rubrics that clearly identify what is assessed in the major assignments for the course (recorded conversation and project).
2. Through timely written and oral feedback offered to course members for all work submitted by the instructor.
3. Through timely written and oral feedback on the recorded conversations by members of the class assigned to give feedback as well as by the instructor.
4. Through mutual feedback about how things are going in the course.

Bibliography. Several online readings will be posted on the ML 406 course site and there will be choices of texts/readings regarding chosen project areas. Texts read in common are listed below:

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<tr>
<th>Text Title</th>
<th>Author</th>
<th>ISBN# (Required)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Passed On: African American Mourning Stories</td>
<td>Karla FC Holloway</td>
<td>ISBN 0822328607</td>
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<td>One other text TBA</td>
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