Philosophical and Spiritual Issues in Death & Dying (3)

From Plato to Heidegger to Derrida, philosophers and spiritual writers have examined how death and dying contribute to an understanding of human existence. Does the discontinuity of death yield to a higher continuity, or do religious traditions deny death? How ought I to live, once I awaken to the reality of death?

**Texts**

**Online readings from** [http://classics.mit.edu/index.html](http://classics.mit.edu/index.html)
- Plato’s *Apology*
- Aristotle’s *On the Soul*
- Marcus Aurelius, *Meditations* (Books II and IV)
- Epicurus, “Letter to Menoeceus”
- Lucretius, *On the Nature of Things* (Book III)

**Blackboard selections on the soul and resurrection:**
- Biblical attitudes about the resurrection (Ezekiel & the Passion narrative)
- Aquinas on Aristotle’s On the Soul
- Copleston on Aristotle & Aquinas on the soul and the resurrection
- *Jewish Pastoral Care*: Eilberg (new ed: 374-399)
- Nishitani, *Religion and Nothingness* (chap. 1)

**Films:** Bergman, *Seventh Seal & Wild Strawberries*
<table>
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<tr>
<th>WEEK</th>
<th>SUGGESTED TOPICS</th>
<th>TUESDAY IN CLASS SESSION READINGS</th>
<th>Other activity schedule options (sign up for TWO other options (different classes – follow activity schedule) options A &amp; C follow the syllabus schedule; options B, D, E are not on any schedule; options F or G, H, I have specific dates assigned)</th>
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| I 8/28 | **Read for the first class**  
Care for/cure of the soul – two meanings of *cura animarum*  
&  
Death and Its Meaning for Life | **Sign up for ONE** of the readings to present under activity option A  
Plato’s *Apology* [http://classics.mit.edu/index.html](http://classics.mit.edu/index.html) or any other standard edition you own  
Tolstoy, *The Death of Ivan Ilyich* (required text) | For option C: Discuss images of heaven & hell, meanings of suffering and redemption in your (non)religious traditions and practices.  
Or options A, B, D, E |
| II 9/4 | **Should death and dying be of concern to us?** | On [http://classics.mit.edu/index.html](http://classics.mit.edu/index.html)  
Marcus Aurelius, *Meditations* (Books II and IV)  
Epicurus, “Letter to Menoeceus”  
Lucretius, *On the Nature of Things* (Book III) | For option C: with focus on end of life care.  
Or options A, B, D, E |
| III 9/11 | **The Immortal Soul, or “Dry Bones” or No-Self?** | Biblical attitudes (Ezekiel & the Passion on BB)  
Aquinas (excerpts on BB)  
Copleston, on Aquinas (BB)  
*Jewish Pastoral Care: Eilberg* (new ed: 374-399) | **Double credit for this option C:**  
Aristotle’s *On the Soul*  
Find and reflect on significant links between Aristotle’s text and the in-class readings by Aquinas, Maimonides, Copleston.  
Or options A, B, D, E |
| IV 9/18 | **Immortality and Heroism: Despair, Neurosis & Death** | Becker, *The Denial of Death* (chaps. 1-2)  
Kierkegaard, *The Sickness unto Death* (pp. 5-9 & consult the chart of stages of existence (BB)  
(We will work through pp. 13-14 in class) | Option C: What is the main issue of dying & dying: physical longevity, spiritual immortality, life to be lived elsewhere or after-life, living in the now knowing one’s death?  
Or options A, B, D, E |
| V 9/25 | **Existential & depth psychological attitudes towards death and dying** | Becker, *The Denial of Death* (chaps. 3-4)  
(dying man’s return to lost innocence)  
Or options F or G  
Or options A, B, E |
| VI 10/2 | | Becker, *The Denial of Death* (chaps. 5 & 7)  
Kierkegaard, *The Sickness unto Death* (pp. 29-42) | Option D films: Bergman, *Seventh Seal*  
(chess game with death)  
Or option H  
Or options A, B, E |
| VII 10/9 | | Becker, *The Denial of Death* (chaps. 8-9)  
Kierkegaard, *The Sickness unto Death* (pp. 42-74) | Option D films: Bergman, *Wild Strawberries* (coming to terms with oneself)  
Or options F or G  
Or options A, B, E |
| VIII | | | |


The final projects are due at on TU of the final exam week by 9 p.m. – electronic submission in MS-Word format in Safe Assign box on the blackboard. In case our class size increases, we reserve TU of the exam week for the last class session.