

Grief and Bereavement Among Historically Marginalized and Oppressed People (MDiv/MFT/MAR)

Louisville Seminary

January 16-20, 2023

Online via Zoom

Instructor

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Course Description

This course is designed to introduce students to grief and bereavement in marginalized people. Through exploration of grief in scripture, in self, and in parishioners/clients/patients, students will identify different types of grief, think about grief theologically, and be prepared to provide compassionate bereavement care for the grief-stricken. Causes and the impact/expression of grief on marginalized people will also be covered.

COURSE LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- 1) Students will become familiar with different kinds of grief, including disenfranchised and complicated grief.
- 2) Students will gain an understanding of their own perspective and awareness of death, dying, and loss.
- 3) Students will be able to identify factors that affect the nature of the grief experience, especially with respect to individual, cultural, spiritual, and religious influences.

These objectives are in service to the seminary's larger MDiv and MAR Student Learning Outcomes, as articulated in the 2022-23 Academic Catalog:

Master of Divinity Student Learning Outcomes:

SLO1: Students will gain knowledge and understanding of the Bible and the ability to use critical skills and educated imagination to interpret it in contemporary social and cultural contexts.

SLO3: Students will be able to think theologically and ethically in relation to particular traditions and contemporary needs.

SLO4: Students will demonstrate the ability to reflect critically and self-critically on relationships between Christian faith and various forms of systemic injustice.

SLO5: Students will acquire the knowledge and skill sets necessary for the practice of Christian ministry – as demonstrated by effectiveness in such activities as:

- Leading congregations within the framework of their communions, confessions, and polity

1

- Preaching, teaching, and leading worship
- Praying and teaching others to pray
- Leading an organization effectively
- Providing public leadership
- Inviting others into the Christian faith
- Offering pastoral care
- Participating in constructive intra-Christian and interreligious engagement

SLO6: Students will articulate their own theological perspective, mindful of the global, multicultural, multi-religious context of contemporary ministry

QEP SLO: Students can describe strategies, grounded in their practice, for working toward racial justice appropriate to their particular vocational settings. Students can demonstrate competence with this Student Learning Outcome (SLO) in many ways including, but not limited to, the following:

- Defining and using key terms in ways informed by an understanding of systemic racism
- Identifying racism in its many manifestations (structural, personal, communal, etc.)
- Critical reflection on the history and current contexts regarding race, racism, and anti-racism
- Critical reflection on racist and antiracist practices and theologies
- Developing and implementing antiracist policies, practices, and theologies

Master of Arts in Religion (MAR) Student Outcomes

SLO1: Be able to interpret Scripture critically and imaginatively.

SLO5: Students will be able to conduct independent critical research and write clearly and convincingly on a topic of biblical, theological, historical, or ethical concern.

Required Texts: Please have these read BEFORE class begins.

Doka, K. J. (2002). *Disenfranchised Grief: New Directions, Challenges, and Strategies for Practice* (1st edition). Research Press. Read only pp. xi—231.

Lewis, C. S. 1898-1963. (2021). *A Grief Observed*. Hassell Street Press.

Wade, B. (2021). *Grieving While Black: An Antiracist Take on Oppression and Sorrow*. North Atlantic Books.

Yalom, I. D. (2009). *Staring at the Sun: Overcoming the Terror of Death* (1st edition). Jossey-Bass.

Options for Book Report Presentations (Submit your top three choices to me for approval; first come, first served!)

ABPP, J. W. W. P. (2018). *Grief Counseling and Grief Therapy, Fifth Edition: A Handbook for the Mental Health Practitioner – Grief Counseling Handbook on Treatment of Grief, Loss and Bereavement, Book and Free eBook* (5th edition). Springer Publishing Company.

Gawande, A. (2014). *Being Mortal: Illness, Medicine, and What Matters in the End*. Profile Books Ltd.

Grief as a Family Process: A Developmental Approach to Clinical Practice. (n.d.). Guilford Press. Retrieved August 24, 2022, from <https://www.guilford.com/books/Grief-as-a-Family-Process/Ester-Shapiro/9780898621969>

Holloway, K. F. (2002). *Passed on: African American Mourning Stories: A Memorial* (1st edition). Duke University Press Books.

O'Connor, M.-F. (2022). *The Grieving Brain: The Surprising Science of How We Learn from Love and Loss*. HarperOne.

Course Requirements

1) Biblical Grief Reflection Paper (three to five pages, double-spaced) (25%). Due one week BEFORE CLASS STARTS (January 9).

Select a biblical story that involves loss and/or grief. Write a short (no more than five pages, double-spaced) exegetical and narrative reflection on this passage. The precipitating loss can be interpersonal, communal, societal, generational, accidental, intentional, racial, or any other kind of biblical event that you see as resulting in a loss that is grieved.

Include in your paper:

- Type of loss (the specifics of the situation)
- Type of grief (e.g., disenfranchised, complicated, anticipatory)
- Standard exegetical scholarship to explain and contextualize the passage you've chosen
- The age of the individual(s) impacted by the loss
- Who else was impacted by the loss
- How the individual(s) felt and coped with the loss immediately, both positively and negatively
- How the individual(s) felt and coped with the loss long-term, both positively and negatively
- How the individual(s) made sense of the loss theologically

- How the loss impacted their understanding of self/community/society
- How the loss theologically/spiritually/existentially impacted their world view
- How the individual(s) grew from and/or what they learned from the loss
- How the individual(s) used what they learned from the loss, both personally and professionally
- Your theological understanding of the loss (i.e., God's role, e.g., precipitating the loss, not intervening to prevent the loss, resolving the loss, comforting the bereaved)
- A plan of care for the bereaved individual(s), OR a sermon outline for a sermon you could preach to a congregation based on the passage
- Anything else you'd like to highlight

2) Book Review PowerPoint presentation, minimum 25 slides (25%). Due one week BEFORE CLASS STARTS (January 9).

Please prepare a PowerPoint presentation based on one of the books assigned as readings for the course that will help to guide discussion of that work during class. Your presentation should be able to stand on its own as the basis for a workshop to your peers, an adult educational class for a faith-based organization (such as a church), and/or a Spiritual Care Grand Rounds presentation to caregivers in your health care organization.

Be sure to include key learnings from the book, relevant examples from your ministry as appropriate to illustrate them, and implications for improving parishioner/client/patient care that you can incorporate from your reading of the text. Feel free to use clarifying examples from your own life and/or the lives of parishioners/clients/patients. Be sure to disguise the identity of others if you do not expressly have their permission to be included.

Also, incorporate a quality improvement project/program or research project you could implement in your organization based on key takeaways from the book. Include some sort of measurable metric you can use to assess the effectiveness of your proposed proposal/intervention.

Example:

- A presentation to a board of deacons, Stephen Ministers, or other support personnel on ways to improve pastoral care for grieving individuals. A simple intervention would be passing out a questionnaire before your presentation gauging their level of knowledge about your topic, and then giving them a

questionnaire after your presentation to see if their knowledge in your topic has increased. If you choose this as your metric, please include the questionnaire as an appendix to your paper.

- A proposal to a church governing body on a new program designed to improve pastoral care for grieving individuals. Your metric could be the estimated number of people served by your proposal, cost-savings, fulfillment of church mission, and/or whatever other metric makes sense.
- A proposal for a new grief training program for caregivers based on your presentation. If you do this, include an outline of the key points of your presentation, culminating in the proposed program. Identify key learning objectives, as well.
- A proposal for a new program to address a currently unmet pastoral care need in your congregation or health care setting (e.g., a grief support group). If you do this, be sure to present the context of the unmet need/population served in some detail, your intervention, and what you hope to accomplish with your new program.

I will assign the books on a first-come, first-served basis. Please email me a list of the top three books you'd like to review. Every effort will be made to give you your first choice,

3) Grief time line/analysis (12-15 pages). Due January 23 (25%)

Please create a personal timeline of significant loss(es) in your life in bullet-point form. Remember that grief and loss does not only pertain to the death of a loved one, but can result from anything you personally experience as a loss, such as the loss of a romantic relationship, a physical or intellectual ability, a professional role, or a highly valued item.

Include the date and a short description of each loss, including such information as your age, the context of the loss, and how you grieved for and/or coped with the loss.

Once your narrative timeline has been constructed, please write about one specific instance of loss that impacted you the most. Include the following:

- (1) Your grieving process: Describe your response to the loss in terms of your thoughts, feelings, and behaviors. How did you respond to the loss? How did others respond to the loss, and to you, following the loss? How do you feel about the loss today? Include a discussion of key factors (e.g., historical, political, economic, spiritual/theological) impacting your loss. Note whether there is any “unfinished

- business” associated with the loss. If so, how might “closure” be obtained? In retrospect, can you think of anything you didn’t have at the time of the loss and shortly after that would have helped to lessen your grief?
- (2) Resources, strengths, and coping strategies that may have served as “protective factors” for your bereavement and healing.
 - (3) A theological/spiritual/existential exploration of the impact of your loss. Include any rituals you found helpful in processing your grief.
 - (4) Ways you cared for yourself during your bereavement, if any. If there were none, please include a plan for caring for yourself during bereavement that you can use going forward.
 - (5) What you learned as a result of your loss/grief. What lasting impact, if any, did this loss have on your life? Why? How could this loss impact your ability to work with others experiencing similar losses?
 - (6) Be sure to incorporate key concepts discussed within the course. Please demonstrate these connections by referencing assigned texts and scholarly articles as needed (APA formatting). Google Scholar is a good place to find current journal articles that may be helpful.

4) Participation. (25%). My expectation is that you will be enthusiastic learners, actively engaging with the texts, with one another, and with me.

Deadlines

Monday, January 9	Biblical grief reflection paper due
Monday, January 9	Book review PowerPoint presentation due
Monday, June 23	Grief time line/analysis

Late assignments: For every day an assignment is late a letter grade will be subtracted (e.g., an A paper would be a B, a B paper a C, and so on). Four days late on any assignment will result in a failing grade on the assignment.

Formatting of Written Assignments

Please follow these guidelines for your written assignments:

- Include your name, assignment, course, date, and title on first page. No need to make a separate cover page.
- One-inch (1”) margins on top, bottom, left, and right of all pages. Justify left all text.
- Use Times New Roman 12-point font, black color, double-spaced.

Assignment Submission

Please submit all assignments to me in DOC or DOCX format (**not PDF**) as email attachments. PowerPoint presentations can be submitted in PPT or PPTX format (**not PDF**).

Use of Inclusive Language In accordance with seminary policy, students are to use inclusive language in class discussions and in written and oral communication by using language representative of the whole human community in respect to gender, sexual orientation, ethnicity, age, and physical and intellectual capacities. Direct quotations from theological texts and translations of the Bible do not have to be altered to conform to this policy. In your own writing, however, when referring to God, you are encouraged to use a variety of images and metaphors, reflecting the richness of the Bible's images for God. See for further assistance, <http://www.lpts.edu/academics/academicresources/academic-forms/guides-policies-and-handbooks/inclusive-and-expansivelanguage>.

Academic Honesty All work turned in to the instructors is expected to be the work of the student whose name appears on the assignment. Any borrowing of the ideas or the words of others must be acknowledged by quotation marks (where appropriate) and by citation of author and source. Use of another's language or ideas from online resources is included in this policy, and must be attributed to author and source of the work being cited. Failure to do so constitutes plagiarism, and may result in failure of the course. Two occurrences of plagiarism may result in dismissal from the Seminary. Students unfamiliar with issues related to academic honesty can find help from the staff in the Academic Support Center. For the Seminary policy, see The Code of Student Conduct, 6.11; the Student Handbook, p. 19.

Special Accommodations Students requiring accommodations for a documented physical or learning disability should be in contact with the Director of the Academic Support Center during the first two weeks of a semester (or before the semester begins) and should speak with the instructor as soon as possible to arrange appropriate adjustments. Students with environmental or other sensitivities that may affect their learning are also encouraged to speak with the instructor.

Citation Policy Citations in your papers should follow Seminary standards, which are based on these guides:

American Psychological Association. Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association. 6th ed. Washington, DC: American Psychological Association, 2010.

Turabian, Kate L., Wayne C. Booth, Gregory G. Colomb, and Joseph M. Williams. A Manual for Writers of Research Papers, Theses, and Dissertations: Chicago Style for Students and Researchers. 8th ed. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2013.

The Chicago Manual of Style. 16th ed. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2010.
Copies of these guides are available at the library and in the Academic Support Center.

Attendance Policy According to the Seminary catalog, students are expected to attend class meetings regularly. In case of illness or emergency, students are asked to notify the instructor of their planned absence from class, either prior to the session or within 24 hours of the class session. Missing 1/4 of the course may result in a low or failing grade in the course.

Self-Care During this Course

Learning about grief and discussing grief can be emotionally challenging. Please make it a point *before* class even begins to plan out time and space to process what you are learning during our week together. Be intentional about scheduling self-care time in nature, engaging in life-affirming spiritual practices, connecting with loved ones and/or pets, scheduling time with your therapist, and/or in general making time for activities and people that lift you up. Be sure to get adequate sleep and eat nutritionally-healthy meals. And please feel free to reach out to me with any concerns you may have.

COURSE SCHEDULE

Course Schedule January 16-20 (subject to change)	
<u>Topic</u>	<u>Readings/Assignments</u>
<p>1/20/23</p> <p>Martin Luther King, Jr. Day</p> <p>No class</p>	<p>Several of the readings assigned prior to class are in lieu of class on this day.</p> <p>Please be sure to have the readings completed before class on Tuesday.</p>
<p>1/17 Morning</p> <p>Introduction to the course</p> <p>Presentation on Grief and Bereavement (Olman)</p> <p>Book Presentation(s)</p>	<p>1/17 Afternoon:</p> <p>1:00 PM Guest speaker: Dr. Noel Forlini Burt, Old Testament Scholar “Hope in the Wilderness: Theological and Spiritual Reflections on Grief”</p> <p>On your own, watch “Cooler Bandits” on YouTube: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=O8smSbJvGjw</p> <p>Be able to identify and discuss specific examples of different types of grief you see exhibited in the movie.</p> <p>Jot down three key learnings/takeaways from the film, and three questions you’d like to ask Rev. Belle tomorrow morning. Rev. Belle’s brother is one of the “cooler bandits” discussed in the film.</p>
<p>1/18 Morning:</p> <p>Discussion of “Cooler Bandits”/ Thoughts on Grief</p> <p>Guest Speaker: Rev. Twila Belle, MDiv Staff Chaplain Cleveland Clinic Main Campus</p>	<p>1/18 Afternoon:</p> <p>In-class assignment: Select a chapter from pp. 233-414 on specific types of grief Share with the class what you learned.</p> <p>Book presentation (s)</p>

<p>1/19 Morning:</p> <p>Trauma and Grief</p> <p>Rev. Celestia Gibson, MDiv Supervisor, Spiritual Care Cleveland Clinic Akron General</p>	<p>1/19 Afternoon:</p> <p>Book Presentation(s)</p> <p>In-class assignment: Grief Interview</p> <p>Ask a colleague, friend, or family member to describe a cultural, religious, or ethnic tradition or ritual that is associated with death and bereavement. For instance, you might ask a Jewish colleague to describe what happens after someone dies and through the first month after the death. Or you might ask a colleague from Asia to describe the funeral and bereavement customs in their country of origin. You may also choose to describe your own religious, ethnic, and cultural traditions or rituals.</p>
<p>1/20 Morning</p> <p>Discussion: Grief Interviews</p> <p>Book Presentation(s)</p>	<p>1/20 Afternoon</p> <p>Book Presentation(s)</p> <p>Final thoughts</p> <p>Course evaluations</p>