

FYSP 187: *Death and the Art of Dying*

King 343 MWF 3:30 – 4:20 / Instructor Jed Deppman
Visiting Hours: Fri. 9-12 and by appointment in 28 Rice Hall.
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I. Description. If death is not upon us now (thinks Hamlet) then it will come later, and if not later, then now. Being *ready* is what really counts, but what does that mean? Is there an *ars moriendi*, an art to dying well? Should our understanding of death shape the way we choose to live?

To address these questions, we will begin by thinking through ideas and expressions of death from a variety of perspectives, arts, and historical periods. Works of fiction, poetry, philosophy, music, and visual art will provide models for comparative inquiries into (among other things) the *valuing* of death: why are some deaths considered noble, beautiful, purposeful, or meaningful, while others are shameful, ugly, purposeless, or senseless? We will then work through our thoughts by engaging with community partners in Oberlin. Testing and expanding our thinking by talking and being with others, we will reimagine our own lives and deaths.

- II. Texts.**
- Books:
- Dazai, Osamu. *No Longer Human*.
 - Nuland, Sherwin. *How We Die*.
 - Goethe, J. W. V. *The Sorrows of Young Werther*.
 - García-Márquez, Gabriel. *Chronicle of a Death Foretold*.
- ERES / BB:
- Heinz, Donald. “The Lost Art of Dying.”
 - Bataille, Georges. “The Link between Taboos and Death.”
 - Borges, Jorge Luis. “The Secret Miracle.”
 - Heidegger, Martin. *Being and Time* (excerpts.)
 - Rousseau, Jean-Jacques. *Rêveries of a Solitary Walker* (3rd Walk).
 - Joyce, James. “The Dead.”
 - Metaphysical Poetry: Donne & Herbert.
 - Emily Dickinson: Selected Poetry.
 - Selected Elegies.
- Films:
- Unforgiven* (Dir. Clint Eastwood.)
 - The Dead* (Dir. John Huston).

NB: You must bring hard copies of all required readings to class with you.

III. Attendance and Late Work. Unexcused absences lower your grade. If you miss class, it is your responsibility both to turn your work in on time and to learn the material you’ve missed – including class discussion – before the next class. Late assignments are reduced one full letter grade per day.

IV. Honor Code. To participate in this class, you must understand and adhere to Oberlin’s Honor Code. See <http://www.oberlin.edu/students/links-life/rules-regs.html#honor>.

V. Grading.

- 10%: Participation. Short writing assignments and informed discussion in class.
- 20%: Small Group presentations. (4% each for 5 presentations.)
- 20%: Community-based learning. This includes a commitment of 20-30 hours outside of class and regular journal reflections. Guidelines given in class.
- 30%: 3 papers of 4-6 pages.
- 20%: Final Research Paper.

Class Schedule

9/7	Wednesday.	Introduction to the class.
9/9	Friday.	Read on Eres: Borges: "A Secret Miracle." Handout on <i>Ars Moriendi</i> . Handout: Kübler-Ross: "The Stages of Dying."
9/12	Monday.	Read on Eres: Heinz: <i>The Lost Art of Dying</i> .
9/14	Wednesday.	Shuland. <i>How We Die</i> .
9/16	Friday.	Shuland, Heinz, K.-R., Borges. Small Groups Meet #1.
9/19	Monday.	Shuland. Small Groups Present #1.
9/21	Wednesday.	Rousseau: <i>Rêveries of a Solitary Walker</i> (3 rd Walk).
9/23	Friday.	Emily Dickinson.
9/26	Monday.	Emily Dickinson. Paper #1 Due in class.
9/28	Wednesday.	Emily Dickinson.
9/30	Friday.	Shuland, Rousseau, Dickinson. Small Groups Meet #2.
10/3	Monday.	Small Groups Present #2. Goethe: <i>The Sorrows of Young Werther</i> .
10/5	Wednesday.	Goethe: <i>The Sorrows of Young Werther</i> .
10/7	Friday.	Goethe: <i>The Sorrows of Young Werther</i> .
10/10	Monday.	Heidegger: <i>Being and Time</i> .
10/12	Wednesday.	Heidegger: <i>Being and Time</i> .
10/14	Friday.	Small Groups Meet #3. Goethe, Heidegger.
10/17	Monday.	Small Groups Present #3. Visual Art: Picasso, Mantegna, Gauguin, Grunwald.
10/19	Wednesday.	Visual Art: Kollwitz, David, Courbet, El Greco. Paper #2 Due in class.
10/21	Friday.	Visual Art: Meeting at Allen Art Museum.

Fall Break

10/31	Monday.	James Joyce: "The Dead."
11/2	Wednesday.	Joyce: "The Dead." Film 7 p.m. King 343.
11/4	Friday.	Joyce: "The Dead." Small Groups Meet #4.
11/7	Monday.	Small Groups Present #4. Bataille: "The Link between Taboos and Death."
11/9	Wednesday.	Dazai: <i>No Longer Human</i> .
11/11	Friday.	Dazai: <i>No Longer Human</i> .
11/14	Monday.	Dazai: <i>No Longer Human</i> . Proposal Due for Final Research Paper.
11/16	Wednesday.	Dazai: <i>No Longer Human</i> . Small Groups Meet #5. Film 7 p.m. King 343.
11/18	Friday.	Small Groups Present #5. <i>Unforgiven</i> .
11/21	Monday.	<i>Unforgiven</i> . Paper #3 due in class.
11/23	Wednesday.	(No class; required attendance at films.)

Thanksgiving

11/28	Monday.	Elegiac Poetry.
11/30	Wednesday.	Meeting in Library.
12/2	Friday.	Richard Strauss: Tod und Verklarung.
12/5	Monday.	García-Márquez, <i>Chronicle of a Death Foretold</i> .
12/7	Wednesday.	García-Márquez, <i>Chronicle of a Death Foretold</i>
12/9	Friday.	García-Márquez, <i>Chronicle of a Death Foretold</i> . Small Groups Meet #6.
12/12	Monday.	Small Groups Present #6. Metaphysical Poetry: Donne & Herbert.
12/14	Wednesday.	Catch-up day.
12/19	Monday.	Final Paper Due in Rice 28 by 5 pm.