

Starr King School for the Ministry
ILLNESS, HEALTH & HEALING

Fall 2020



Twisted with Joy by D'Oyley

Each of us has been, or someday could be, Lazarus. Each one of us could be a person who emerges from the tomb of our own serious illness, life crisis, or other catastrophe. When, sometime in our lives, we hear the command, "Lazarus, come forth!" we will understand that the person being spoken to is none other than ourselves. In their journey home, not everybody will follow in Lazarus' footsteps. But everyone will recognize the terrain - the steep cliffs, the sharp stones, the dense thickets, and all the other features that indicate we are feeling our way through the landscape of

healing. -- Lewis Richmond, Healing Lazarus: A Buddhist's Journey from Near Death to New Life (2004).

Course Description: In this semester-long, on-line course, students will listen for the voices of those who are ill and those who care for them. Those voices – often ignored or silenced - are etched with pain, strong emotions, and wisdom. The course is designed to be experiential, multi-religious, and counter-oppressive. Students will explore how different religious traditions have approached illness, death, and healing. Students will also draw from other resources such as poetry, narrative medicine, the arts, and spiritual care. Finally, the class will encourage students to develop practices that promote health and healing in their own lives, congregations, communities, and/or ministries.

Course Workload & Requirements: As a three unit course, students are expected to put in 135 hours of work over the course of the semester. Requirements for successful completion of the class include the following:

- **Class Attendance:** Students will participate in class on-line weekly. They may miss up to two weeks of class without making up the work, so long as students notify the instructor as soon as possible.
- **Posts on Texts:** Students will engage with the texts related to each week's theme, writing at least one post and commenting on a classmate's post.

In lieu of writing posts, students may discuss class texts with one or more other students via phone, zoom or in person and simply fill out a short conversation log on Moodle.

- **Posts on Practice Exercises:** Students will also be asked to do one practice exercise and comment on at least one classmate's practice post each week.

- **Book & Film Reflections:** In order to deepen their understanding of illness, health, and healing, students will read/watch and reflect on 2 of the suggested books, 4 of the suggested films, or some combination thereof. Students may substitute other books and films with the instructor's prior approval.
- **Practice, Project or Paper:** By the *sixth* week, students will have chosen a practice, project or paper (PPP) to deepen their understanding of illness, health and healing. This will absorb about 15- 20 hours of a student's time over the course of the semester.

Students in past classes have done some of the following: taking a dance class, getting more sleep, working with a therapist or 12 step sponsor, preparing vegan meals, creating a stronger circle of friends, chi running, working on end of life matters, writing poetry, getting regular massages, creating art, engaging in prayer or meditation, doing tai chi, compiling scripture and prayers to use in their ministry, researching a topic of keen interest, exploring ayurvedic healing, offering a sermon using some of the class material, watching IHH films with friends or family, etc.

Students will do a brief weekly "check-in" on their practice/project/paper (PPP) starting the *seventh week* and will submit a "final report" at the end of the class. "Final reports" can take many forms, for example: creative efforts, theological reflections, music, photographs, videos, research papers, sermons, digital scrapbooks, rituals, embodied movement, etc.

- **Self-evaluation:** Finally, students will complete a self-evaluation at the end of the course based on their progress in meeting the course objectives listed below.

Course Objectives: By the end of the semester, it is expected that students will be able to (1) reflect on at least three lessons they learned from this class; (2) describe at least two ways the

class' multi-religious, counter-oppressive perspectives have shaped and/or challenged their understanding of illness, health, and healing; (3) describe what they gleaned from their personal practice, project, or paper; and (4) share what they received and contributed to the creation of a caring, collaborative learning community this semester.

Course Texts: There will be no required course texts. Instead, each week there will be a selection of short readings, videos, prayers, and poetry. Books and films related to the week's theme will also be suggested. Students are strongly encouraged to use the Graduate Theological Union's Library to access some of these resources.

Course Instructor: The class will be taught by Rev. Christine Fry, an ordained Unitarian Universalist minister and Assistant Professor of Spiritual Practice and Care at Starr King. Chris has been teaching at SKSM since 2004 offering classes like this one ("Illness, Health, and Healing") plus "Forgiveness and Moral Repair"; "Families and Spiritual Practice" and "Spiritual Practices in These Times."

Chris is an inflammatory breast cancer survivor. She facilitated "Write for Health" groups in homeless programs, recovery groups, jails, hospitals, congregations and in her own home for more than twenty years.

Chris lives in Davis, California with her husband, Isao Fujimoto, a retired UC Davis professor and long-time community activist. Their daughter, Esumi, was born while Chris was a SKSM student. She is now a registered nurse and activist specializing in maternal and infant health and midwifery.

Virtual Office Hours: Chris is a part-time faculty member, working 15 hours per week, Monday – Thursday. Chris is available via zoom or phone by advance appointment. She is also available through e-mail at cfry@sksm.edu.

Fall 2020 Calendar

September 8 – 13: Living in a Time of Pandemic

September 14 - 20: The Wounded Storyteller

September 28 – October 4: Poetic Medicine

October 5 – 11: Health and Healing for Spiritual Leaders

October 12 – 18: Living with Chronic Illness

October 19 – 25: Healing Arts, Movement & Rituals

October 26 – *November 1: Reading Week*

November 2 – 8: Speaking the Language of Healing

November 9 – 15: Bi-Polar Lives

November 16 – 22: Awake at the Bedside

November 23 – 29: Family, Friends, and Caregivers

November 30 – December 6: An Empty Cradle

December 7 – 13: Black Mothers Matter

December 14 – 18: Reflecting on What We Have Learned

Some Suggested Books & Films

Please note: You do **NOT** have to read all of these books nor watch all of the films listed below. Instead, **students will select TWO books, FOUR films, or some combination thereof** from this list to read and/or watch over the course of the semester and then share their reflections on them in class. Students may also substitute different books or films with the instructor's prior approval. [Prices listed are from Amazon. Books and films may be cheaper if bought used and/or from other sources.]

September 8-13:

Living in a Time of Pandemic

Suggested Books:

Haupt, Jennifer (ed). Alone Together: Love, Grief and Comfort in the Time of COVID-19 (to be released Sept. 1, 2020). \$16.99
ISBN: 9781771682282

Samuel, Rabbi Michael Leo. God and the Pandemic: A Judaic Reflection on the Coronavirus (2020). \$14.95 ISBN:
9781506909288

Strub, Sean. Body Counts: A Memoir of Politics, Sex, AIDS and Survival (2014). \$3.00 ASIN: BOOBSAZ6PA

Suggested Films:

Influenza of 1918 (2016) Amazon Prime Video

*In This Together: A PBS American Portrait (documentary of how covid-19 is affecting people's lives and the nation), 2020.
Amazon Prime Video \$5.99 rental*

September 14-20:

The Wounded Storyteller

Suggested Books:

Khakpour, Porochista. Sick: A Memoir (2018). \$15.99
ISBN:978006242873.

Methot, Suzanne. Legacy: Trauma, Story, and Indigenous Healing (2019). \$16.10 ISBN: 9781770414259

Taylor, Jill Bolte. My Stroke of Insight: A Brain Scientist's Personal Journey (2006) \$9.00. ASIN: B00XI0S6K8

Suggested Films:

Jean-Dominique Bauby, The Diving Bell and the Butterfly
[\$6.00 ASIN: B00XI056K8]

Southern Comfort (2001). A documentary of Robert Eads, a transgender man diagnosed with ovarian cancer.

September 28 – October 4:

Poetic Medicine

Suggested Books:

Campo, Rafael. What the Body Told (1996). \$22.95 ISBN: 9780822317425

Nepo, Mark. Surviving Has Made Me Crazy (2007). \$16.20 ISBN: 9781933880013

Perillo, Lucia. I've Heard the Vultures Singing: Field Notes on Poetry, Illness, and Nature (2009). \$8.65 ISBN-10: 1595340580

Suggested Films:

Healing Words: Poetry & Medicine with John Fox
[\$16.00 ASIN: B001CR49AM]

Poetry (2010). Drama about a 60-something woman faced with the discovery of a family crime and in the early stages of Alzheimer's, who finds strength and purpose in a poetry class. Amazon Prime Video.

October 5 -11:

Health & Healing for Spiritual Leaders

Suggested Books:

Earle, Rev. Mary C. Broken Body, Healing Spirit: Lectio Divina and Living with Illness (2003) \$14.00 ASIN: B00ADVUDW6

Proeschold-Bell, Rae Jean and Jason Byassee. Faithful and Fractured (2018). \$12.28 ISBN: 9780801098833

Taylor, Sonya Renee. The Body Is Not an Apology: The Power of Radical Self-Love (2018). \$17.95 ISBN: 9781626569768

Suggested Films:

Ram Dass: Fierce Grace \$16.00 ASIN: B00008DDV1

The Departure (2017). A former punk-turned-Buddhist priest in Japan has made a career out of helping suicidal people find reasons to live but at a heavy personal cost. Amazon Prime Video \$3.99 rental.

October 12-18: Living with Chronic Illness

Suggested Books:

Bailey, Elisabeth Tova. The Sound of a Wild Snail Eating (2016). \$ 14.95 ISBN: 9781565126060

Cohen, Darlene. Finding a Joyful Life in the Heart of Pain: A Meditative Approach to Living with Physical, Emotional, or Spiritual Suffering (2000). \$24.95 ISBN: 1570624674

Simmons, Philip. Learning to Fall: The Blessings of an Imperfect Life (2003). \$12.95 ISBN: 055338158x

Suggested Films:

Cake (2015). Drama of woman living with chronic pain featuring Jennifer Aniston. Amazon Prime Video.

Mystery Diagnosis – Season 4 (2007). Discovery Health follows the investigation of medical mysteries from emergence of symptoms through agonizing tests to the pursuit of a final diagnosis. Amazon Prime Video.

October 19 -25:

Healing Arts, Movement, and Rituals

Suggested Books:

Flatt, Robert. Healing Art: Don't Let Anything Ruin Your Day (2016). \$10.89 ISBN: 9781942945253

Epstein, Nadine and Rosita Arvigo. Spiritual Bathing: Healing Rituals and Traditions from Around the World (2018). \$22.95 ISBN: 9781635615593

Kucera, Sarah. The Ayurvedic Self-Care Handbook: Holistic Healing Rituals for Every Day and Season (2019). \$11.49 ISBN: 9781615195435

Suggested Films:

Healing Quest (2014). Season 12. Documentary of integrative health and natural approaches to well-being. Amazon Prime Video.

Wyoma: African Healing Dance (1998). \$9.57 ASIN B0000AGQ6D

October 26 – November 1: Reading Week

November 2 -8:

Speak the Language of Healing

Suggested Books:

Kuner, Susan and Carol Orsborn, Linda Quigley, and Karen Stroup. Speak the Language of Healing: Living with Breast Cancer Without Going to War (1999). \$3.00 ISBN-10: 1573241687

Lorde, Audre. The Cancer Journals (2006). \$13.00 ASIN: B00C5UM2PE

Nielsen, Emilia. Disrupting Breast Cancer Narratives: Stories of Rage and Repair (2019). \$39.95 ISBN: 9781487504373

Suggested Films:

Last Days (2019). Widow struggling to make ends meet is diagnosed with breast cancer. Amazon Prime Video

Why I Wore Lipstick to My Mastectomy (2019). A drama/comedy about a twenty-seven year old woman diagnosed with breast cancer in the midst of her busy, promising life. Amazon Prime Video.

November 9 -15:

Bi-Polar Lives

Suggested Books:

Coleman, Monica. Bipolar Faith: A Black Woman's Journey with Depression and Faith (2016). \$17.11 ISBN-10: 1506408591

Hazzard, Vanessa and Iresha Picot (eds). The Color of Hope: People of Color Mental Health Narratives (2015). \$9.99

Moezzi, Melody. Haldol and Hyacinth: A Bi-Polar Life (2013) \$13.53 ASIN: B00AGWOVGG

Suggested Films:

Infinitely Polar Bear (2015) \$3.99 Amazon Rental

Touched with Fire (2016). *Bipolar poets begin a romance. Spike Lee is the executive producer.*

November 16-22:

Awake at the Bedside

Suggested Books:

Ellison, Koshin Paley. Awake at the Bedside: Contemporary Teachings on Palliative and End of Life Care (2016). \$13.56 ASIN: B0I7I22DZW

Gawande, Atul. Being Mortal: Medicine and What Matters in the End (2017). \$8.80 ISBN-10: 1250076226

Kalanithi, Paul. When Breath Becomes Air (2016). \$11.82
ISBN-10: 081298840X

Suggested Films:

The Farewell (2019). Family returns to China to say goodbye to their beloved matriarch who has not been told she is dying.
Amazon Prime Video.

Seven Songs for a Long Life (2016). A documentary on music in a hospice setting. Amazon Prime Video.

November 23 - 29 :

Family, Friends & Caregivers

Feiler, Bruce. The Council of Dads: My Daughters, My Illness, and the Men Who Could Be Me (2010). \$2.00 ASIN: B003M3LHS

Housden, Maria. Hannah's Gift: Lessons from a Life Fully Lived (2002). \$10.00. ISBN-10: 0553381221

Sheehy, Gail. Passages in Caregiving: Turning Chaos into Confidence (2011). \$10.99 ISBN: 9780061661211

Suggested Films:

Council of Dads, Season One (2020) \$1.99 per episode or \$16.99 per season Amazon rental

Diane (2019). A spiritual movie about a caregiver's life. Amazon Prime Video.

November 30 – December 6:

An Empty Cradle

Suggested Books:

Glenn, Amy Wright. Birth, Breath & Death: Meditations on Motherhood, Chaplaincy and Life as a Doula (2013). \$13.00
ASIN: BOOBYE242M

O'Hearn, Patrick and Cassie Everts. Nursery of Heaven: Miscarriage, Still Birth, and Infant Loss in the Lives of the Saints and Today's Parents (2019). \$15.00 ISBN: 9781734149302

Smith, Angie. I Will Carry You: The Sacred Dance of Grief and Joy (2010). \$11.06 ISBN-10: 080546428X

Suggested Films:

Don't Talk About the Baby (2018). Documentary on the cultural stigmas surrounding pregnancy loss and infertility. Amazon Prime Video.

Return to Zero (2014). Based on a true story, film shows a couple preparing for their first child. Just weeks before their due date, they discover their son has died in the womb and will be stillborn. Amazon Prime Video.

December 7 – 13:

Black Mothers Matter

Suggested Books:

Greenfield, Eloise. The Women Who Caught the Babies: A Story of African American Midwives (2019). \$17.95 ISBN: 9780997772074

Oparah, Julia Chinyere et.al. Battling Over Birth: Black Women and the Maternal Health Crisis (2017). \$19.71 ISBN: 9781946665119

Wells, Keisha. From Three Heartbeats to One: A Gentle Companion Offering Hope with Infant Loss (2019). \$14.99 ISBN: 9781734149302

Suggested Films:

No Woman, No Cry. Documentary on maternal deaths and disabilities. Amazon Prime Videos.

When the Bough Breaks. A documentary on how racism gets embedded in the body and affects birth outcomes. Part of a four hour documentary by PBS called Unnatural Causes: Is Inequality Making Us Sick?.

December 14 - 18:

Reflecting on What We Have Learned

