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...

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:


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:


Suggested Films:

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

September 28 – October 4:

Poetic Medicine

Suggested Books:


Suggested Films:

*Healing Words: Poetry & Medicine with John Fox* [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:


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:


Suggested Films:


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:


Suggested Films:

October 26 – November 1: Reading Week

November 2 -8:

Speak the Language of Healing

Suggested Books:


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


Suggested Films:

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

November 9 - 15:

Bi-Polar Lives

Suggested Books:


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:


**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.*


**November 23 - 29:**

**Family, Friends & Caregivers**


Suggested Films:

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


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


Suggested Films:


*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:


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