

**Pastoral Care Through  
The Life Cycle  
CL 683**

*Fall Semester*

**United Theological Seminary**

**New Brighton, MN**

**Thursday: 1:30 – 4:45**

**Classroom E**

**COURSE DESCRIPTION**

Care giving is a ministry to people, relationships and communities that extends through the ecstasies and exigencies of life as well as the “ordinary times” of human experience. The course will examine various understandings of the concept of the “life cycle” and pay particular attention to the historical development of that concept. Attention will be focused in the course on critical times of transition in people’s lives where intentional care giving is needed. A wide spectrum of care through the utilization of counseling, rituals, “marking milestones” and the concomitant sense of joy or sorrow or both that accompany such transitions and changes will be considered.

**COURSE OBJECTIVES**

- A. To consider the various angles of vision and approaches to the understanding of the life cycle from a historical perspective.
- B. To identify the dynamics operative in the varying developmental tasks throughout the span of human life.
- C. To give attention to the theological, biblical and psycho-social aspects of varying life experiences that span the course of human existence.
- D. To consider the role of the faith community in recognizing, affirming, commiserating and/or celebrating these varying experiences.
- E. To become more fully aware of the cultural and social dimensions of evolving persons, households, communities and societies in the post-modern era.
- F. To explore new ways in which congregational care can be planned and implemented within a given ecclesiastical context.

**COURSE TEXTS**

- A. Borysenko, Joan. *A Woman’s Book of Life: The Biology, Psychology and Spirituality of the Feminine Life Cycle*. New York: Berkley Pub. Co., a Division of Penguin Putnam Inc., 1996.
- B. Jones, Paul W. *Theological Worlds: Understanding Alternative Rhythms of Christian Belief*. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1999.

- C. Schweitzer, Friedrich. *The Postmodern Life Cycle: Challenges for Church and Theology*. St. Louis: Chalice Press, 2004.

## **COURSE BIBLIOGRAPHY (separate handout)**

## **COURSE REQUIREMENTS**

- A. Attendance at class and participation in small group discussions. ***More than two unexcused absences constitutes failure for the course.***
- B. Reading the assigned material in the syllabus for each class session.
- C. “Life Review Personal Paper.” 5-6 pages (double spaced)  
 In this paper you are asked to do a review of your own life up until this point in your own life. The following questions may be considered as possible guidelines for your paper.
1. What significant “stories,” “events,” and “experiences” from my childhood have been most formative in shaping my understanding of life at this point in time?
  2. What “role” if any, did your experience inside a faith community contribute or detract from your emerging self understanding?
  3. What dynamics in your ‘household’ (both positive and negative) contributed to your current understanding of who you are as a person?
  4. What relationships have been most important in determining your theology/philosophy of life? Please include any significant intergenerational relationships.
  5. How might you imagine how your “life history” will impact the way you do ministry with others?

**DUE: September 24**

- D. Participation in Small Group work during the course of the semester.
- E. Book Review: **Book of your Choice – Dealing with Life Cycle Issues** (4-5 pages, double spaced)  
**DUE: October 22**
- F. Final Project/Paper for the Course (options) (8-10 pages double spaced)
1. Develop an “art project” relating to the “meaning of life” as it evolves from your understanding and theology of life. This may be “original art” from your own creativity, or a collection of significant art expressions with accompanying explanations. Include also the theological and care

giving dimensions relevant to what is depicted in the art work.  
(8 -10 pages including explanatory text)

2. Develop a curricular project to be used in a congregational setting that addresses issues of the life cycle as a whole, ***or*** some particular aspect of the life cycle: e.g., you may wish to focus on infancy, early childhood, childhood, school age, adolescence, young adulthood, adulthood or old age. Indicate how you would ‘advertise’ this kind of a course for the congregation and why you chose the particular focus for the course.
  - a. Concentrate on the principle issues you see as being important in the whole of the life cycle, ***or*** that are relevant for the particular categories noted above, if you have chosen one focal area.
  - b. There should be ***four sessions*** that include the following:
    - 1) Title for each of the sessions
    - 2) Objectives to be attained
    - 3) Content and method of approach/teaching
    - 4) Salient theological/care giving issues
    - 5) Resources and activities to be utilized
    - 6) Appropriate closing/assignments if any for the class
  - c. Indicate how you would “***evaluate***” the course and if you would do any “follow up” after the course was completed.  
(8 – 10 pages double spaced for the four sessions)
  
3. Research Paper
  - a. Do a research paper on your understanding of the cycle of life from cradle to grave within your cultural and social context. Include the relevant issues, concerns, dynamics and problems that you would address. Indicate how you think about these matters theologically and from the perspective of a care giver.
  
  - b. A research paper that focuses on one particular dimension of the cycle of life whether that be infancy, early childhood, childhood, school age, adolescence, young adulthood, adulthood or old age. Include the relevant issues, concerns, dynamics and problems that you would address. Indicate how you think about this time in life theologically and from the perspective of a care giver.  
(8 -10 pages double spaced with appropriate documentation and other considerations associated with a research paper.)
  
4. Art Project
  - a. this is recommended primarily for people who may be in the ‘theology and the arts’ track, though it is not limited to such people.
  - b. Develop an art project that is reflective of either the whole life cycle, OR a particular segment of the life cycle that interests you as a student.

- c. The project should include a brief paper that explains your project relative to:
- 1) what is the genesis or origin of the project/
  - 2) how is it that this project integrates the topic of life cycle with the arts?
  - 3) What particular theological issues are addressed by the project?
  - 4) How might this project inform or be utilized in your ministry?

**FINAL PROJECT DUE: December 21**

**COURSE SCHEDULE**

September 17	Introduction to the course, discussion of the syllabus, course requirements, expectations and logistics. Preliminary consideration of and definitions for “life cycle” studies as they have developed historically. The role of “care giving” within this framework of ministry.
September 24	Theological Perspective on Life as a Backdrop for Life Cycle considerations. <b>Required Reading: Jones, Introduction and Chapter 1</b> <b>Due: Personal Life Review Paper – Come Prepared to Share What You are “COMFORTABLE” sharing with the class.</b>
October 1	Theological Worlds – Personal and Professional Concerns. <b>Required Reading: Jones, Chapters 2-5</b>
October 8	Historical Survey of Life Cycle Theories – I  The instructor will provide information historically from various theorists relating to the life cycle understanding. <b>Required Reading: Schweitzer, Intro./Chap. 1</b>
October 15	Historical Survey of Life Cycle Theories – II  The instructor will provide information historically from Various theorists relating to the life cycle understanding. <b>Required Reading: TBA</b>
October 22	Critique and discussion of historical paradigms as they

relate to the postmodern era. A particular focus will be on gender issues and other salient considerations that impact an understanding of evolving life.

**Required Reading: Borysenko, Intro. & Chap. 1**

**DUE: Review of the Book of your Choice**

**October 29**

**NO CLASS – HAPPY READING WEEK!**

November 5

The significance of birth and childhood in the context of the household and the impact of that events on significant others. The rituals surrounding birth/childhood and incorporation into the community of faith as well as the wider community will be considered.

**Required Reading: Schweitzer, Chap. 2  
Borysenko, Chap. 2 & 3**

November 12

The concept of “adolescence” in the life of each person and its impact on the household will be discussed. The implications for ministry and proactive approaches to adolescence will be discussed.

**Required Reading: Schweitzer, Chap. 3  
Borysenko, Chap. 4**

November 19

The “new category” of ‘postadolescence. What does this entail? What considerations are given for this particular category? What are the salient issues and concerns for this period of life?

**Required Reading: Schweitzer, Chap. 4  
Borysenko, Chap. 5**

**November 26**

**NO CLASS - HAPPY THANKSGIVING!**

December 3

Adulthood with its varied tasks.

**Required Reading: Schweitzer, Chap. 5  
Borysenko, Chap. 6-9**

December 10

Viewing of Michael Moore’s film SICKO on health care in the U.S.

December 17

“The Third Age”

**Required Reading: Schweitzer, Chap.6  
Borysenko, Chap. 10-11**

December 21

The significance of Aging

**Required Reading: Schweitzer, Chap. 7**

**Borysenko, Chap. 12-13**

Class wrap up  
Final questions and concerns

(Final Class is Monday evening to compensate for the Thanksgiving Break!)

**DUE: Final Project Paper****COURSE GRADING**

- A. Attendance in class along with completing the reading assignments for each evening.  
*More than two unexcused absences constitutes failure for the course.*
- B. Quality of the assigned papers *submitted on time!*
- C. Participation in small group process
- D. Quality of the final project submitted for the course.

There will be no exams in the course.

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Office Hours:

Monday:	1:30 – 4:30
Wednesday	2:30 – 4:30
Thurs.	10:30 - 11:30

**Other Times By Special Appointment**