

THE AMERICAN NATIONAL CATHOLIC



THEOLOGICAL INSTITUTE

ANCTI Syllabus for TH 122: Pastoral Counseling I: Christian Death and Ministry to the Dying and Bereaved

Fall 2025: Saturdays @ 11:00 AM ET (8:00 PT) on Zoom # 850-3838-0777

Instructor: Rev. Fr. Richard S. Sinacola, MSW. M. Div., Ph.D., Licensed Psychologist

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This course offers the ANCTI seminarian or student an opportunity to develop basic pastoral counseling skills with a special emphasis on death, dying, and grief counseling. It is intended to educate those entering ministry on counseling techniques and resources used to assist parishioners and others in our roles as priest, deacon, pastor and/or spiritual advisor.

Course Objectives:

At the conclusion of this course, the student will:

1. Develop a better understanding of the issues faced by those experiencing grief and loss.
2. Have an understanding and ability to apply basic yet appropriate counseling techniques to facilitate an effective listening and pastoral relationship.
3. Demonstrate through classroom discussion and written assignments a working knowledge of counseling skills and sensitivity in working with parishioners and others seeking counsel and guidance on issues related to loss.

Required texts:

James, J., & Friedman, R. (2009). *The grief recovery handbook*. New York: William Morrow.

Leonard, R. (2010). *Where the hell is God*. South Bend: Paulist Press

Sandberg, S., & Grant, A. (2017). *Option B*. New York: Alfred A Knopf.

Strongly recommended: Those marked with an * are highly recommended.

*Benner, D. (2003). *Strategic pastoral counseling: A short term structured model (2nd. Ed.)*.

Grand Rapids: Baker Academic Press

Carkhuff, R. (2000). *The art of helping*. Amherst: Human Resource Development Press.

Doehring, C. (2015). *The practice of pastoral care: A post-modern approach*. Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press.

Hickman, M. (1994). *Healing after loss*. New York: William Morrow

Lebacqz, K. & Driskill, J. (2000). *Ethics and spiritual care*. Nashville: Abingdon Press.

Levine, S. (2005). *Unattended sorrow*. New York: Hurst Communications.

*Lewis, C.S. (1961). *A grief observed*. New York: Harper One.

Oates, W. (1976). *Pastoral care and counseling in grief and separation*. Philadelphia: Fortress Press.

Pargament, K. (1997). *The psychology of religion and coping*. New York: The Guilford Press.

*Schupp, L. (2003). *Grief: Normal, complicated, traumatic*. Eau Claire: Pesi Healthcare Publications.

*Seager, S. (2020) *The smallest lights in the universe*. New York: Random House.

Sinacola, R. (2000). *Professional counselors in private practice*. Gulf Shores: Learning Publications. (available on Amazon).

Sinacola, R. (2017). Spirituality and Mental Health. *Audio Digest Psychology*, 6, 15.

Sinacola, R., Peters-Strickland, T., & Wyner, J. (2020). *Basic psychopharmacology for mental health professionals (3rd Ed.)* Boston: Pearson.

Sinacola, R. (2024). *The five Cs of a healthy relationship*. San Diego: Cognella Academic Publishers.

*Walsh-Burke, K. (2006). *Grief and loss: Theories and Skills for helping professionals*. Boston: Pearson.

*Weinberg, G. (1984). *The heart of psychotherapy*. New York: St. Martin's Press.

Assignments:

In order for the student to receive a passing grade in this course, he/she must complete and receive a passing grade on all three assignments:

1. Regular and active attendance in the class. The student should attend all lectures with his/her camera on and actively participate in discussions on the topic of the day. If a student misses more than

one class session, he or she may not receive a passing grade for this assignment. Clergy and all students are encouraged to actively share experiences and expertise during class. If a student is taking the course via distance learning, the student is expected to watch all recorded lectures and answer all discussion questions posted on-line. He or she is also expected to attend the three Zoom discussions scheduled during the semester and actively participate in the conversation about what they learned. The student is expected to touch base with the instructor at least three times during the course for individual feedback and assessment.

2. Prepare a 20 minute summary lecture of one of the resources, books, or articles mentioned in the reference list of this course. The student may prepare a PowerPoint to be used along with his or her lecture. Check with instructor so there are no duplicates on topics. This lecture should include a general summary of the work and specific passages or techniques the student found helpful along with how he or she plans to use them in counseling. This is due and will be presented on the last day of class.

3. Research and prepare a two page summary of helpful scripture and/or prayers that could be used in a grief counseling session with a client or parishioner. Be prepared to share this with the entire class. This is due on the last class period. Submit this paper to the instructor.

Grading scale: A= excellent, B=good, C= passing, F= needs improvement but a failing grade.

Course Schedule: (The instructor reserves the right to alter the schedule as needed).

Week One: (10-11-25) Introduction to the course and introduction to basic counseling skills. See Carkhuff (2000), Sinicola (2000), and Weinberg (1984) for additional reading.

Week Two: (10-18) An overview on ethics. See Lebacqz & Driskill (2000), Sinicola (2000) and Weinberg (1984).

Week Three: (10-25) How is Grief and Loss defined and assessed? The five tasks of grieving. See Benner (2003), James and Friedman (2009), Walsh-Burke (2006) and Sinicola (2017) and (2020) for additional reading.

Week Four: (11-1) The stages of loss. Pastoral counseling versus spiritual direction versus psychotherapy: The prudence of referral for further assessment or medication if needed. See James and Friedman (2009), Sandberg & Grant (2017), and Sinicola (2017,2020,2024).

Week Five: (11-8) Beginning the relationship and addressing grief. See Brenner (2003), James and Friedman (2009), for additional reading.

Week Six: (11-15) Specific techniques and counseling approaches. Typical guidelines for sessions 1-5. Dealing with guilt and assessing for suicide and other mental health concerns. See James and Friedman (2009), Sinicola (2020).

Week Seven: (11-22) Address anger issues with God. See Leonard (2010) for additional reading.

Week Eight: (11-29) Thanksgiving weekend. No class this week.

Week Nine: (12-6) Present summaries of student research. Student lectures on selected readings. Course conclusion and final thoughts. (This may run a few minutes longer than usual).