

Faculty profile - Dr. Darcy Harris

Dr. Darcy Harris has worked in the areas of cancer care, hospice, grief counselling, and caregiver support as clinician, administrative leader, researcher, and educator throughout her career. She has published numerous books and articles on topics related to coping with loss, change, and grief, and she is a frequent speaker and presenter on topics for professionals and supportive care organizations.



Dr. Harris' current research interests include issues in grief and loss, non-death losses and grief, professional issues for caregivers, and the role of compassion in care delivery organizations.

Dr. Harris is currently involved in a number of community and professional organizations. She has served on the board of directors for the Association for Death Education and Counselling, currently serves as a board member for St. Joseph's Healthcare in London. She is the past chair and a current member of the London Grief and Loss Resource Committee, and she is a member of the International Work Group on Death, Dying, and Bereavement. She is also a recipient of the Death Educator award from the Association for Death Education and Counselling.

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For more information

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Thanatology

The Thanatology program is unique to King's; it is the only university in North America to offer a BA in Thanatology. The program gives students several degree options such as a major, combining it with another discipline for an honours double major, or a minor in Thanatology while majoring in a complementary subject (i.e., CSI, SJP or Psychology). Many of our courses are available on-line, and our program incorporates various teaching modalities including in-class instruction, blended learning and experiential learning.

The program offers a wide variety of courses including an overview of bereavement and grief, ethical issues, palliative care, suicide, children and death, spiritual and philosophical issues, change and transition, popular culture, grief and trauma, and diversity and social justice. In addition, the program offers a practicum course which includes a 45-hour field placement, and a grief counselling course which involves experiential learning of basic counselling skills.

Interested students can also join the Thanatology club known as the Than Clan, whose goal is to provide educational knowledge to students regarding death, dying and bereavement through interactive social settings. They have hosted a Death Cafe, lectures around grief and spirituality, and offered G.R.A.C.E. training, among other things.



Courses

The introductory Thanatology course is Survey of Thanatology (2200) and is taken in second year. The course is designed to introduce students to the various specialized courses that are offered within the program. The survey course includes a wide range of topics dealing with death, grief and loss, including:

- Understanding death awareness
- Ethical issues at end of life care
- Palliative care
- How children cope with grief and loss
- The role of the media
- Understanding suicide
- Popular culture and portrayals of death
- Current trends in the funeral industry
- Non-death losses and grief

Anyone interested in learning more about grief and loss is welcome to take Survey of Thanatology. Also, given the interdisciplinary nature of Thanatology, students in CSI, Social Work, SJP, Psychology and Nursing find this course to be a highly informative addition to their program, as learning to cope with loss underlies many of the challenges that we face.

Career options

A degree in Thanatology prepares students to pursue graduate education or work in many fields. Students from our program have developed careers in health care, counselling, spiritual care, research and education. In addition, students from our program have gone on to pursue further education in various areas including:

- Social Work
- Nursing
- Child Life Specialist
- Counselling Psychology
- Pastoral Counselling
- Education (teacher's college)
- Hospice & Palliative Care

What students have to say

"As Program Director at Wellspring Cancer Support Centre, the Thanatology program has offered me a multi-faceted approach and deep understanding of how grief and loss can have a huge impact not only through the loss of life, but loss of health, job, or relationships, and how to best support people dealing with loss throughout the life span."
*Daniel Lockwood
Wellspring*



"Even though the Thanatology program was not my initial reason for attending King's, I would not trade my experience for anything else! My professors are incredible because not only are they great teachers, they also bring real world experience into the classroom as the majority of them have worked in the field. I believe that through the Thanatology program I have learned one of life's most important lessons at an early age. It has taught me to truly appreciate each day and the people and things that I cherish the most. Studying death and dying has given me life."
*Jeelise Allen
4th year International Student from Bermuda*

