Visions and Voices and the USC Libraries have collaborated to create a series of resource guides that allow you to build on your experiences at many Visions and Voices events. Explore the resources listed below and continue your journey of inquiry and discovery!

Dying Well: The Meaning and Value of Death
A Lecture by Ira Byock, MD

USC LIBRARIES RESOURCE GUIDE

As part of the Medical Humanities series of events organized by Pamela Schaff and Erin Quinn of Keck School of Medicine of USC and Hilary Schor of USC College and USC, Visions and Voices presents a lecture by Ira Byock, MD, entitled Dying Well: The Meaning and Value of Death. To help you pursue Byock’s reflections on death, grief and the fullness of living, Ross Scimeca of the USC Libraries has selected the following resources.

Introduction

Alfred Doeblin’s novel Berlin Alexanderplatz contains a number of interesting meditations on death and meaning in human life. After a lifetime of misadventures, the main character, Franz Biberkopf, finds himself at an institution for the criminally insane. When Death appears in his cell, Franz asks him why he exists. Death replies that human existence would be meaningless without Death. Man is the only animal that knows every living creature will eventually die—including loved ones, friends and the self. Death’s point is that the wise, unlike Franz, realize this and plan their lives accordingly. By contrast, Franz lived an unreflective life; accidents, rather than intentions, directed his actions.

Doeblin presents these existential themes in a naturalistic way through the novel’s dialogue between Franz and Death. Martin Heidegger, Jean-Paul Sartre and Albert Camus, among countless other philosophers and writers, meditate on similar themes. In this philosophical tradition, death evokes the idea of nothingness and reveals the urgency of creating meaning in human existence. As in Berlin Alexanderplatz, the confrontation with death is a necessary precondition for the self-conscious creation of meaning.

Further Reading in Medicine and Philosophy

*Ending Life: Ethics and the Way We Die*
By M. Pabst Battin
- Online Library R726.B329 2005eb
- Doheny Library R726.B329 2005

*What Is the Meaning of Human Life?*
By Raymond Belliotti
- Philosophy Library BD431.B389 2001

*Dying Well: The Prospect for Growth at the End of Life*
By Ira Byock
- Gerontology Library HQ1073.B96 1997

*Death and Western Thought*
By Jacques Choron
- Gerontology Library BD444.45 1963B

*The Right to Die with Dignity: An Argument in Ethics, Medicine, and Law*
By Raphael Cohen-Almagor
- Leav y and VKC Libraries R726.C635 2001

*Death and Spirituality*
By Kenneth J. Doka
- Gerontology Library BT825.D37 1993

*The Philosophy of Death*
By Steven Luper
- Gerontology Library BD444.L87 2009

*Readings in Thanatology*
Edited by Josh D. Morgan
- Gerontology Library BD443.B43 1997

*Facing Death: Where Culture, Religion, and Medicine Meet*
Edited by Howard M. Spiro
- Doheny and Leav ey Libraries R726.8.F33 1996

*The Quest to Die with Dignity: An Analysis of Americans’ Values, Opinions and Attitudes concerning End-of-Life Care*
By Beverly A. Tyler
- Doheny and Gerontology Libraries R726.8.Q47 1997

*The Good Death: The New American Search to Reshape the End of Life*
By Marilyn Webb
- Leav ey Library HQ1073.S.U6W43 1997

Continued
Recommended Journals

To access the following e-journals, enter their titles into the search box from the E-Journals tab at www.usc.edu/libraries. From within the online journals, search for key words such as dying, dignity, end-of-life care, death AND meaning, death AND value, bereavement, and the like.

- American Journal of Bioethics
- Death Studies
- Ethics & Medicine: A Christian Perspective on Issues in Bioethics
- The Internet Journal of Law, Healthcare, and Ethics
- The Journal of Bioethics
- The Journal of Clinical Ethics
- The Journal of Law, Medicine, and Ethics
- The Journal of Medical Humanities
- The Journal of Medical Humanities and Bioethics
- The Journal of Medicine and Philosophy
- Medical Ethics
- Medical Humanities
- Omega: An International Journal for the Study of Dying, Death, Bereavement, Suicide, and Other Lethal Behaviors
- Philosophy, Ethics, and Humanities in Medicine
- Yale Journal of Health Policy, Law, and Ethics

Death in Literature and Film

There is a great deal of literature and film that explores the human experience—and the meaning—of death and grieving. Below are just a few of the works that will help you continue exploring the universal themes in Dr. Byock’s lecture.

- A Death in the Family
  By James Agee
  - Doheny Library PS3501.G35D43 1998

- The Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse
  By Vicente Blasco Ibanez
  - Leavey Library PQ6603.L2C813 1924

- The Plague
  By Albert Camus
  - Leavey Library PQ2605.A3734P413 1948

- The Seventh Seal (based on Bergman’s play Wood Painting)
  By Ingmar Bergman
  - Leavey Library LVYDvd 680

- The Death of Ivan Ilych
  By Leo Tolstoy
  - Doheny Library PG3366.S6D74 2008

- Our Lady of the Assassins (based on Fernando Vallejo’s novel La virgin de los sicarios)
  By Barbet Schroeder
  - Leavey Library LVYDvd 1165