

“The mission of Tyndale Seminary is to provide Christ-centred graduate theological education for leaders in the church and society whose lives are marked by intellectual maturity, spiritual vigour and moral integrity, and whose witness will faithfully engage culture with the Gospel.”

Semester, Year	FALL, 2025
Course Title	THANATOLOGY SKILLS LAB
Course Code	PAST TH57 1S
Date	From September 9, 2025 to December 2, 2025 EVERY TUESDAY
Time	From 8:15 to 11:05 AM
Delivery Format	SYNCHRONOUS ONLINE
Class information	The classes will be LIVESTREAMED on TUESDAYS from 8:15 to 11:05 am.
Instructor	LYNDSAY THOMPSON, DMin, RP Email: lthompson@tyndale.ca
Office Hours	By appointment only.
Course Materials	Access course material at classes.tyndale.ca or other services at Tyndale One . Course emails will be sent to your @MyTyndale.ca e-mail account only.

I. COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course is designed to educate and equip students enrolled in the study of Pastoral Thanatology with the basic skills required for effective and ethical grief companioning. This course involves 3 hours of weekly in-class lecture, demonstration and role-playing exercises which will give each student hands on experience practicing the basic skills required to journey with an individual through season of grief. The course will also review the implementation of Biblical resources such as prayer, scripture and the importance of spiritual formation during the companioning process. This course has a strong emphasis on Safe and Effective Use of Self (SEUS), self-care and spiritual growth for both the student and those they will be companioning.

Exclusion: COUN 0601 & 0602

II. LEARNING OUTCOMES

At the end of the course, students will be able to:

1. Demonstrate a beginning comprehension of skills involved in active listening in order to respond appropriately to the unique situations of those with whom the student is companioning through seasons for grief.
2. Show an ability to recall and demonstrate a basic use of skills related to the companioning process. This also includes the appropriate use of Biblical resources and skills that enhance pastoral companioning in the field of Thanatology.
3. Recognize basic concerns that may arise in the companioning process and demonstrate how to effectively assess and address them.
4. Evaluate the basic differences, needs and context of each individual and demonstrate the appropriate and ethical use of skills for each unique case. This includes the use of both clinical and Biblical skills to companion and bring hope.
5. Develop a deeper sense of self-awareness, Safe and Effective Use of Self (SEUS) and spiritual formation as it applies to each individual both in and out of a companioning session

III. COURSE REQUIREMENTS

A. REQUIRED READING

Brown, J. (1997). [The question cube: A model for developing questions repertoire in training couples and family therapists](#). *Journal of Marital and Family Therapy*, 23, 27-40.

Wolfelt, Alan D. (2012). [Companioning you!: A soulful guide to caring for yourself while you care for the dying and the bereaved](#). Fort Collins: Companion Press. [ISBN: 978-1-61722-166-8]

Wolfelt, Alan D. (2016). [Counselling skills for companioning the mourner: The fundamentals of effective grief counselling](#). Fort Collins: Companion Press. [ISBN: 978-1-61722-230-6]

B. SUPPLEMENTARY / RECOMMENDED READING AND TOOLS

Ivey, A. and Ivey, M, Zalaquett, C. (2010). *Intentional interviewing and counselling: Facilitating client development in a multicultural society* (7th ed.). Pacific Grove, CA: Brooks/Cole. [ISBN-10: 0495601233 ISBN-13: 9780495601234]

Kosminsky, Phyllis, and John R. Jordan. (2016). *Attachment-informed grief therapy: The clinician's guide to foundations and applications*. New York: Routledge/Taylor & Francis Group.

O'Connor, Mary-Frances. (2022). *The grieving brain: The surprising science of how we learn from love and loss*. First edition. New York, NY: HarperOne, an imprint of HarperCollinsPublishers.

SUPPLEMENTARY READING AND TOOLS

- Chestnut, Beatrice (2013). [*The complete enneagram: 27 paths to greater self-knowledge*](#). Berkley: She Writes Press. [ISBN: 978-1-938315-54-4]
- Chron, I. M. (2016). [*The road back to you: An enneagram journey to self-discovery*](#). Downers Grove: IVP Books. [ISBN: 978-0-83059-327-0]
- Winokuer, Howard R. and Harris, Darcy L. (2012). *Principle and practice of grief counseling*. Springer Publishing Company: New York. [ISBN: 978-0-8261-0872-2].
- Wolfelt, Alan D. (2018). [*When grief is complicated: A model for therapists to understand, identify and companion griever*](#). Fort Collins: Companion Press. [ISBN: 978-1-61722-258]
- Worden, J. William. (2018). [*Grief counseling and grief therapy: A handbook for the mental health practitioner. Fifth edition*](#). New York, NY: Springer Publishing Company, Inc.
- Wright, N. (2003). *The new guide to crisis & trauma counseling: A practical guide for ministers, counselors and lay counselors*. Ventura, CA: Regal Books. [ISBN-13 978-0830732418]

[Typology Podcast](#) - This podcast provides multiple narrative accounts for each type.

For further training and courses on the Enneagram:

<https://www.tyndale.ca/tsfc>

<http://insidejourneyenneagram.com>

Tyndale recommends [STEPBible](#) – a free and reputable online resource developed by Tyndale House (Cambridge, England) – for word searches of original-language texts, as well as for topical searches, interlinear texts, dictionaries, etc. Refer to the library for other [online resources for Biblical Studies](#).

C. ASSIGNMENTS AND GRADING

1. Livestream Class Participation and Required Readings: 10 % of final grade

Student participation will be graded on a scale of 1 to 4: 1 (or D): present, not disruptive; responds when called on but does not offer much; infrequent involvement; 2 (or C): adequate preparation, but no evidence of interpretation of analysis; offers straightforward information; contributes moderately when called upon; 3 (or B): good preparation, offers interpretation and analysis, contributes well to discussion in on-going fashion; 4 (or A): excellent preparation,

offers analysis, synthesis and evaluation of material; contributes significantly to ongoing discussion.

This assignment is related to Outcome #1-5.

2. SEUS and Self-Awareness Forum Discussions: 25 % of final grade (5 submissions: 2 directly to instructor, 3 forum posts. 5 x 5% = 25% of final grade)

Educational research reveals that maximum benefits in online instructional formats result when students take personal responsibilities to complete readings, engage actively (e.g. forums), and consciously contribute to a virtual learning community through a spirit of collaboration, openness and encouragement. In addition to live stream presence, “attendance” in this course is demonstrated by regular log-ins and up-to-date participation in forums.

Students will use Wolfeldt (2012), Wolfedlt (2016) texts, do their own personality study as well as incorporate the Bible and any other Biblical resources to guide them through bi-weekly discussions that promote self-awareness, safe and effective use of self (SEUS) and spiritual growth. These discussions will look specifically at how self-awareness impacts work and ministry in the field thanatology. The assignment will progress as follows:

a) Exploratory Personality Paper Due: Sept. 16, 2025:

Students are asked to begin the semester by exploring a personality typology or inventory such as the Enneagram, MBTI or any others of interest. The purpose of this is to begin the semester with a lens through which each student can begin to understand his or herself. Each student is encouraged to continue to examine their own personality throughout the semester. To begin, the student will write a 2-3 page response to the following questions:

What typology indicator have you chosen to use and why?

Upon initial exploration, what stands out about how this theory describes your personality?
What thoughts do you have about how self-awareness (such as understanding your personality) might assist you as you consider journeying with someone through seasons of grief?

In light of your initial findings, propose 2-3 questions you may have about how your specific personality may respond to, be impacted by, thrive or be challenged by interacting so close with the topics addressed in the study of thanatology.

Options:

- Myers Briggs Indicator: <https://www.mbtionline.com> or <https://www.16personalities.com>
- Enneagram: RHETI Test: www.enneagraminstitute.com
- Via Institute: <https://www.viacharacter.org>

If you have another typology you would like to explore, please discuss this with the instructor.

b) Individual Posts & Responses: Due Sept. 20, Oct. 21, Nov. 9, 2025

Over the course of the semester there will be 3 forum discussions. Each forum will have two questions. These questions will be related to the student's continued exploration of his or her personality and the required SEUS readings (Wolfeldt 2012 and Wolfeldt 2016). The purpose of these forums is to engage with other students on the critical topic of the ethical and safe use of oneself in the field of thanatology. Questions will be along the following lines:

- How does my unique personality type understand issues like death and dying? How might this inform transference? Countertransference?
- How do I personally experience grace? How does this affect my ability to extend grace in my ministry? To myself?
- As I grow in understanding of myself through these assignments, are there any theological issues that are challenging for me?
- What characteristics of God have been particularly helpful in this journey of self-awareness, safe and effective use of self and spiritual formation during training to work in the field of Thanatology?
- Knowing a bit more about myself, what spiritual disciplines (rule of life, Sabbath, examen, etc.) may I need to establish in order to take care of myself as I companion others?

Each forum question will be posted just before class each week. Students will post their responses by Friday at 11:59pm of the same week, and comment on the posts of other students in their group by class the following week. This should allow sufficient time to think, respond and dialogue. Your post for each question should be about 200-250 words per question (a total of 500 words per forum). Each post should be concise, addressing the issues in the questions with reference to class readings/lectures, and demonstrate critical thinking (e.g. further questions or issues raised, application to your context). Your comments to fellow students may be shorter (100 words), however please ensure your thoughts are meaningful and well thought out. You are not required to respond to a "late post" of any member.

Penalty for late work:

"Late posts" will be noted by the instructor. Penalty for late posts would be a reduction of 1/3 of a grade per every 12 hours late (e.g. from A to A minus or B to B minus).

If there is "no post" by above deadlines, the student will receive a "zero" for that forum. If there are specific reasons for late posts (as stated in "Late Papers and Extension Policy," Seminary Academic Calendar), the student is to email the instructor directly.

c) Final SEUS Self-Reflection Paper Due: Nov. 25, 2025

At the end of the semester, each student will submit 3-4 pages summarizing what was learned from exploring their personality, forum discussions, SEUS readings and understandings gleaned about themselves over the course of the semester. The paper should include the following questions:

- What did you learn about yourself through the use of the personality typology you chose at the beginning of the semester?
- How might this finding impact how you interact with someone who is in season of loss?
- What might you need to be aware of in terms of ethically ensuring your “stuff” does not negatively impact someone’s grief experience?
- According to your personality study, what might be signs that something needs to be attended to in your life to ensure you are able to be healthy in this field?
- What are two action items that will help you apply what you have learned to your spiritual formation?

3. Participation in Weekly Skills Labs: 10% of final grade

Each week students will participate in a practice session. This gives each student the opportunity to have hands on experience practicing the basic skills of companioning that are taught in each class. Each student will practice the roles of both companion and the bereaved in small groups to ensure skill acquisition and development. It is suggested that each student record the practice session to review for areas of growth. Students are encouraged to be sensitive to material and honour confidentiality. The instructor will supervise each session and assign a mark out of 10 for the practice session, as well as provide helpful feedback on the progress of each student.

This assignment is related to outcome #: 1,2,3,4

4. Mid-Term Skills Demonstration, Transcript and Learning Summary Paper: Demonstration in class- October 28, 2025; Transcript and Learning Summary- Due Nov. 11, 2025 (20% of final grade)

Each student will be assigned a time slot during the regular class period to conduct a 10-12 minute session with a peer, much like the weekly practice sessions. The student will record this session to their own computer. The student will then transcribe the session word for word. The student will then make comments on the transcript, indicating areas they might have done differently. A detailed outline for the format of this will be given. This will be accompanied by a 2-page paper outlining any insights this exercise provided.

This assignment is related to outcomes #1-3.

5. Final Skills Demonstration and Learning Summary Paper: Demonstration December 2, 2025 in-class; Learning Summary Paper Due: December 9, 2025 (30% of final grade).

Each student will conduct a final 10-12 minute session with a peer identical to the mid-term demonstration. This will be a final assessment of the micro-skills that have been taught and developed over the course of the semester. The student will be given a chance to reflect on the session immediately after completion. The student will then provide a 7-page paper discussing the following:

- In light of what you have experience this semester, how would you define “grief companioning”?
- How did you come to this definition?
- Explain how your understanding of what it means to walk with someone through grief may have changed or developed over the course
- Discuss your experience practicing the microskills. Do you feel as though they will be effective in your upcoming internship? Why or why not?
- What area of companioning do you feel comes easiest to you? What areas do you look forward to developing?

This assignment is related to outcomes #1-3, 5

D. SUMMARY OF ASSIGNMENTS AND GRADING

Evaluation is based upon the completion of the following assignments:

Assignment	Due	%
1. Livestream Class Attendance, Participation and Required Readings		10 %
2. Weekly SEUS and Self-Awareness Forums and Reflections		30 %
3. Weekly Skills Lab Participation		15 %
4. Mid Term Skills Evaluation and Paper	Oct 28 Nov 11	20 %
5. Final Skills Evaluation and Paper	Dec 2 Dec 9	25 %
Total Grade		100 %

IV. COURSE SCHEDULE, CONTENT AND REQUIRED READINGS

Week	Lecture Topic	Reading	Assignment Due
Week 1 Sept 9	Introduction to the course and syllabus What is companioning? The neurobiology of companioning and the grieving brain What is Self-Care and SEUS? Why is this important? Spiritual growth and theological considerations for the caregiver		

Week 2 Sept 16	Foundations of companioning What is the goal of companioning? Overview of each “microskills” of companioning Beginning considerations: culture, family of origin, faith tradition, etc.	Wolfieldt (2012) pp. 1-60 Wolfieldt (2012) pp. 61-68 Recommended: Ivey and Ivey: Ch 1-2 *Throughout the semester, continue to research your typology on your own through books, articles, podcasts, sermons, etc.	Exploratory SUES Paper
Week 3 Sept 23	Attending behaviours, observations skills, creating warmth	Wolfieldt (2016): pp. 1-35 Wolfieldt (2012): pp. 69-73 Recommended: Ivey and Ivey: Ch.3-4	
Week 4 Sept 30	The “Skill” of empathy; asking questions	Brown, Question Cube (Article posted on Moodle) Wolfieldt (2012) pp. 75-80 Wolfieldt (2016): pp. 37-68 Recommended: Ivey and Ivey: Ch.5	Forum #1
Week 5 Oct 7	Encouraging, paraphrasing and summarizing	Wolfieldt (2012): pp. 82-87 Recommended: Ivey and Ivey: Ch. 6	

Week 6 Oct 14	Reflecting feeling and emotions	Wolfeldt (2012): pp. 88-94 Recommended: Ivey and Ivey: Ch. 7	Forum #2
Week 7 Oct 21	Reading Days – NO CLASS		
Week 8 Oct 28	Midterm Demonstration (In class)		
Week 9 Nov 4	Meaning	Wolfeldt (2012): pp. 95-99 Wolfeldt (2016): pp. 69-119 Recommended: Ivey and Ivey: Ch. 11	Forum #3
Week 10 Nov 11	Perspectives, self-disclosure and facilitating grief groups	Wolfeldt (2012): pp.101-106 Recommended: Ivey and Ivey: Ch. 9 and 12	Midterm evaluation
Week 11 Nov 18	Attachment informed companioning	Wolfeldt (2012) pp.107-115 Additional readings to be posted on class page	
Week 12 Nov 25	Families, children and other special topics	To be posted on class page	Final SEUS Reflection Paper
Week 13 Dec 2	Final Skills Demonstration (IN CLASS)		
Dec 9	Final Skills Evaluation and Philosophy of Companioning Paper		

V. SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY

Selected bibliography will be posted on your course resource page at classes.tyndale.ca.

VI. GENERAL REQUIREMENTS FOR ALL COURSES

A. EQUITY OF ACCESS

Students with permanent or temporary disabilities who need academic accommodations must [contact](#) the [Accessibility Services](#) at the [Centre for Academic Excellence](#) to [register](#) and discuss their specific needs. *New students* must self-identify and register with the Accessibility Office at the beginning of the semester or as early as possible to access appropriate services. *Current students* must renew their plans as early as possible to have active accommodations in place.

B. REQUIREMENTS FOR LIVESTREAM INTERACTION (*SYNCHRONOUS ONLINE COURSE ONLY*)

- Livestream attendance for the entire duration of the class at announced times
- Headphones (preferred), built-in microphone, and web-camera
- Well-lit and quiet room
- Stable high-speed internet connection, preferably using an Ethernet cable over Wi-Fi
- Full name displayed on Zoom and Microsoft Teams for attendance purposes*
- A commitment to having the camera on to foster community building*

**exceptions with permission from professor*

C. GUIDELINES FOR INTERACTIONS

Tyndale University prides itself in being a trans-denominational community. We anticipate our students to have varied viewpoints which will enrich the discussions in our learning community. Therefore, we ask our students to be charitable and respectful in their interactions with each other, and to remain focused on the topic of discussion, out of respect to others who have committed to being a part of this learning community. Please refer to “Guidelines for Interactions” on your course resource page at classes.tyndale.ca.

D. GUIDELINES FOR THE SUBMISSION OF WRITTEN WORK

Grading Rubric

Please consult the rubric provided for each assignment on your course resource page at classes.tyndale.ca.

Academic Integrity

Integrity in academic work is required of all our students. Academic dishonesty is any breach of this integrity and includes such practices as cheating (the use of unauthorized material on tests and examinations), submitting the same work for different classes without permission of the

instructors; using false information (including false references to secondary sources) in an assignment; improper or unacknowledged collaboration with other students, and plagiarism (including improper use of artificial intelligence programs). Tyndale University takes seriously its responsibility to uphold academic integrity, and to penalize academic dishonesty. Please refer to the [Academic Integrity website](#) for further details.

For proper citation style, consult [Citation Guides](#) for different styles. Students are encouraged to consult [Writing Services](#).

Students should also consult the current [Academic Calendar](#) for academic policies on Academic Honesty, Gender Inclusive Language in Written Assignments, Late Papers and Extensions, Return of Assignments, and Grading System.

Turnitin Text-Matching Software

Tyndale has a subscription to Turnitin, a text-matching software that ensures the originality of academic writing and verifies the proper citation of all sources. The instructor for this course will use Turnitin for assignments submitted through your course resource page at classes.tyndale.ca. Upon submission, you will receive a summary that includes your submitted files along with a similarity report generated by Turnitin. Please be aware that Turnitin can also detect AI-generated content from tools like Grammarly, so students should be mindful of when using such software. It's advisable to confirm with your instructor before using any AI tools into your assignments. Below are some useful resources:

- [Student](#) Guides for Turnitin via classes.tyndale.ca course resource page
- Interpreting Similarity ([Guide](#), [Video](#), [Spectrum](#))

Research Ethics

All course-based assignments involving human participants requires ethical review and may require approval by the [Tyndale Research Ethics Board \(REB\)](#). Check with the Seminary Dean's Office (seminaryoffice@tyndale.ca) before proceeding.

Late Papers and Extensions Policy

All papers and course assignments must be submitted by the due dates indicated in the course syllabus. Unless the instructor already has a policy on grading late papers in the course syllabus, grades for papers submitted late without an approved extension will be lowered at the rate of two-thirds of a grade per week or part thereof (e.g., from "A+" to "A-," from "B" to "C+"). Please note that some programs, such as cohort-based or intensive courses, may follow a different policy due to the nature of the program.

Faculty may not grant an extension beyond the last day of exams for the semester. Requests for extensions beyond this date must be addressed in writing to the Registrar by filling out the

[Extension Request Form](#). The application will be considered only in cases such as a death in the family, medical emergency, hospitalization of oneself or immediate family member or prolonged illness requiring treatment by a physician. Factors such as assignments for other courses, holidays, and technology-related difficulties are insufficient grounds for requesting an extension.

A temporary grade of incomplete (“I”) may be granted by the Registrar. Once an extension is granted, it is the student’s responsibility to contact the instructor and make satisfactory arrangements to complete the outstanding work. A grade of “F” will be recorded for students who do not complete the outstanding work by the deadline.

E. COURSE EVALUATION

Tyndale Seminary values quality in the courses it offers its students. End-of-course evaluations provide valuable student feedback and are one of the ways that Tyndale Seminary works towards maintaining and improving the quality of courses and the student’s learning experience. Student involvement in this process is critical to enhance the general quality of teaching and learning.

Before the end of the course, students will receive a MyTyndale email with a link to the online course evaluation. The link can also be found in the left column on the course page. The evaluation period is 2 weeks; after the evaluation period has ended, it cannot be reopened.

Course Evaluation results will not be disclosed to the instructor before final grades in the course have been submitted and processed. Student names will be kept confidential, and the instructor will only see the aggregated results of the class.

F. LIBRARY RESOURCES

[Tyndale Library](#) supports courses with [e-journals, e-books](#), and the [mail delivery of books](#) and circulating materials. See the [Library FAQ page](#).

G. GRADING SYSTEM & SCALE

For each course’s grading rubric, please refer to your course syllabus or classes.tyndale.ca. For general grading guidelines, refer to Seminary [Grading System & Scale](#).