Cultural, Sociological, and Historical Studies

*** 100 Plus: How the Coming Age of Longevity Will Change Everything, From Careers and Relationships to Family and Faith by Sonia Arrison (2011) What will life look like when we live to be over 100? The author takes us on an eye-opening journey to the future where science and technology are beginning to radically change life as we know it. [NHCPL]

Advice on Dying: And Living a Better Life by H.H. Dalai Lama (2002) Explores a wide range of traditions and beliefs as it explores the stages we all go through when we die.

American Resting Place: Four Hundred Years of History Through our Cemeteries and Burial Grounds by Marilyn Yalom, photos. by Reid S. Yalom (2008) Mother and son traveled the U.S. exploring and photographing historic cemeteries to create this mix of art and scholarship, history and vision, that provides a window to our religious and cultural development for over four hundred years. [NHCPL]


Beyond the Good Death: The Anthropology of Modern Dying by James W. Green (2008) The author examines the changes in our concept of death over the last several decades. [NHCPL]

Death and Dying: Opposing Viewpoints (2003) Presents pro and con arguments from how end of life care can be improved to is there life after death. Excellent bibliography and resources section. [NHCPL]

Death: The Great Mystery of Life by Herbie Brennan (2002) Brennan’s book on death is utterly fascinating – frightening and disquieting, yet hopeful and optimistic. Encyclopedic in its range of topics from descriptions of how and why we die to discussion of the many theories regarding our fate after death. [NHCPL]

*** Death’s Door: Modern Dying and the Ways We Grieve by Sandra Gilbert (2006) [NHCPL] The author, a poet and academic, explores our relationship to death in literature, history, poetry, and social practices. The bibliography alone is 28 pages long! [NHCPL]


*** Healing of America: A Global Quest for Better, Cheaper, and Fairer Health Care by T. R. Reid (2009) Journalist Reid traveled to France, Germany, Japan, the UK and Canada to study their health care systems and compares them with ours. [NHCPL]

Living, Dreaming, Dying by Rob Nairn (2004) “Practical Wisdom from the Tibetan Book of the Dead.” For the Buddhists and philosophers among us; readable and enlightening. [NHCPL]

Making an Exit: From the Magnificent to the Macabre – How We Dignify the Dead by Sarah Murray (2011) After the death of her father, Murray embarked on a series of travels to discover how our end is commemorated around the globe and how we approach our own mortality. [NHCPL]

Meeting Death: In Hospice, Hospital, and at Home by Heather Robertson (2000) The author, a trained hospice volunteer, traveled across Canada to gather the stories of the terminally ill, their physicians, nurses, counselors, and families. Passionate and clear-eyed. [NHCPL]

Never Say Die: The Myth and Marketing of the New Old Age by Susan Jacoby (2011) This wide ranging reappraisal examines the explosion of Alzheimer’s cases, the uncertain economic future of aging “Boomers,” the predicament of women who make up an overwhelming majority of the oldest and poorest old, and the illusion that we can control the way we age. [NHCPL]

Remember Me: A Lively Tour of the New American Way of Death by Lisa Takeuchi Cullen (2006) Eye-opening, funny, and unforgettable, this work gives an account of the ways in which Americans are designing new occasions to mark death by celebrating life. [NHCPL]

Rethinking Aging: Growing Old and Living Well in an Overtreated Society by Nortin M. Hadler, M.D. (2011) Sure to be controversial, the author has become a leading voice among those who approach the vast menu of health-care choices with informed skepticism. [NHCPL]
Sacred Dying: Creating Rituals for Embracing the End of Life by Megory Anderson (2001)  The author, a theologian, presents an essential testimonial and handbook for creating a dignified, peaceful, and more sacred end to life. Her recommendations are intelligent, inventive, and mercifully humane.


Shock of Gray: The Aging of the World’s Population and How it Pits Young Against Old, Child Against Parent, Worker Against Boss, Company Against Rival, and Nation Against Nation by Ted C. Fishman (2010) Through compelling interviews with families, employers, workers, economists, gerontologists, government officials, health-care professionals, corporate executives, and small business owners, the author reveals the astonishing and interconnected effects of global aging and why nations, cultures, and crucial human relationships are changing. [NHCPL]

Stiff: The Curious Lives of Human Cadavers by Mary Roach (2003) Those who have decided to leave their body “to science” and those considering it will find words of wisdom (and a little humor) about what cadavers have done for the advancement of civilization. [NHCPL]

*** Whole Death Catalog: A Lively Guide to the Bitter End by Harold Schechter (2009) The author digs deep into a wealth of sources to unearthes a treasure trove of surprising facts, amusing anecdotes, and practical information.

*** Books I personally think are exceptional either in content or readability or both. Worth buying.

This bibliography was prepared by Rebecca Taylor, Funeral Consumers Alliance – Coastal Carolina. Notation of "NHCPL" means the New Hanover County Public Library. Please check your local public library, or request titles by Interlibrary Loan. Virtually all titles are also available from online bookstores, like amazon.com, often in “used” and other inexpensive editions.

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