



UNIVERSITY OF CALGARY
FACULTY OF ARTS
Department of Philosophy

PHIL 499 Lec 01 "Topics in Philosophy"
Topic 1 – Death: Metaphysical and Ethical Issues

Fall 2019

Tuesday: 5:00-7:45, ST 126

COURSE OUTLINE

Instructor Name: Walter Glannon

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Office: SS 1226

Office Hours: Tuesday: 13:00-15:00

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This course critically examines metaphysical and ethical issues surrounding death. It is divided into three parts. Beginning with Epicurus' claim that death is "nothing to us" because "when we are, death is not, and when death is, we are not," the first part of the course focuses on the claim and argument that death is bad because it deprives us of additional good life years. We will read articles by philosophers as well as works of literature that address this question. The second part of the course examines arguments for and against radical life extension and immortality and the question of whether a much longer mortal life or an immortal life would be desirable or undesirable. It also explores different psychological responses to the inevitability of death and how these responses shape our lives. The third part of the course addresses applied ethical questions and arguments concerning euthanasia and assisted suicide.

PREREQUISITE(S)

Two previous courses in Philosophy, at least one of which is at the 300 level.

COURSE OBJECTIVES/LEARNING OUTCOMES

- Broad knowledge of diverse historical views on the philosophy of death.
- Deep knowledge of metaphysical and ethical discussions of death.
- Ability to critically interpret and analyze different arguments.
- Ability to write a convincing argument that takes adequate account of alternative positions
- Ability to engage in constructive, respectful, oral and written argumentation

REQUIRED TEXTBOOKS

Philosophy and Death: Introductory Readings, edited by Samantha Brennan and Robert Stainton (Broadview Press, 2010, paper)

Death, Immortality and Meaning in Life, John Martin Fischer (Oxford University Press, 2019, paper)

The Death of Ivan Ilych, Lev Tolstoy, translated by R. Pevear and L. Volokhonsky (Vintage Books, 2012, paper).

COURSE REQUIREMENTS AND ASSESSMENT

- 5-6 page double-spaced paper, due October 1=40%
- 2 page double-spaced commentary on *The Death of Ivan Ilych*, due October 15=10%
- 8-10 page double-spaced paper, due December 3=50%

The grade on assignments and the final grade will depend on the ability to clearly interpret and analyze arguments of philosophers writing about death and construct your own clear and sound arguments for different positions on these questions.

Letter Grade Conversion Table

A+=98-100%	B+=86-89%	C+=74-77%	D+=62-65%
A=93-97%	B=82-85%	C=70-73%	D=58-61%
A-=90-92%	B-=78-81%	C-=66-69%	F=0-57%

There will not be a Registrar-scheduled final exam

A passing grade in any particular component of the course is not essential for the student to pass the course as a whole.

The use of calculators and computers will be allowed with the specific permission of the instructor.

Course work must be submitted in class.

Policy on late submission of papers

Students with medical or other EXTENUATING REASONS for not submitting papers on the due date may be allowed to submit them later after consultation with the instructor.

Schedule

September 10: Introduction to philosophical debates on death. Epicurean and Lucretian arguments and contemporary responses. Fischer, Chapters 2-4; Epicurus, "Letter to Menoeceus" and "The Principal Doctrines," Lucretius, "On the Nature of Things," Nagel, "Death," in Brennan and Stainton, *Philosophy and Death*, 163-205.

September 17: Deprivation accounts of death; arguments for and against posthumous harm.

September 24: Deprivation accounts of death. Annihilation.

October 1: First paper due. *The Death of Ivan Ilych*

October 8: *The Death of Ivan Ilych*

October 15: Commentary on Ivan Ilych Due. Arguments for and against immortality. Plato, *Phaedo*, in Brennan and Stainton, 39-64. Davis, "Traditional Christian Belief in the Resurrection of the Body," in Brennan and Stainton, 77-98; Fischer, Chapters 5-7.

October 22: Immortality: Fischer, Chapters 5-7; Williams, "The Makropulos Case," in Brennan and Stainton, 207-223.

October 29: Radical Life Extension and Immortality.

November 5: Radical Life Extension and Immortality

November 19: Euthanasia and Assisted Suicide: Brandt, "The Morality and Rationality of Suicide," in Brennan and Stainton, 312-330; "The Philosophers' Brief," in Brennan and Stainton, 331-344; Glover, "The Sanctity of Life," McMahan, "The Wrongness of Killing and the Badness of Death"; Brennan, "The Badness of Death," in Brennan and Stainton, 345-394.

November 26: Euthanasia and Assisted Suicide.

December 3: NDEs, OBEs and The Final Chapter: Fischer, Chapters 8-10; **Second Paper Due.**

Academic Accommodations

It is the student's responsibility to request academic accommodations according to the University policies and procedures. The student accommodation policy can be found at ucalgary.ca/access/accommodations/policy.

Students needing an Accommodation because of a disability or medical condition should communicate this need to Student Accessibility Services in accordance with the Procedure for Accommodations for Students with Disabilities: ucalgary.ca/policies/files/policies/procedure-for-accommodations-for-

[students-with-disabilities.pdf](#). Students needing an Accommodation in relation to their coursework or to fulfil requirements for a graduate degree, based on a protected ground other than disability, should communicate this need, preferably in writing, to their instructor.

Student Support and Resources

Full details and information about the following resources can be found at ucalgary.ca/Registrar/registration/course-outlines

- Wellness and Mental Health Resources
- Student Success Centre
- Student Ombuds Office
- Student Union (SU) Information
- Graduate Students' Association (GSA) Information
- Emergency Evacuation/Assembly Points
- Safewalk

Academic Advising

If you are a student in the Faculty of Arts, you can speak to an academic advisor in the Arts Students' Centre about course planning, course selection, registration, program progression and more. Visit the Faculty of Arts website at arts.ucalgary.ca/advising for contact details and information regarding common academic concerns.

For questions specific to the philosophy program, please visit phil.ucalgary.ca. Further academic guidance is available by contacting David Dick (Undergraduate Program Director dgdick@ucalgary.ca) or Jeremy Fantl (Honours Advisor jfantl@ucalgary.ca). If you have questions regarding registration, please email Rebecca Lesser (Undergraduate Program Administrator phildept@ucalgary.ca).

Writing Assessment and Support

The assessment of all written assignments—and, to a lesser extent, written exam responses—is based in part on writing skills. This includes correctness (grammar, punctuation, sentence structure, etc.), as well as general clarity and organization. Research papers must include a thorough and accurate citation of sources. Students are also encouraged to use Writing Support Services for assistance (one-on-one appointments, drop-in support and writing workshops). For more information, and other services offered by the Student Success Centre, please visit ucalgary.ca/ssc.

Online Resources and Electronic Devices

Important information and communication about this course may be posted on D2L (Desire2Learn), UCalgary's online learning management system. Visit ucalgary.service-now.com/it for how-to information and technical assistance.

The instructor reserves the right to establish specific course policies regarding the use of electronic devices. If permitted, the use of devices must be exclusively for instructional purposes, and without disruption to the instructor or fellow students. Devices should be set to silent mode during lectures. Audio or video recording of lectures is not permitted without the written permission of the instructor. Students violating this policy are subject to discipline under the University of Calgary's Non-Academic Misconduct policy.

Academic Misconduct/Honesty

Cheating or plagiarism on any assignment or examination is as an extremely serious academic offense, the penalty for which will be an F on the assignment or an F in the course, and possibly a disciplinary sanction such as probation, suspension, or expulsion. For information on academic misconduct and its consequences, please see the University of Calgary Calendar at ucalgary.ca/pubs/calendar/current/k.html.

Intellectual honesty requires that your work include adequate referencing to sources. Plagiarism occurs when you do not acknowledge or correctly reference your sources. If you have questions about referencing, please consult your instructor.

University Policies

The Instructor Intellectual Property Policy is available at ucalgary.ca/policies/files/policies/Intellectual%20Property%20Policy.pdf

The University of Calgary is under the jurisdiction of the provincial Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy (FOIP) Act, as outlined at ucalgary.ca/legalservices/foip. The instructor (or TA) must return graded assignments *directly* to the student UNLESS written permission to do otherwise has been provided.

All students are required to read the University of Calgary policy on Acceptable Use of Material Protected by Copyright (ucalgary.ca/policies/files/policies/acceptable-use-of-material-protected-by-copyright.pdf) and requirements of the copyright act (laws-lois.justice.gc.ca/eng/acts/C-42/index.html).