



FACULTY OF ARTS
DEPARTMENT OF PHILOSOPHY

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

Fall Term 2011

Course Outline

Lectures: MW 17:30-18:45 ST 125

Instructor: Walter Glannon

Office: SS 1226

Phone: 403-220-3171

Email: wglannon@ucalgary.ca

Office Hours: Tuesday 13:30-15:30

Course Description

This course examines metaphysical and ethical issues surrounding death. Beginning with Epicurus' claims that death is "nothing to us" because "when death is, then we are not," the first part of the course focuses on the argument that death is bad or evil because it deprives us of additional goods of life. The second part of the course examines arguments for and against immortality and whether an immortal life would be desirable or undesirable. It also explores different psychological responses to the inevitability of death and how these responses shape how we live our lives. The third part of the course addresses definitions of death and applied ethical questions and arguments concerning euthanasia, assisted suicide, and terminal sedation.

Required Texts

Philosophy and Death: Introductory Readings, Samantha Brennan and Robert Stainton, eds.
(Broadview Press, 2010)

Well-Being and Death, Ben Bradley (Oxford University Press, 2009)

Our Stories: Essays on Life, Death, and Free Will, John Martin Fischer (Oxford University Press, 2009)

Evaluation

- 3 papers:
 - First paper, 5-6 double-spaced pages due in class Wednesday October 12=30%
 - Second paper, 5-6 double-spaced pages due in class Wednesday November 9=30%.
 - Third paper, 5-6 double-spaced pages due in class Wednesday December 7=30%
- Class participation, based on attendance and one brief presentation=10%

Grading Method

98-100 = A+

94-97 = A

90-93 = A-

86-89 = B+

82-85 = B

78-81 = B-

74-77 = C+

70-73 = C

66-69 = C-

62-65 = D+

58-61 = D

< 57 = F

Policy on Late Assignments

Papers submitted later than the due date will lose one-half letter grade each day beyond that date. Students with medical or other extenuating reasons for not submitting a paper on the due date will not be penalized if they inform the instructor and provide him with documentation confirming the special circumstances.

Schedule

September 12, 14: Introduction to philosophical debates on death; Epicurean and Lucretian arguments and contemporary responses. Epicurus, "Letter to Menoeceus" and "The Principal Doctrines," Lucretius, "On the Nature of Things," Nagel, "Death," Silverstein, "The Evil of Death," in Brennan and Stainton, *Philosophy and Death*, pp. 163-205.

September 19, 21: Nagel, Silverstein, Fischer, *Our Stories*, Chapters 1-3, 5, and 7, pp. 3-49.

September 26, 28: Fischer, *Our Stories*; Bradley, *Well-Being and Death*, Chapters 2-5 and Conclusion, pp. 47-180.

October 3-5: Bradley, *Well-Being and Death*

October 12: Bradley, *Well-Being and Death*. **First paper due Wednesday October 12**

October 17-19: Plato, *Phaedo*, Davis, "Traditional Christian Belief in the Resurrection of the Body," in *Philosophy and Death*, pp. 39-64, 77-98, Fischer, *Our Stories*, Chapter 4, pp. 51-62, Williams, "The Makropulos Case: Reflections on the Tedium of Immortality," Fischer, "Why Immortality is Not So Bad," in *Philosophy and Death*, pp. 207-238, Fischer, *Our Stories*, Chapter 6, pp. 79-92.

October 24, 26: Selections from Emily Dickinson's poetry and Tolstoy's *War and Peace* and *The Death of Ivan Ilych*, *Ikiru* ("To Live," 1952 film directed by Kurosawa).

October 31, November 2: Arguments for and against immortality.

November 7, 9: Review of metaphysical questions regarding death. **Second paper due Wednesday November 9**

November 14-16: Pojman, "What is Death? The Crisis of Criteria," McMahan, "The Metaphysics of Brain Death," in *Philosophy and Death*, pp. 99-142, Laureys, "Death, Unconsciousness, and the Brain," PDF on Blackboard, Shewmon, "The Brain and Somatic Integration: Insights into the Standard Biological Rationale for Equating 'Brain Death' with Death," PDF on Blackboard.

November 21, 23: Glover, "The Sanctity of Life," McMahan, "The Wrongness of Killing and the Badness of Death," Brennan, "The Badness of Death, the Wrongness of Killing, and the Moral Importance of Autonomy," in *Philosophy and Death*, pp. 345-394.

November 28, 30: James Rachels, "Active and Passive Euthanasia," Steinbock, "The Intentional Termination of Life," Brandt, "The Morality and Rationality of Suicide," and "Assisted Suicide: The Philosophers' Brief," in *Philosophy and Death*, pp. 297-344, Mortier et al., "Terminal Sedation," PDF on Blackboard.

December 5, 7: Review of applied ethical issues at the end of life. **Third paper due Wednesday December 7**

INTELLECTUAL HONESTY

Intellectual honesty is the cornerstone of the development and acquisition of knowledge and requires that the contribution of others be acknowledged. As a result, cheating or plagiarism on any assignment or examination is regarded as **an extremely serious academic offence**, the penalty for which may be an F on the assignment and possibly also an F in the course, academic probation, or requirement to withdraw. The University Calendar states that plagiarism exists when:

- *the work submitted or presented was done, in whole or in part, by an individual other than the one submitting or presenting the work (this includes having another impersonate the student or otherwise substituting the work of another for one's own in an examination or test;*
- *parts of the work are taken from another source without reference to the original author;*
- *the whole work (e.g., an essay) is copied from another source; and/or*
- *a student submits or presents work in one course which has also been submitted in another course (although it may be completely original with that student) without the knowledge of or prior agreement of the instructor involved.*

While it is recognized that scholarly work often involves reference to the ideas, data and conclusions of other scholars, intellectual honesty requires that such references be explicitly and clearly noted. Plagiarism occurs not only when direct quotations are taken from a source without specific acknowledgement, but also when original ideas or data from the source are not acknowledged. A bibliography is insufficient to establish which portions of the student's work are taken from external sources; footnotes or other recognized forms of citation must be used for this purpose.

ACADEMIC ACCOMMODATION

It is the student's responsibility to request academic accommodation. If you are a student with a documented disability who may require academic accommodation and have not registered with the Disability Resource Centre, contact their office at 220-8237. Students who have not registered with the Disability Resource Centre are not eligible for formal academic accommodation. You are also required to discuss your needs with your instructor no later than fourteen (14) days after the start of this course.

FREEDOM OF INFORMATION AND PROTECTION OF PRIVACY (FOIP) ACT

The University of Calgary is under the jurisdiction of the provincial FOIP Act in all aspects of its operations as a publicly funded institution. The Department of Philosophy ensures the student's right to privacy by requiring all graded assignments be returned to the student directly from the instructor unless other arrangements have been made in writing and filed with the Department Administrator.

SAFEWALK: PROMOTING CAMPUS SAFETY AND AWARENESS

Twenty four hours a day, seven days a week, Safewalk volunteers walk people safely to their destination on campus. This service is free and available to students, staff, and campus visitors. Safewalks are done in male/female pairs. The volunteers walk anywhere on campus (including McMahon Stadium, Health Sciences, Student Family Housing, the Alberta Children's Hospital and the University LRT station). To request a Safewalk volunteer to walk with you, call 403-220-5333 (24 hours a day/7 days a week/365 days a year) or use one of the Help Phones located across campus (they are not just for emergencies).