



FACULTY OF ARTS  
DEPARTMENT OF PHILOSOPHY

**PHIL 499 Lec 01 – Topics in Philosophy**  
**Topic 1: “Death: Metaphysical and Ethical Issues”**  
**Fall Term 2016**

**Course Outline**

**Lectures: MW 17:00-18:15, ST 128**

**Instructor:** Walter Glannon

**Office:** SS 1226

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**Office Hours:** Tuesday: 13:30-15:30

**Course Description**

This course critically examines metaphysical and ethical issues surrounding death. It is divided into three parts. 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 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 how we live our lives. The third part of the course addresses applied ethical questions and arguments concerning euthanasia and assisted suicide.

**Required Texts**

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

*Death*, Shelly Kagan (Yale University Press, 2012)

Course Pack at *Bound and Copied*

**Classroom Etiquette**

Because this course involves close reading of texts, use of distracting electronic devices of any kind (laptops, tablets, iPhones, iPads, etc.) will not be allowed in class without the specific permission of the instructor.

**Course Requirements**

In-class exam on deprivation accounts of death, September 28 = 30 pts

In-class exam on immortality, life extension and responses to death, November 2 = 35 pts

Take-home exam on euthanasia and assisted suicide, December 7 = 30 pts.

One-page commentary on Tolstoy and Wittgenstein, October 26 = 5 pts

## **Letter Grade Conversion Table**

A+	98 –100 %	B+	86-89 %	C+	74-77 %	D+	62-65 %
A	94-97 %	B	82-85 %	C	70-73 %	D	58-61 %
A-	90-93 %	B-	78-81 %	C-	66-69 %	F	0-57 %

## **Policy on Missed Quizzes and Exams**

Students with medical or other extenuating reasons for not taking a quiz or exam or not submitting assignments on the designated dates will not be penalized if they inform the instructor and provide him with documentation confirming the special circumstances. They can make up the quiz or exam or submit assignments later after consultation with the instructor.

## **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” all in Brennan and Stainton, *Philosophy and Death*, 163-205; Kagan, *Death*, Chapters 8, 10, 12, 13.

**September 19, 21:** Nagel, “Death,” and Kagan, *Death*

**September 26:** Nagel, Kagan and Jenkins, ‘Dead and Gone’ in Course Pack

**September 28: In-Class Exam on Deprivation Accounts of Death**

**October 3, 5:** Plato, *Phaedo*, in Brennan and Stainton, 39-64, Kagan, Chapters 2, 3, 5, 6.

**October 12:** Davis, ‘Traditional Christian Belief in the Resurrection of the Body,’ in Brennan and Stainton, 77-98; Merricks, “The Resurrection of the Body,” in Course Pack

**October 17, 19:** Williams, ‘The Makropulos Case,’ in Brennan and Stainton, 207-223; Harris, “Intimations of Immortality,” Pijnenburg and Leget, ‘Who Wants to Live Forever?’ in Course Pack.

**October 24, 26:** Kagan, Chapter 14, Johnston, *Surviving Death*, in Course Pack; **1-page commentary on Tolstoy and Wittgenstein due.**

**October 31:** Kagan and Johnston on Responses to Death

**November 2: In-Class Exam on Immortality, Life Extension and Responses to Death**

**November 7, 9:** Brandt, “The Morality and Rationality of Suicide,” in Brennan and Stainton, 312-330, and Kagan, Chapter 15.

**November 14, 16:** Yong and Curlin, ‘Why Physicians Should Oppose Assisted Suicide,’ and Quill, Back and Block, “Responding to Patient’s Requesting Physician Assisted Death,” in Course Pack.

**November 21, 23:** “The Philosophers’ Brief,” in Brennan and Stainton,” 331-344

**November 28, 30:** Glover, “The Sanctity of Life,” McMahan, “The Wrongness of Killing and the Badness of Death,” and Brennan, ‘The Badness of Death,’ in Brennan and Stainton, 345-394.

**December 5:** Glover, McMahan and Brennan

**December 7: Review; Take-Home Exam on Euthanasia and Suicide Due in Class.**

## **Academic Honesty**

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, an F in the course, academic probation, or requirement to withdraw from the University. See the relevant sections on ‘Academic Misconduct’ in the current University Calendar. 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 correct referencing, consult your instructor.

## **Academic Accommodation**

Student's seeking an accommodation based on disability or medical concerns should contact Student Accessibility Services. SAS will process the request and issue letters of accommodation to instructors. For more information on support services and accommodations for students with disabilities, visit <http://www.ucalgary.ca/access/>. Students who require accommodation in

relation to their coursework based on a protected ground other than disability should communicate this need in writing to their instructor. The full policy on student accommodations is available at [http://www.ucalgary.ca/policies/files/policies/student-accommodation-policy\\_0.pdf](http://www.ucalgary.ca/policies/files/policies/student-accommodation-policy_0.pdf)

#### D2L Help

Desire2Learn is UCalgary's online learning management system. Go to <http://www.ucalgary.ca/it/services/d2l> for help.

#### Student Advising and Information Resources

- General Academic Concerns and Program Planning – Have a question but not sure where to start? The Arts Students' Centre is your information resource for everything in the Faculty of Arts. Drop in at SS102, call 403-220-3580, or email [ascarts@ucalgary.ca](mailto:ascarts@ucalgary.ca). Advisors in the ASC can also provide assistance and advice in planning your program through to graduation. Visit the Faculty of Arts website at <https://arts.ucalgary.ca/undergraduate> for detailed information on common academic concerns.
- **Advice on Philosophy Courses** – You may find answers to your more specific questions about a philosophy degree on the Department of Philosophy's website <http://phil.ucalgary.ca> or contact one of Philosophy's Undergraduate Advisors (see below)
- **Registration Overload/Prereq Waivers** – If you are seeking to register in a Philosophy course that is full or to get permission to waive the prereqs for a course, email the instructor of the course.

#### Protection of Privacy

The University of Calgary is under the jurisdiction of the provincial Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy (FOIP) Act. 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 or teaching assistant.

#### Safewalk

Call 403-220-5333 (24/7/365) for a Safewalk volunteer to accompany you safely to your destination on campus including parking lots, housing, and the LRT station or use a Campus Help Phone.

#### PHILOSOPHY DEPARTMENT

The Department of Philosophy is located on the 12<sup>th</sup> floor of the Social Sciences Building  
and on the web at [www.phil.ucalgary.ca](http://www.phil.ucalgary.ca)

#### PHILOSOPHY UNDERGRADUATE PROGRAM ADVISORS FOR FALL 2016:

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For assistance with registration issues in Philosophy courses, contact  
Merlette Schnell ([schnell@ucalgary.ca](mailto:schnell@ucalgary.ca))