

**Department of Philosophy
University of Victoria
Fall Session – First Term**

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Mondays & Thursdays 2:00-3:00, or by appointment (via Zoom)

This course will be conducted with a two-fold goal in mind.

On the one hand, it is meant to serve as an introduction to the sorts of concerns that arise amongst bioethicists when matters of death and dying are at issue. As such, our discussions of death and dying throughout the course will touch on deliberations over medical, moral and legal topics, including: the clinical definition of death; the rationality of suicide; the nature of the relationship between care-givers and the dying; the role that surrogate decision makers or proxies play at the end of life; passive and active euthanasia; physician-assisted suicide; and, the legitimacy of requests made by the dying to have treatment withheld or withdrawn

On the other hand, this course on death and dying affords us the opportunity to explore some of the broader and deeper questions about death and dying that have exercised philosophers from Plato to the present.

All humans are mortal. We are humans, and therefore we are going to die.

This simple syllogism carries with it an enormous weight. It states a fact. A fact about *us*, about *all* of us, and it is an unsettling and indeed unpleasant fact to grapple with. It is precisely this fact about death, however, which has acted as a powerful motive force, prompting deep philosophical reflection about the value and meaning of life and how best to live that life. It is in taking up these reflections that we will be most engaged throughout the course. As such, much of our discussion will focus on how we are to respond to the fact that we are dying. We will take up the question of whether or not death is an evil, and whether or not it is to be feared. We will touch on the question of whether the fact of death robs life of meaning, or, on the contrary, it is that which provides life with meaning. We will examine the nature of suicide, and look to some classical views on whether or not it is ever permissible to kill oneself or, perhaps, whether it is sometimes laudable to do so. Lastly, we will take up the related question of who decides when and how we are to die. Is our own death a matter for us to decide, and if so, are we entitled to ask, or even demand, that others not only respect that right, but assist us in exercising it?

Asynchronous lectures will be posted on or before the Monday of each week as Kaltura Capture videos.

Synchronous meetings will be run via Zoom on Thursday afternoons, and will involve a combination of lecture and tutorial, in which you are encouraged to participate.

‘Academic integrity requires commitment to the values of honesty, trust, fairness, respect, and responsibility. It is expected that students, faculty members and staff at the University of Victoria, as members of an intellectual community, will adhere to these ethical values in all activities related to learning, teaching, research and service. Any action that contravenes this standard, including misrepresentation, falsification or deception, undermines the intention and worth of scholarly work and violates the fundamental academic rights of members of our community.’

For the full statement of the University’s Policy on Academic Integrity, including definitions of the violations of the policy, the procedures for dealing with such violations and the possible penalties that might be administered, please consult the Undergraduate Programs Calendar.

UVic is committed to equity, diversity, social justice and fostering a welcoming and diverse learning, teaching and working environment. These are essential elements in achieving excellence in research and education. As members of a diverse and dynamic learning community, we each have a role to play in creating safe, supportive, inclusive and healthy learning environments that foster mutual respect and civility, and that recognize that people are our primary strength.

	<p><i>Preparing for Death and Dying</i> - No Reading</p>
	<p><i>Seeing Dead People: Some Clinical and Philosophical Considerations</i></p> <p>i) <i>The Whole-Brain Definition of Death: Defining the Norm</i> - President’s Commission.... <i>Defining Death: Medical Legal and Ethical Issues in the Definition of Death</i> - President’s Commission.... <i>Guidelines for the Determination of Death</i></p> <p>ii) <i>Non-Brain Definitions of Death: A Place for Tradition</i> - President’s Commission... <i>Non-Brain Formulations: The Alternative to the Brain-Based Definitions.</i></p> <p>iii) <i>The Higher-Brain Definition of Death: An Alternative Rejected</i> - President’s Commission... <i>The ‘Higher-Brain’ Formulations.</i></p> <p>iv) <i>The Higher-Brain Definition of Death: An Alternative Defended</i> - Veatch, Robert M.. <i>The Impending Collapse of the Whole-Brain Definition of Death.</i></p>
	<p><i>Being Dying People: The View from Literature</i> : - Tolstoy, Leo, <i>The Death of Ivan Ilych.</i></p>

Being Dying People: The View from Philosophy

- Montaigne, Michael de. *That to Study Philosophy is to Learn to Die* Book 0 (1 of 2) 1 of 1

	<p><i>A Model Proposed</i></p> <p>i) <i>Ethical Theories</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - from Singer, Peter. (ed). <i>A Companion to Ethics</i>. (on reserve at McPherson Library) - Pettit, Philip. 'Consequentialism'. pgs. 230-240 - Davis, Nancy. 'Contemporary Deontology'. pgs. 205-218 - Almond, Brenda. 'Rights'. pgs 259-273 <p>ii) <i>Deliberative Models</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - from Kuhse, Helga & Peter Singer (eds). <i>A Companion to Bioethics</i> (on reserve at McPherson Library & Online) - Childress, James. 'A Principle-Based Approach'. pgs. 61-71 - Manning, Rita C.. 'A Care Approach'. pgs. 98-105 - Arras, John D.. 'A Case Approach'. pgs. 106-116
	<p><i>Definitions & Some Classical Texts on the Morality and Rationality of Suicide</i></p> <p>i) <i>Defining Suicide</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Velasquez, Manuel G.. <i>Defining Suicide</i>. - Beauchamp, Tom L.. <i>The Problem of Defining Suicide</i>. <p>ii) <i>Some Classical Views</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Seneca. <i>On Taking One's Own Life</i>. - Augustine. §11 & §§16-27 – <i>City of God</i>. - Aquinas, Thomas. <i>Whether it is Lawful to Kill Oneself?</i>. - Hume, David. <i>Of Suicide</i>. - Kant, Immanuel. <i>Of Duties to the Body, In Regard to Life; Of Suicide; and Of Care for One's Life</i>.
	<p><i>Evaluations of the Rationality of Suicide</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Pabst-Battin, Margaret. <i>The Concept of Rational Suicide</i>. - Feinberg, Joel. <i>Whose Life is it Anyway?</i>.

Definitions and Distinctions

- Quill, Timothy. *Death & Dignity: A Case of Individualized Decision Making*.
- Rachels, James. *Active and Passive Euthanasia*.
- Beauchamp, Tom L. & James F. Childress. *Rachels on Active and Passive Euthanasia*.
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