

WESTERN UNIVERSITY
DEPARTMENT OF PHILOSOPHY
Undergraduate Course Outline 2024-25
Philosophy 2073G (650):
Death

INSTRUCTOR INFORMATION

Information including instructor contact details and course location can be found on the course OWL Brightspace: <https://westernu.brightspace.com/>

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course is focused on understanding and engaging the arguments that scholars have made about death. The specific arguments we consider attempt to answer the following questions: What does it mean to say that a person or organism is dead? What, if anything, survives beyond death? Is death bad? Conversely, is immortality good? Are there any circumstances in which it is morally permissible to bring about the death of another and if so, why?

LEARNING OUTCOMES

This course seeks to achieve two goals. The first, and most important, is to introduce students to and/or build upon a set of standard philosophical skills. Using the readings, lectures, and assignments this course will help students to identify what it is that makes the set of reasons that support the conclusions of an argument either convincing or implausible by requiring them to formulate well-reasoned responses to the arguments made in the readings.

The second goal of this course is to introduce students to the ways in which the aforementioned philosophical skills have been applied by classical and contemporary philosophers to one of the most intriguing elements of human life, i.e., death. This goal is accomplished on the two course exams.

TEXTS

Samantha Brennan and Robert J. Stainton eds., *Philosophy and Death: Introductory Readings* (Broadview Press: 2009) The textbook costs \$66.25 according to the publisher: [Philosophy and Death - Broadview Press](#).

Students are welcome to purchase second-hand copies of this textbook. There is only one edition.

METHOD OF EVALUATION

20% - Mid-Term Exam (covering weeks 1 to 5)

50% - two 1100 – 1300 word essays, worth 25% each
30% - Final Exam (covering weeks 7 to 12)

Readings: Nagel (pgs. 177 – 184)
Silverstein (pgs. 185 – 205)

Week 8 (March 3rd): Is Immortality Bad? Maybe.

Readings: Williams (pgs. 207 – 223)
Fischer (pgs. 224 – 237)

Week 9 (March 10th): Gender and Death

Readings: Brennan (pgs. 239 – 246)
Thomson (pgs. 249 – 265)

Week 10 (March 17th): When is Killing Wrong? (Part 1: Abortion)

Readings: Marquis (pgs. 266 – 284)
Sinnott-Armstrong (pgs. 285 – 296)

Week 11 (March 24th): When is Killing Wrong? (Part 2: Euthanasia)

Readings: Rachels (pgs. 297 – 302)
Steinbock (pgs. 303 – 311)
Rawls, Thompson, Nozick, Dworkin, Scanlon, and Nagel
(pgs. 331 – 344)

Week 12 (March 31st): So why is Killing Wrong?

Readings: McMahan (pgs. 362 – 379)
Brennan (pgs. 380 – 393)

This Reading Schedule is Subject to Change Given Sufficient Prior Notice

ACADEMIC CONSIDERATION

Essays – The first essay is due on Friday, March 4th by 11:59 p.m. EST on OWL. Any essay not submitted by that time will be **subject to a 5% per day late penalty**, weekends included, up to a maximum of 10 days, or 50% of your grade on the essay. At that point, a grade of 0 will be recorded.

Students who wish to avoid the late penalty will **need to submit formal supporting documentation** to the Academic Advising office of the Faculty in which the student is registered. A suitable alternative deadline for the submission of the essay will be established in consultation with Professor Robb once consideration has been granted. The second essay is due on the last day of classes, i.e., Friday, April 4th by 11:59 p.m. EDT on Obeen granted.

the last day of classes for the term, a failure to meet that deadline will automatically result in a grade of 0.

Essay submissions after the final day of the course will only be permitted when **supporting documentation** is submitted to the Academic Advising office of the Faculty in which the student is registered. A suitable alternative deadline for the submission of the essay will be established in consultation with Professor Robb once consideration has been granted.

Exams – The Mid-Term and Final exams will be timed; students will have 4 hours of writing time once they begin for both. The Mid-Term Exam will be open for students to take at any point during Week 6. The Final Exam will be scheduled by the Office of the Registrar during the April 2025 Final Exam period (with an anticipated 5-day writing window). Owing to the flexibility included in this exam scheduling, students who fail to complete an exam during the designated period will be unable to write a make-up without the submission of formal supporting documentation to the Academic Advising office of the Faculty in which the student is registered.

The Final exam will be scheduled by the Office of the Registrar during the April 2025 Final Exam period. Students unable to write at the scheduled time will need to provide formal supporting documentation to the Academic Advising office of the Faculty in which the student is registered, at which point a make-up exam will be scheduled.

All requests for academic consideration for the duration of this course are to be made to the Academic Advising office of the student's Faculty of

commercial plagiarism detection software under license to the University for the detection of plagiarism. All papers submitted for such checking will be included as source documents in the reference database for the purpose of detecting plagiarism of papers subsequently submitted to the system. Use of the service is subject to the licensing agreement, currently between The University of Western Ontario and Turnitin.com (<http://www.turnitin.com>).

Statement on the use of proctoring software

Examinations in this course will be conducted using ProctorTrack remote proctoring service. By taking this course, you are consenting to the use of this software and acknowledge that you will be required to provide **personal information** (including some biometric data) and the session will be **recorded**. Completion of this course will require you to have a reliable internet connection and a device that meets the technical requirements for this service. More information about this remote proctoring service,

Students wishing to audit the course should consult with the instructor prior to or during the first week of classes.

ACCOMMODATION

Students seeking academic accommodation on medical grounds for any missed tests, exams, participation components and/or assignments worth 10% or more of their final

