

# PHL 382: Death and Dying

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Office Hours: Mondays and Wednesdays, 4:30–5:45 pm (JHB 419)

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## **Description**

We are all going to die. For this reason, humans have spent a great deal of time thinking about death. This course will consider some major questions, including the following: What does it mean to die? Why, if at all, is death a bad thing for the one who dies? What is the appropriate attitude for us to have towards death?

In the second part of the course we will turn to societal issues related to death and dying, in particular suicide and euthanasia. Whereas the first part primarily deals with ethical questions, this part will also consider some legal issues. Are suicide and euthanasia ever rational? Are they morally permissible or sometimes even obligatory? Should euthanasia be legal, and if so, under what circumstances? We will focus on the recent Supreme Court of Canada decision which struck down legal prohibitions on physician-assisted death.

## **Grading**

The first paper should be around 5 pages (up to 1,750 words). The second paper should be 8–10 pages (up to 3,500 words). Please use standard formatting: 1 inch (2.54cm) margins with 12-point, Times New Roman (or another suitable serif) font. Late papers will not be accepted without a justified reason and appropriate documentation.

Paper 1 (Due July 20)	20%
Paper 2 (Due August 10)	40%
Final Exam	30%
Participation	10%

## Reading Schedule

There is no assigned textbook or reading pack for this course. All of the readings are either available for free online or will be made available on Blackboard.

### Week 1: What is Death?

#### June 29

Introduction

#### July 6

- Fred Feldman, “The Enigma of Death,” *Philosophia* 21:3–4 (1992): 163–181.
- Louis Pojman, “What is Death? The Crisis of Criteria,” from *Life and Death*.

### Week 2: Well-Being

#### July 8

- Fred Feldman, “The Good Life: A defence of attitudinal hedonism,” *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 65 (2002): 604–628.
- Derek Parfit, “What Makes Someone’s Life Go Best?” from *Reasons and Persons*, 494–499.
- Peter Singer, *Practical Ethics (Second Edition)*, 83–109.

### Week 3: Harm and the Epicurean Challenge

#### July 13

- Epicurus, “Letter to Menoeceus”.
- Anthony Brueckner and John Martin Fischer, “Why is Death Bad?” *Philosophical Studies* 50:2 (1986): 213–221.
- Thomas Nagel, “Death,” from *Mortal Questions*, 1–10.
- Jeff McMahan, “Death and the Value of Life,” *Ethics* 99:1 (1988): 32–61.

### July 15

- Fred Feldman, “Some Puzzles About the Evil of Death,” *The Philosophical Review* C:2 (1991): 205–227.
- Jeff McMahan, “Part 2,” from *The Ethics of Killing*, 95–145.

### Week 4: Immortality and The Appropriate Attitude

#### July 20 – \*First paper due\*

- Bernard Williams, “The Makropulos Case: Reflections on the Tedium of Immortality,” from *Problems of the Self*: 82–100.
- Lisa Bortolotti and Yujin Nagasawa, “Immortality Without Boredom,” *Ratio* 22:3 (2009): 261–277.

### July 22

- Philip Larkin, “Aubade”.
- Julian Barnes, “The Dream,” from *A History of the World in 10 1/2 Chapters*, 281–307.

### Week 5: The Ethics of Suicide and Euthanasia

#### July 27

- R.B. Brant, “The Morality and Rationality of Suicide,” from *A Handbook for the Study of Suicide* (1975).
- John Hardwig, “Is There a Duty to Die?” *The Hastings Center Report* 27:2 (1997): 34–42.

#### July 29

- James Rachels, “Active and Passive Euthanasia,” *New England Journal of Medicine* 292 (1975): 78–80.
- Dan Brock, “Voluntary Active Euthanasia,” *The Hastings Center Report* 22:2 (1992): 10–22.
- Daniel Callahan, “When Self-Determination Runs Amok,” *The Hastings Center Report* 22:2 (1992): 52–55.

## **Week 6: The Legality of Euthanasia in Canada**

### **August 5**

- Jocelyn Downie, “What the Law Should Be for Assisted Suicide and Voluntary Euthanasia,” from *Dying Justice*, 88–107.
- L.W. Sumner, “From Prohibition to Regulation,” from *Assisted Death: A study in ethics & law*, 165–203.

### **August 10 – \*Final paper due\***

- R v. Latimer
- Carter v. Canada