



**Disability Studies 2272F (570)  
BIOETHICS AND DISABILITY  
Fall/ Winter 2025-2026**

**Instructor:** J. Marsh

**Email:** [jmarsh26@uwo.ca](mailto:jmarsh26@uwo.ca)

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**Course Information**

**Calendar Description:**

Introduction to how moral reasoning can help to identify and address current emerging disability related situations in health care practice, caregiving, health policy and research. Normative ethics, philosophy of health care, and Disability Studies models are applied to discussion of case studies.

**Antirequisite(s):** [Philosophy 2272F/G](#), the former Disability Studies 2072F/G or the former Philosophy 2072F/G.

**Extra Information:** 3 hours; Cross-listed with [Philosophy 2272F/G](#).

**Course Weight:** 0.50

**Breadth:** Category B

**Subject Code:** PHILOSOP

Notice: Unless you have either the requisites for this course (fulfilment of pre-requisites, no anti-requisite conflicts), or special permission from your Dean to enrol in it, you may be removed from this course and it will be deleted from your record. This decision may not be appealed. You will receive no adjustment to your fees in the event that you are dropped from a course for failing to have the necessary prerequisites.



## **Bioethics & Disability**

Philosophy 2272F/Disability Studies 2272F|Sec 570| Fall 2025| In-person

**Instructor:** Dr. Jonathan P. Marsh

**Office Hour:** TBA

**Email:** [jmarsh26@uwo.ca](mailto:jmarsh26@uwo.ca) (Please allow 24 hours for replies.)

**Class Times and Location(s):** See online schedule.

**Mode of instruction:** in-person

### ***Description***

According to a still prevalent “MEDICAL MODEL”, disability is a form of “illness” that needs to be treated, prevented, or cured. In recent years, various critics have urged that this traditional model of disability — far from being part of objective medicine — involves highly contentious assumptions that are incommensurate with medicine’s own commitments to justice and to do no harm. In its place, alternative models of disability, including “SOCIAL” and “MERE DIFFERENCE” MODELS, have emerged.

In this course, students will become acquainted with how these new and emerging models reimagine disability, challenge tradition and rethink core questions in bioethics.

### ***Extra Info***

CATEGORY A.

Antirequisite(s): **DS 2272F/G**,

Cross-listed with **DS 2272F/G**.

Course Weight: 0.50

**N.B. as this is an introductory and interdisciplinary course, no prior knowledge is expected or presupposed. All students are welcome.**

### ***Aims***

By the end of the semester, every committed student will

1. be acquainted with new and emerging models of disability — and of disability bioethics — and how they differ from conventional medical models.
2. understand how these differences play out not only in film and everyday media but also when it comes to framing and approaching decisions involving GENETIC SCREENING, EMBRYO SELECTION, ASSISTED DYING, PROSTHETIC LIMBS and/or COCHLEAR IMPLANTS.
3. have presented and defended their own sustained argument at the cross-section of bioethics and disability that engages and enhances recent professional literatures.
4. have cultivated skills pertaining to argumentation, dialogue, collective learning, charitable interpretation, virtuous disagreement, intellectual openness, research and clear writing (to help with outcomes 1-3).

### ***Text Info & Course-Related Expenses***

There is no textbook. Readings will be made available, without any additional cost to students, via the course website. Please note, however, that there may be a comparatively modest expense in connection with your Hollywood & Media assignment. That expense will come in the form of a one-time movie rental (which is projected to be approx. \$4.99, per group, if you decide to watch your selected film together). Please first check the library, or your prepaid subscriptions, to see if your selected film is available.

<b>Assignments</b>	<b>Values</b>	<b>Dates</b>	<b>Aims (see p. 1)</b>
1. Hollywood & Media Assignment	25%		1-4
- Written Portion (10%)		Oct 1	
- Group Presentation (15%)		Oct 9 -Nov 20 (depending on group#)	
2. Paper	30%	Nov 30	3-4
3. Final Exam	30 %	TBA (December examination period).	1 & 2
4. Active & Informed Participation	15%	Weekly	1-4

#### **1. Hollywood & Media Assignment (25%):** This assignment contains two components

- A. a small written component (worth 10%) and
- B. a group presentation component (worth 15%). Due dates will be determined once groups are assigned. Your podcasts will incorporate feedback you received on the written component.

#### **2. Research Paper (30%):** Detailed instructions will be provided. See Turnitin and AI policies below.

- **Class-specific policy on AI use:** Use of Chat GPT and any other AI (including Grammarly) is strictly prohibited in all assessments, including essays and examinations. Unauthorized use of AI will be subject to academic discipline. Cheating-detection software(s) will be employed.
- **Notice of Turnitin Analysis:** All written work may be subject to submission for textual similarity review to the 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.

#### **3. Final Exam (30%):** Anything we cover is admissible and hence a proper object of study,

unless I explicitly say otherwise in writing (via OWL Brightspace). Please do not to make any irrevocable travel arrangements until the College publishes the exam schedule. The exam will likely contain some sort of combination of shorter answers and longer answer(s), though these details should not impact your preparation methods. More details will be provided during our final session.

**4. Active & Informed Participation (15 %):** A successful participation grade encompasses more, though no less, than reliable class attendance. It also requires joining the conversation. Whether this occurs during ordinary lectures, tutorials, or workshops, or when commenting on group podcast presentations, doing this well requires taking active measures to advance the discussion. Such measures include:

- (a) being attentive,
- (b) knowing and thoughtfully engaging the assigned readings,
- (c) applying the tools and virtues associated with critical thinking (e.g., careful argumentation, open-mindedness, reflective questioning, virtuous disagreement, and active listening),
- (d) not using one's laptop/cellphone, and not talking, while others are presenting ideas,
- (e) submitting all required participation comments, via Brightspace, when prompted, within the allotted time windows, and participating, verbally, during group work and class discussions.

#### ***Methods***

Teaching methods will involve lectures, dialogues, group work, informal polls, crowdsourcing, and occasional videos.

#### ***Grading & Assignment Info***

As skills and understanding come in degrees, what follows are university-wide grade descriptors:

- **A+** 90-100% One could scarcely expect better from a student at this level
- **A** 80 – 89% Superior work which is clearly above average
- **B** 70 – 79% Good work, meeting all requirements, and eminently satisfactory
- **C** 60 – 69% Competent work, meeting requirements
- **D** 50 – 59% Fair work, minimally acceptable
- **F** below 50 Fail

**Missed Work:** With the exception of the final exam, no assignments will be received after the last day of classes. Moreover, any missed assessments will receive a grade of zero (o) unless a student receives academic considerations. Students are permitted one (1) academic consideration for this this half (0.5) course without formal supporting documentation. Let's call this an informal academic consideration.

- **Example of A Successful Informal Consideration:** A student must miss their Hollywood & Film Presentation (value 10%) due to circumstances that they could not reasonably have been expected to have foreseen, prevented or controlled. They request academic considerations in a timely manner (**within 48 hours**, by e-mailing their instructor, from their UWO account, with “PHIL 2272 request for informal academic considerations” as the title). Because an alternative assessment cannot be given without forfeiting this assignment’s essential design purpose (working together, with classmates, to collectively advance our understanding) the instructor offers them informal considerations in the form of a grade transfer to the nearest assignment: in this case the final exam (which is now worth 40% as opposed to 30%). Because this consideration request involves direct communication with the instructor, not the advisor, confidential information (e.g., medical documentation) is never shared/received/permitted.

Please note that academic considerations for a missed exam (in this class, always requires a **formal** recommendation from your advisor.

- Formal considerations for a missed **final exam** will come in the form of a special exam – ordinarily, if that is also missed, next time the course is offered, provided separate formal considerations are received.

### ***Attendance/Participation Policy***

Participation requirements are designed to enhance collective learning and enrich our classroom experience throughout the entire term. For this reason, any missed participation cannot be made up for with alternative assessments without this grade losing its meaning. Rather than providing academic considerations for individually missed sessions, I will **only require 10 of 12 full participation sessions**. There’s never a need to notify me of an absence unless you will be missing an in-class assignment (e.g., a test or an exam). Importantly, given the already flexible nature of this policy:

- Anything beyond 3 missed sessions equals **1 month+** of missed class/participation. As this (even if faultless) makes it impossible to have meaningfully contributed to the classroom learning experience of all throughout the term (the purpose of this assignment), such circumstances cannot, by their very nature, be made up for with alternative assessments. The only solution here, if considerations are received, is a full grade transfer/reweighing (i.e., your full 20% participation value is spread out over the entire remaining grades).
- **Late Registration Policy:** Late registration does not lower the required minimum number of 10.
- **Early Departure/Late Arrival Policy:** Arriving late, or departing early (which can distract, rather than enhance, the learning experiences of all) does not entitle participation credit (i.e., count towards the 10). Nor does forgetting to sign-in, even if the full session was attended.

- **No Hybrid Session Policy:** We will not have “hybrid” sessions (where some join us over Zoom) for this in-person class, though we may meet, as a class, over Zoom if the College recommends this (say if campus closes due to poor weather conditions).

### **Course Map**

#### **UNIT 0: GROUNDWORK**

- Week 1** ○. New Models of Disability & New Approaches to Bioethics

#### **UNITS 1-3: THEORETICAL & PRACTICAL CONTROVERSIES: APPLYING & COMPARING THE MODELS**

#### **Weeks 2-6** **UNIT 1. BIOETHICAL ISSUES AT THE BEGINNING OF LIFE**

Sample applied topics & controversies:

- 1.1. Genetic Screening
- 1.2. IVF & Embryo Selection
- The “Expressivist Objection” + Recent Replies

Sample case: *R (Crowter) v Health Secretary (DC)* [2022] 1 WLR 2513.

Classical principles & theories in bioethics will be compared with more recent alternatives

#### **Week 7-9** **UNIT 2. BIOETHICAL ISSUES AT THE END OF LIFE**

Sample applied topics:

- 2.1. Assisted Dying
- 2.2. Medical Futility
- 2.3. Palliative Care

Classical principles & theories in bioethics will be compared with more recent alternatives

- **Reading Week: Nov 3-9, 2025**

#### **Week 10** **UNIT 3. BIOETHICAL ISSUES DURING LIFE**

Sample topics:

- 3.1. Prosthetic Limbs

- 3.2. Cochlear Implants

**Weeks 11-12.**

Sample topics:

- 3.3. Epistemic Justice & Disability Pride
- 3.4. Quality of Life Assessments & Testimonial Justice in Medicine [Problems with “You Say You’re Happy But...Reasoning”]
- Course Conclusion + Exam Q&A. Please bring review questions with you.

**Dec 11–22, 2025 Mid-year Examination Period**

Reminder: please be sure not to make any irrevocable travel arrangements, or other firm plans, until you know the exam date for each course, including any possible make-up exams.

**KING'S UNIVERSITY COLLEGE**  
**GENERAL COURSE POLICIES**  
**2025-2026**

**1. Academic Accommodations, Consideration for Absences**

**Academic Accommodation (Accessibility)**

Accessibility Services works to ensure that academic programs are accessible to all students, and supports students who may have a condition related to, but not limited to, vision, hearing, mobility, different ways of learning, mental health, chronic illnesses, chronic pain, autism spectrum disorder, ADD/ADHD, and temporary conditions (beyond short-term academic consideration). Accessibility Services provides recommendations for accommodation based on medical documentation or psychological and cognitive assessment. The accommodation policy can be found here [Academic Accommodation for Students with Disabilities](#). Information on Accessibility Services at King's can be found [here](#).

**Academic Consideration for Student Absence**

If a student is unable to meet a course requirement due to substantial but temporary extenuating circumstances (medical or compassionate), they should follow the procedures below.

In some cases, where instructors have built flexibility into their assessments, this flexibility will already address consideration needs.

Requests for academic consideration should be directed to the Academic Advising Office of your faculty/college of registration. Requests must be made as soon as possible and no later than 48 hours after the missed assessment.

As a rule, documentation is required for academic consideration. For academic consideration requests on medical grounds, the Student Medical Certificate is available at [https://www.kings.uwo.ca/kings/assets/File/currentStudents/courses\\_enrollment/exams and tests/SMC-Feb-2025.pdf](https://www.kings.uwo.ca/kings/assets/File/currentStudents/courses_enrollment/exams_and_tests/SMC-Feb-2025.pdf).

Students are permitted one academic consideration request without supporting documentation per term per course.

Instructors may designate one assessment per half-course weight as requiring formal supporting documentation. Please refer to the course outline for each course.

For further information, please see:

[https://uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic\\_policies/appeals/academic\\_consideration\\_Sep24.pdf](https://uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/academic_consideration_Sep24.pdf)

**Absences from Final Examinations**

If you miss the Final Exam, contact the Academic Advising Office of your faculty/college of registration as soon as you are able to do so. They will assess your eligibility to write the Special Examination (the name given by the University to a makeup Final Exam).



You may also be eligible to write the Special Exam if you are in a “Multiple Exam Situation” (e.g., more than 2 exams in 23-hour period, or more than 3 exams in a 47-hour period).

If a student fails to write a scheduled Special Examination, the date of the next Special Examination (if granted) normally will be the scheduled date for the final exam the next time this course is offered. The maximum course load for that term will be reduced by the credit of the course(s) for which the final examination has been deferred. See the Academic Calendar for details (under Special Examinations).

### **Religious Accommodation**

Students should consult the University's list of recognized religious holidays, and should give notice in writing to the instructor and Academic Advising Office if a course requirement will be affected by a religious holiday/observance. Notice must be given as early as possible, and no later than two weeks prior to an examination, and one week prior to a midterm test date. It is the responsibility of such students to inform themselves concerning the work done in classes from which they are absent and to take appropriate action.

## **2. Support Services**

Accessibility, Counselling and Student Development at King's University College:  
<https://www.kings.uwo.ca/current-students/student-services/>

Students experiencing emotional or mental health distress can access services at King's University

College: <http://www.kings.uwo.ca/current-students/campus-services/student-supportservices/personal-counselling/>

Good2talk is a good online and phone 24/7 resource for students and is available in English, Mandarin, and French: <https://good2talk.ca>, 1-866-925-5454

MentalHealth@Western provides a complete list of options about how to obtain help:  
[https://www.uwo.ca/health/mental\\_wellbeing/](https://www.uwo.ca/health/mental_wellbeing/)

Academic Support Services at King's University College:  
<https://www.kings.uwo.ca/current-students/academic-resources/>

### **GBSV Support:**

King's is committed to reducing incidents of gender-based and sexual violence and providing compassionate support to anyone who has gone through these traumatic events. If you have experienced sexual or gender-based violence (either recently or in the past), you will find information about support services for survivors, including emergency contacts at:  
<https://www.kings.uwo.ca/about-kings/safe-campus/gender-and-sexual-violence/>

You can reach someone supports at Kings by emailing [Care@kings.uwo.ca](mailto:Care@kings.uwo.ca) or calling 519-930-4640 to reach a social worker who can offer help.

You can also reach Western's Gender-Based Violence & Survivor Support Case Manager by email or by calling 519-661-3568.

Further supports can be found on this website: <https://www.kings.uwo.ca/about-kings/safecampus/gender-and-sexual-violence/>

See also [https://www.uwo.ca/health/student\\_support/survivor\\_support/get-help.html](https://www.uwo.ca/health/student_support/survivor_support/get-help.html)

University Students' Council offers many valuable support services for students, including the health insurance plan: <http://westernusc.ca/services/>

### **3. Statement on Use of Electronic Devices**

Use of Electronic Devices: Unless explicitly stated otherwise, you are not allowed to have a cell phone, or any other electronic device, with you during tests or examinations. Unauthorized possession of such a device during a test or examination constitutes an academic offence.

Use of Laptops, Tablets, and Smartphones in the Classroom: King's University College at Western University acknowledges the integration of new technologies and learning methods into the curriculum. The use of electronic devices such as laptop computers, tablets, or smartphones can contribute to student engagement and effective learning. At the same time, King's recognizes that instructors and students share jointly the responsibility to establish and maintain a respectful classroom environment conducive to learning.

The use of electronic devices by students during lectures, seminars, labs, etc., shall be for matters related to the course at hand only. Students found to be using electronic devices for purposes not directly related to the class may be subject to sanctions under the Student Code of Conduct; see <https://www.kings.uwo.ca/current-students/student-affairs/code-of-student-conduct1/>

Inappropriate use of electronics (e.g., laptops, tablets, smartphones) during lectures, seminars, labs, etc., creates a significant disruption. As a consequence, instructors may choose to limit the use of electronic devices in these settings. In addition, in order to provide a safe classroom environment, students attending in-person class sessions are strongly advised to operate laptops with batteries rather than power cords.

### **4. Statement on Academic Offences**

King's is committed to academic integrity. Scholastic offences are taken seriously and students are directed to read the appropriate policy, specifically, the definition of what constitutes a Scholastic Offence, is posted at

[http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic\\_policies/appeals/scholastic\\_discipline\\_undergrad.pdf](http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/scholastic_discipline_undergrad.pdf)

It is expected that students will submit work that is truly their own, completed without external assistance (human or artificial) except as explicitly permitted by the course instructor. Check with you instructor on what tools, including generative AI (ChatGPT, translation tools, grammarchecking tools) are permitted in the course. Because a tool is permitted in one course, that does not mean it is permitted in other courses.

All required papers may be subject to submission for textual similarity review to the 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; see <https://elearningtoolkit.uwo.ca/tools/Originality Reports - TurnItIn.html>.

Computer-marked multiple-choice tests and/or exams may be subject to submission for similarity review by software that will check for unusual coincidences in answer patterns that may indicate cheating.

### **5. Copyright of Course Material**

Lectures and course materials, including PowerPoint presentations, tests, outlines, and similar materials are protected by copyright. Faculty members are the exclusive owner of copyright in those materials they create. Students may take notes and make copies for their own use. Students may not allow others to reproduce or distribute lecture notes and course materials publicly (whether or not a fee is charged) without the express written consent of a faculty member. Unauthorized sharing of class content is subject to academic discipline.

Similarly, students own copyright in their own original papers and exam essays. If a faculty member wishes to post a student's answers or papers on the course website, they should ask for the student's written permission.

### **6. Use of Recordings**

Participants in this course are not permitted to record the sessions, except where recording is an approved accommodation and/or the participant has the prior written permission of the instructor. Unauthorized recording and/or sharing of class content is subject to academic discipline.

### **7. Policy on Attendance**

Any student who, in the opinion of the instructor, is absent too frequently from class or laboratory periods in any course, will be reported to the Dean of the Faculty offering the course, after due warning has been given. On the recommendation of the department concerned, and with the permission of the Dean of that Faculty, the student will be debarred from taking the regular examination in the course.