



Thanatology 1025A (670)  
Summer 2026  
Introduction to Thanatology

**Course Information:**

**Calendar Description:** An interdisciplinary overview of major themes and attitudes regarding death, loss, grief, and bereavement. Topics include the Death System, personal death awareness, ethical issues, end of life care, supporting grieving individuals, funeral practices, and cultural issues in the field.

**Prerequisite(s):**

**Anti-requisite(s):** The former Thanatology 2200.

**Extra Information:** 3 lecture hours.

**Course Weight:**0.50      **Breadth:** Category A

**Subject Code:** THANAT

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 enroll 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 pre-requisites.

## **INTRODUCTION TO THANATOLOGY: THANAT 1025A 670**

### **COURSE FORMAT 670 (online)**

This is a fully online course that will use King's learning platform, OWL (Brightspace), and other educational resources based on the needs of the course. This class is designed to be **asynchronous**, meaning we will not have a regular, mandatory time when the entire class must be online. However, there will/may be some synchronous activities that you will sign up for based on your own schedule, including office hours or optional group Zoom discussions.

This course begins on May 4 and continues until July 24, honouring all important dates derived from University approved guidelines and academic policies.

Throughout the course you are expected to interact regularly with other students, and with me, as your instructor. The course is designed to structure and guide some self-paced elements as well as offer interactive opportunities for community learning through online discussions. Each student brings their own knowledge, experience, and interests to our learning community, we will build on that and use our course material (readings, discussions, lessons, etc.) to amplify learning for everyone.

### **Our commitment to each other:**

We will each be responsible for our own learning progress and for contributing to the growth of our learning community through our participation in all course activities and assessments. We will be ready to engage and connect meaningfully. We will be present, professional, respectful, and ready to contribute to our group.

Welcome to our class!

### **ADDITIONAL CLASS POLICIES FOR ONLINE BEHAVIOR AND INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY**

- All students are expected to engage online in a professional and respectful manner. This includes all interactions with peers, as well as communication with your professor. Failure to do so will result in Academic discipline.
- Course content created by a faculty member is considered the faculty member's intellectual property; it should not be distributed, shared in any public domain, or sold by a student or other third party without prior written consent of the faculty member.

**Instructor:** Sherry Smith, Ph.D., FT

**Email:** [ssmit534@uwo.ca](mailto:ssmit534@uwo.ca)

**Zoom Office Hours:** Tuesdays 1:00-3:00 PM or by appointment

**Course Location:** Online

#### HOW TO CONTACT ME

Contact me by email [ssmit534@uwo.ca](mailto:ssmit534@uwo.ca) and please include the class course number in the subject line. I will try to respond within 24 business hours, Monday – Friday, 9:00 AM to 5:00 PM.

#### COURSE OVERVIEW

This introductory course will provide an overview of foundational topics in the field of Thanatology, including attitudes about death, historical and sociological perspectives, hospice/palliative care, bereavement/grief, supporting bereaved individuals, and current trends and funeral practices.

#### COURSE OBJECTIVES

- To identify and discuss foundational topics in Thanatology.
- To describe the historical and sociological influences on current thinking about death, grief and loss.
- To identify the basic principles, practices and contexts of palliative/hospice care.
- To articulate current theoretical perspectives in grief/bereavement.
- To provide examples of effective support to people who are dying and/or bereaved.
- To examine the purpose and role of funerals in the contemporary world.

#### REQUIRED COURSE MATERIAL

- 1) Northcott, H., & Wilson, D. (2022). *Dying and Death in Canada*. Fourth Edition. [\$49.95 Print]. University of Toronto Press. [Library link for e-book](#)
- 2) Assigned online readings available on OWL.

#### RECOMMENDED TEXT (used in all Thanatology courses)

- 1) American Psychological Association. (2020). *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association* (7<sup>th</sup> ed.). [\$47.90 Print]. American Psychological Association.

#### COURSE REQUIREMENTS AND EVALUATION OF GRADES

Public Thanatology Essay	25%
Online Midterm Examination	25%
Participation	20%
Online Final Examination	30%

### **FRIDAY MAKE-UP EXAMS**

Please note that Friday, Make-Up Exams may only be written with the instructor's consent.

#### **PARTICIPATION (20%)**

Participation in the discussion forum is critical for maximizing learning experiences in any distance education course. In this course students are required to be part of an online community of learners who collectively interact through discussion. The instructor will facilitate discussions; however, the instructor or teaching assistant will not address every single post. In general, they might share a related idea, intervene if the discussion digresses, or connect student comments together to enhance student learning. Post as early as possible in the week so that others will have time to respond to your contributions. Be respectful of other people's ideas, opinions, and beliefs. It is fine to disagree but please respect others' rights to think differently. Discussions will be checked daily during the week and occasionally on weekends. Not participating in the discussion forums is the same as not showing up for class. Further details can be found on OWL Brightspace under "Course Introduction" - "Participation Rubric."

#### **ONLINE MIDTERM EXAM (25%)**

Your midterm exam will be offered online through the OWL site, and it is scheduled for Friday June 12, 7:00-9:00 PM. The midterm exam will cover all course content that has been presented up to the date of the exam, including readings, lecture notes and important online discussions. It may include multiple-choice questions, true/false questions, and/or short answer/essay style questions.

#### **PUBLIC THANATOLOGY ESSAY (25%)**

This participatory assignment requires you to "find death in your immediate environment" (Joralemon, 2016, p. 109) and apply what you have learned in class to analyze the significance of public and private memorials in your community. The assignment is intended to be both experiential (you will go out in search of memorials) and scholarly (you will connect your observations with what we are learning in class and in the textbook). Please review the assignment instructions for more information. Further details can be found on OWL Brightspace under "Assignments." The deadline for this assessment is Monday July 6, 10:00 AM. No late penalty will be imposed for the first 72 hours after deadline, in case of extenuating circumstances. Students should plan to submit by the deadline. Because the submission deadline for this assessment already includes flexibility, the instructor reserves the right to deny academic consideration for assignments submitted past the 72-hour period.

#### **BONUS MARKS (2%)**

All students who book and attend an appointment with The Write Place for feedback on the Public Thanatology Essay will receive a 2% bonus mark, which will be applied to your final grade. You are responsible for uploading a confirmation of your appointment and attendance to receive the bonus marks. Please submit this as a separate attachment along with your essay. For more information on The Write Place and for making an appointment, please visit [Academic Supports](#).

### ONLINE FINAL EXAM (30%)

The final exam will cover course materials presented from the previous exam forward. It will not be a cumulative exam. It may include multiple-choice questions, true/false questions, and short answer/essay style questions. The final exam will be scheduled during the regular examination period (July 27-30, 2026).

### WORKLOAD

Students should expect to spend approximately six hours each week completing the lecture material, readings, audio-visuials, forum discussions and assignments. You are expected to complete this prior to actively participating in the forum discussions.

### BOUNDARIES AND CONFIDENTIALITY

Introduction to Thanatology is an academic, university-level course. Students should note that the themes and personal sharing required for integration of the subject matter in this course may reawaken their personal grief process and feelings of vulnerability. While this course will be made richer by the sharing of personal narratives, it is not the purpose of this forum to resolve emotions related to student life losses. If you have experienced recent bereavement or another significant loss, you might consider not taking THANAT 1025 at this time. Please see the instructor privately if you have any questions or concerns about the topics covered in this course. When required, students should seek professional support. Your instructor can provide more information about support available through King's.

While the course may contribute to the student's personal growth, grades will be assigned on the basis of academic achievement and mastery over the material covered. All participants are expected to complete the course requirements to a high standard in order to receive credit. While there may be opportunities to present personal experiences and feelings to the class, appropriate limits to self-disclosure or to the time allotted to individuals will be upheld when personal narratives are shared. All participants must agree to treat one another with respect and hold each other's contributions as *strictly confidential*.

### COURSE FORMAT

Weekly lecture material may include PowerPoint presentations, film/YouTube clips, case studies, podcasts, interactive exercises, or lecture notes and will include material not contained in the text. Supplementary reading material will also be assigned and will be placed on reserve in the library or posted on OWL. No attempt will be made to cover all the assigned readings in lectures or in online discussions. Students are responsible for reading and understanding the assigned portions of the textbook and supplementary reading list, even if this material is not covered in lectures or online discussions.

### INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY STATEMENT

Course content created by a faculty member is considered the faculty member's intellectual property; distribution of this material outside of the course (shared online or in any public domain, sold by a student or other third party without prior written consent of the faculty member) is explicitly forbidden and is grounds for academic discipline.

### ASSIGNMENT STYLE GUIDE

All graded assignments must be written using APA 7<sup>th</sup> Edition. This includes the weekly forum discussions. Students should make use of these guidelines provided by King's University College with regards to style: [Thanatology: Writing & Citing](#) and [APA 7th Ed. Quick Guide](#).

## NOTICE OF TURNITIN ANALYSIS

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. Use of the service is subject to the licensing agreement, currently between the University of Western Ontario and Turnitin.com (<http://www.turnitin.com>).

## ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

Within this course, use of generative artificial intelligence (AI) tools (such as ChatGPT, Claude, Gemini, co-pilot, translation tools, and grammar-checking tools) is not permitted for written work submitted for evaluation. Unauthorized use of AI will be subject to academic discipline.

## LATE SUBMISSIONS/EXTENSIONS/ EXAMS

Students must endeavor to submit assignments by the due date listed in the Course Outline and OWL. The assignment (not including exams) will be subject to a 72-hour grace period. Students may submit assignments up to three days after the listed due date without penalty. Assignments submitted after the grace period will be penalized at a rate of 5% per day unless prior arrangements have been made with the instructor. If you are unable to attend the mid-term exam due to an illness or other extenuating circumstance, you must receive academic consideration from the ADO as soon as possible. Examinations scheduled by the Office of the Registrar during official examination periods (July/August) always require formal supporting documentation.

**The final date to drop a half course without academic penalty is July 14, 2026.**

## 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

## COURSE SCHEDULE, READINGS AND DUE DATES

<b>May 4</b> Readings:	<b>Module 1 – What is Thanatology?</b> (1) Northcott & Wilson, Preface & Chapter 2
<b>May 11</b> Readings:	<b>Module 2 – Death and Canadian Social Institutions</b> (1) Northcott & Wilson, Chapter 3
<b>May 19</b> Readings:	<b>Module 3 – Historical Overview and Reflection of History in Cemetery Markers</b> (1) Northcott & Wilson, Chapter 1 (pp.18-26) (2) Honderich, H. (2021, July 15). Why Canada is mourning the deaths of hundreds of children.
<b>May 25</b> Readings:	<b>Module 4 – Diversity &amp; Cultural Awareness in Thanatology Contexts</b> (1) Northcott & Wilson, Chapter 4

(2) Bordere, T.C. (2009). Culturally conscious thanatology. *The Forum* 35(2), p. 1, 3-4.

## June 1

Readings:

### Module 5 – Media and Tragic Events

(1) Monahan, B. (2010). News as public drama: The era of the endless news cycle. In B. Monahan, *The shock of the news: Media coverage and the making of 9/11* (pp. 18-38). New York University Press.

(2) Slovic, P., Västfjäll, D., Erlandsson, A., & Gregory, R. (2017). Iconic photographs and the ebb and flow of empathic response to humanitarian disasters. *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences of the United States of America*, 114(4), 640-644.

## June 12

**Online Midterm Exam - Friday June 12, 7:00-9:00 PM**

## June 15

Readings:

### Module 6 – Popular Culture and Death

(1) Durkin, K. F. (2009). Popular culture and images of death. In C. D. Bryant & D. L. Peck (Eds.), *Encyclopedia of death and the human experience* (pp. 812-813). Sage.

(2) Fitzsimmons, P. (2009). Depictions of death in television and the movies. In C. D. Bryant & D. L. Peck (Eds.), *Encyclopedia of death and the human experience* (pp. 360-362). Sage.

(3) Penfold-Mounce, R. (2018). Posthumous careers of celebrities & the undead, morbid sensibility and morbid space. In *Death, the dead and popular culture* (pp. 9-39 & 63-86). Emerald Publishing Limited.

## June 22

Readings:

### Module 7 – Funerals and Funeral Planning

(1) Lowe, J., Rumbold, B., & Aoun, S. M. (2020). Memorialization during COVID-19: implications for the bereaved, service providers and policy makers. *Palliative Care and Social Practice*, 14, 1-9.

(2) Waugh, Earle. (2018). "Funeral practices in Canada." *The Canadian Encyclopedia*.

(3) Bereavement Ontario Network. A guide to death care in Ontario.

(4) Fort, N. (2020, June 8). Amid protests, funerals offer a space for collective mourning – and fighting anti-Black oppression.

## June 29

Readings:

### Module 8 – Facing Death: End of Life Care

(1) Northcott/Wilson, Chapter 5

(2) CBC Radio One. (2018, January 26). A year after MAID, a husband talks about being the spouse left behind.

(3) Harris, D. (2017). An egalitarian perspective to end of life care. In N. Thompson & G. Cox (Eds.), *Handbook of the sociology of death, grief, and bereavement: A guide to theory and practice* (pp. 159-176). Routledge.

## July 6

Readings:

### Module 9 – Nondeath Loss and Grief

(1) Harris, D. (2021). Living losses: Nonfinite loss, ambiguous loss, and chronic sorrow. In D. Harris & H. Winokuer, *Principles and practice of grief counselling*. Third Ed. (pp. 121-137). Springer Publishing Company.

(2) Davies, E., Kassiotis, E., & Quinn, K. (2019). Supporting the families of missing people: More than an investigation. In D. Harris (Ed.), *Non-death loss and grief: Context and clinical implications* (pp. 128-138). Routledge.

**Public Thanatology Essay due Monday July 6, 10:00 AM**

**July 13**

Readings:

**Module 10 – Helping Bereaved Individuals**

(1) Northcott/Wilson, Chapter 6

**July 20**

Readings:

**Module 11 – Animal Companion Loss and Course Conclusion**

(1) Northcott, Conclusion

(2) Spain, B., O'Dwyer, L., & Moston, S. (2019). Pet loss: Understanding disenfranchised grief, memorial use, and posttraumatic growth. *Anthrozoös*, 32(4), 555-568.

**GENDER-BASED SEXUAL VIOLENCE**

King's at Western is committed to reducing incidents of gender-based violence (GBSV) and providing compassionate support to anyone who is going through or has gone through these traumatic events. If you are experiencing or have experienced GBSV (either recently or in the past), you will find information about support services for survivors, including emergency contacts at the following website:

[Mental Health and Wellness at King's – King's University College](#)

You can reach some supports at King's 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 reach some supports at King's by emailing [CARE@kings.uwo.ca](mailto:CARE@kings.uwo.ca) or calling 519-930-4640 to reach a Case Manager/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.

# 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 [here](#).

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://mykings.ca/intranet/app/#/academics/academic-advising/academic-consideration-requests-and-student-absence-portal>

### **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 [https://academicsupport.uwo.ca/accessible\\_education/exams/index.html](https://academicsupport.uwo.ca/accessible_education/exams/index.html).

## **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://mykings.ca/intranet/app/#/student-supports-and-services>

Students experiencing emotional or mental health distress can access services at King's University College: <https://mykings.ca/intranet/app/#/student-supports-and-services/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/psych/index.html>

Academic Support Services at King's University College:

<https://mykings.ca/intranet/app/#/academics/academic-advising>

## **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://mykings.ca/intranet/app/#/student-supports-and-services/campus-safety-and-reporting/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.

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://mykings.ca/intranet/app/#/student-supports-and-services/campus-safety-and-reporting/student-code-of-conduct>

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 [here](#).

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 your instructor on what tools, including generative AI (ChatGPT, translation tools, grammar-checking 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/OriginalityReports-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.