



Thanatology 1025A (570)

Fall 2025

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):

Antirequisite(s): The former Thanatology 2200.

Extra Information: 3 lecture hours.

Course Weight: 0.50 **Breadth:** A

Subject Code: THANAT

Notice: Unless you have either the requisites for this course (fulfilment of pre-requisites, no antirequisite 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 prerequisites.



**Thanatology 1025A/570
Introduction to Thanatology
Fall 2025**

Professor: Dr. Lisa McLean (she/her)

Email: lmclea43@uwo.ca - Please include the course name in your email subject line.

Course time, location, and office hours information can be found in our course OWL site.

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 on death and dying, hospice/palliative care, bereavement and grief, supporting bereaved individuals, and funerals and funeral planning.

Course Objectives

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

Mode of Instruction

In-person

Required Texts

- 1) Northcott, H. C., and Wilson, D. (2022). *Dying and Death in Canada*. 4th Edition. University of Toronto Press.
 - The textbook is available for purchase through the [UWO Bookstore](#) (\$54.05 or \$40.00 for ebook).
 - You can also access the text online for free through the Course Readings tab in OWL. I recommend that you purchase the text as there is a limit to the number of chapters that can be downloaded through the library system.
 - You are recommended to purchase this version as it is substantially different from previous versions.
- 2) Additional assigned online readings available through OWL (free).

Course Requirements and Evaluation of Grades

Participation	20%
Midterm Exam	25%
Public Thanatology Essay	25%
Final Exam	30%

Participation (20%)

Class attendance and participation are an integral part of this course. Your participation will be evaluated by 1) weekly class attendance, and 2) participation in small-group and individual work during class time.

Students are expected to attend class prepared to discuss the readings of the week and actively participate in class discussions. To be fully prepared to participate, **you must complete the week's readings prior to attending class.** To track attendance, a sign-up sheet will be circulated during class time and students will be responsible for making sure that they have signed the attendance sheet each week. Students who miss three (3) or more classes are at risk for debarment from the final exam (see 'Debarment of Students' on page 4).

We all contribute to the integrity of our learning environment and therefore it is important to arrive on time and to be fully present for the entire class time. Although it is understandable that occasionally circumstances can result in a few minutes' delay, **it is unacceptable to habitually arrive late or leave earlier than the class is dismissed by the professor.** Students with extenuating circumstances that necessitate frequent absences may advise the professor in advance of these circumstances to request occasional accommodation if necessary. **Any accommodations requested will be granted on the basis of fairness to all students in the class.**

If you are ill or otherwise are unable to attend class, you may post in the OWL Forum board **2 times** in lieu of class attendance. Additional absences will receive a '0' grade for the day unless you have an approved academic accommodation or consideration from the Academic Dean's Office. Please contact your professor if you have approved accommodations or an academic consideration request from the ADO that may impact your participation.

Midterm Exam (25%), October 20. In-class.

The midterm exam will cover all course content that has been presented up to the date of the exam, including readings, lectures, and in-class discussions. The exam will consist of short answer questions.

Public Thanatology Essay (25%), due Monday, November 17, 11:59pm.

This participatory assignment requires you to 'find death in your immediate environment' (Joralemon, 2016, p. 109) and apply what you've 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. Your completed essay will be uploaded to the Assignments tab in OWL.

Final Exam (30%), scheduled during the exam period (December 11-22)

The final exam will be scheduled during the exam period in December. This exam will cover material presented from the previous exam forward. It is not cumulative. The date and time of the exam will be posted as soon as it is released. The exam will consist of short answer questions.

Bonus Marks (2%)

During this course, we will be practicing the basics of scholarly writing, which will help prepare you for your academic career and other writing intensive courses in Thanatology. All students who book and attend an appointment with The Write Place for feedback on a written assignment will receive a 2% bonus mark, which will be applied to your final grade. You are responsible for emailing me a confirmation of your appointment in order to receive bonus marks. For more information on The Write Place and for making an appointment, please visit: <https://www.kings.uwo.ca/current-students/academic-resources/the-write-place/appointments-and-drop-ins/>.

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

Important Information

A Note on Workload

Students should expect to spend approximately **6 hours** each week completing the readings, attending class, and completing the assignments. **You are expected to have completed all course readings before class on Monday so you can actively participate in the discussion.**

Office Hours and Contacting the Professor

I have set office hours each week for drop in at my office and will be available for meetings by appointment to discuss your progress, assignments, and any questions you may have. The weekly drop-in office hours will be available on a first come, first serve basis and I will only speak with one student at a time (meaning you may need to wait until it is your turn or make an appointment). You can find details about office hours (location and time) in OWL.

To contact me, email lmclea43@uwo.ca and **include the course name** and number in the subject line. I will try to respond within 48 hours, Monday to Friday, 9am to 5pm.

Boundaries & 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 professor privately if you have any questions or concerns about the topics covered in this course. When required, students should seek professional support. Your professor 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*.

Classes and Readings

Classes may include lectures, films, case study discussion, interactive exercises, etc. and will include material not contained in the text. Supplementary reading material may be assigned and posted on OWL. *No attempt will be made to cover all the assigned readings in class time. Students are responsible for reading and understanding the assigned portions of the textbook and additional readings, even if this material is not covered in the class lectures.*

Intellectual Property Statement

Recording of lectures or tutorials without the explicit consent of the Professor or TA is grounds for academic discipline. 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.

Late Submissions/Extensions/Missed Exams

Students must endeavor to submit assignments by the due date listed in the Syllabus and OWL. Assignments (not including exams) will be subject to a **3-day grace period**. Students may submit assignments up to 3 days after the listed due date without penalty. Assignments submitted after the grace period will be **penalized at a rate of 2% per day** unless prior arrangements have been made with the professor.

If you cannot submit an assignment within the 3-day grace period, you must seek approval from the Academic Dean's Office (ADO) for academic consideration (see the policy section).

If you think you will not be able to attend the mid-term exam due to an illness or other extenuating circumstance, you must receive academic consideration from the ADO (see policy section) as soon as possible. You will then be required to write a make-up exam at the next possible Friday make-up session (October 31). Absences from final examinations will follow the policy described in Appendix A.

Debarment of Students from Writing the Final Examination

A student may be debarred from writing the final examination for failure to maintain satisfactory academic standing throughout the academic year.

Any student who, in the opinion of the professor, is absent too frequently from class in any course will be reported to the Chair of the Department of Thanatology (after due warning has been given*). On the recommendation of the department chair, and with the permission of the Academic Dean, the student will be debarred from taking the regular examination in the course.

*Due warning means that the instructor has advised the student in writing/email of the nature of the unsatisfactory performance (i.e. absent too frequently from class), and the consequence of continued unsatisfactory performance (i.e. if another class is missed, the instructor will advise the department and request the student be debarred from writing the final exam).

Academic Integrity, Plagiarism and AI Policy

King's is committed to fostering a culture of professionalism, honesty, and academic integrity, and all members of our community—faculty, staff, and students—have a role to play in promoting an ethical learning environment. Furthermore, through the work they submit for

academic evaluation, students develop important habits of critical thinking, independent inquiry, and creativity. Thus, 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 professor.

Within this course, use of generative artificial intelligence (AI) tools (such as Chat GPT) is not permitted to generate written content (not including spelling/grammar check) for work submitted for evaluation. Unauthorized use of AI will be subject to academic discipline. If you are unsure of the policy surrounding AI use in this class, please consult with your professor.

Reasons for this policy include*:

- This introductory course is intended for you to learn Thanatological theory and concepts, integrate these ideas, and practice scholarly writing. If you are not engaging with the course, including the assignments, you are not learning.
- AI raises a number of questions regarding academic integrity, ethics, and plagiarism. These questions include whether work submitted using AI can be considered ‘your’ own work, and AI firms’ use of [uncredited and uncompensated materials](#) from writers, journalists, and artists.
- Work produced with AI often contains errors and fabrications, while also reproducing and reinforcing negative stereotypes and bias.
- There have been serious questions raised about the [environmental impacts](#) of AI databases and [labour exploitation](#) on the part of their parent companies among a plethora of other ethical concerns.

These issues represent just some of ethical dilemmas that have been posed by the introduction of AI in academic spaces as well as the business practices of AI companies. For these reasons, the use of AI, including ChatGPT and similar generative AI tools, is **not permitted** in this course.

*Adapted with permission from [Olivia Stowell](#), @oliviastowell on X, June 16, 2024.

Plagiarism involves the unacknowledged use of others’ words and ideas. Whenever you use another person’s ideas or words, you must cite your source according to APA guidelines (**APA Manual, 7th Edition**). Plagiarism is a major offense and is taken seriously by the professor and the College.

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>).

The penalties for a student guilty of a scholastic offense range from refusal of a passing grade on the assignment, refusal of a passing grade in the course, suspension from the university to expulsion from the university.

Plagiarism is a major academic offence. Please refer to Western’s scholastic discipline policy, which can be found [here](#).

Assignment Style Guide

All graded assignments should be written using APA 7th Edition. Students should make use of these guidelines provided by King's University College with regards to style: [APA 7th Ed. Quick Guide](#).

Drop Date

The final date to drop a half course without academic penalty is **December 1, 2025**.

Course Schedule

- Sept 8** **Week 1 — What is Thanatology?**
Readings: 1) Northcott and Wilson. Preface & Chapter 2
- Sept 15** **Week 2 — Death and Canadian Social Institutions**
Readings: 1) Northcott and Wilson. Chapter 3
2) Northcott and Wilson. Chapter 1. pp. 18-26. (Only part of the chapter is assigned).
- Supplementary:* (We will listen to excerpts in class)
The Current. (2022, Oct 18). *Why one doctor says modern medicine has disrupted our relationship with death*. [Podcast, 23:36 mins]. CBC Radio.
<https://www.cbc.ca/listen/live-radio/1-63-the-current/clip/15943036-why-one-doctor-says-modern-medicine-disrupted-relationship>
- Sept 22** **Week 3 — Individual Perspectives on Dying and Death**
Readings: 1) Northcott and Wilson, Chapter 5
2) Cadell, S. (2020), April 20). Grief in the time of COVID-19. *Medium*.
<https://medium.com/@scadell/grief-in-the-time-of-covid-19-8d414307e17d>
- Sept 29** **Week 4 — Colonialism & Loss in Canada**
Readings: 1) Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada. (2015). Canada's residential schools: The history, part 1: Origins to 1939. In *The final report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada*. McGill-Queen's University Press.
• Statement from the Chair, Justice Murray Sinclair. (pp. vii-ix)
• Introduction. (pp. 3-6)
2) Joseph, B. (2018). *21 things you may not know about the Indian Act: Helping Canadians make reconciliation with Indigenous Peoples a reality*. Indigenous Relations Press.
• Introduction & The Indian Act (pp. 3-12)
• Points 10-15 (pp. 47-70)
- Recommended:* Appendix 2: Indian Residential Schools: A Chronology and Appendix 3: Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada: Calls to Action.
- Oct 6** **Week 5 — Culture and Thanatology**
Readings: 1) Northcott and Wilson. Chapter 4.
2) Bordere, T. (2009). Culturally conscientious thanatology. *The Forum* 35(2), pp. 1, 3-4.
- Oct 13** **NO CLASS - THANKSGIVING**
- Oct 20** **Week 6 — Mid-Term Exam**
The mid-term exam will take place during class time.
- Oct 27** **Week 7 — Memory, Memorialization, and Social Change**
Readings: 1) Joralemon, D. (2011). *Mortal dilemmas: The troubled landscape of death in America*. Routledge.
• Chapter 7: Remember (pp. 109-122)
2) Waugh, E. (2017). Funeral Practices in Canada. *The Canadian Encyclopedia*.
<https://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/funeral-practices>

3) The Current. (2020, June 8). Amid protests, funerals offer a space for collective mourning — and fighting anti-Black oppression. *CBC Radio*.
<https://www.cbc.ca/radio/thecurrent/the-current-for-june-8-2020-1.5602912/amid-protests-funerals-offer-a-space-for-collective-mourning-and-fighting-anti-black-oppression-1.5603443>

Nov 3 - 9 READING WEEK

Nov 10 Week 8 — Models of Grief

Readings: 1) Northcott and Wilson, Chapter 6

Nov 17 Week 9 — Non-death Loss and Grief

Public Thanatology Essay Due: Monday, November 17, 11:59pm

Readings: 1) Harris, D. (2021). Living losses: Nonfinite loss, ambiguous loss, and chronic sorrow. In D. Harris & H. Winokuer (Eds.), *Principles and practice of grief counselling*. (3rd Ed.; pp. 121-137). Springer.
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

Nov 24 Week 10 — Grieving Pets and Non-human Animals

Readings: 1) Spain, B., O'Dwyer, L., & Moston, S. (2019). Pet loss: Understanding disenfranchised grief, memorial use, and posttraumatic growth, *Anthrozoös*, 32(4), 555-568. DOI: 10.1080/08927936.2019.1621545
2) Meyers, B. Disenfranchised grief and the loss of an animal companion. In K. J. Doka (Ed.), *Disenfranchised grief: New directions, challenges, and strategies for practice* (251-264). Research Press.

Dec 1 Week 11 — Popular Culture and Death

Readings: 1) Penfold-Mounce, R. (2018). *Death, the dead and popular culture*. Emerald Publishing Limited.
• Chapter 2. Posthumous Careers of Celebrities (pp. 9-39)
2) Haley, E. (n/d). Death in Disney Movies: Making the Most of Teachable Movie Moments. *What's Your Grief?* <https://whatsyourgrief.com/death-in-disney-movies/>

NOTE: Last drop deadline is December 1, 2025

Dec 8 Week 12— Exam Review Class & Film

Course overview, exam prep, and film screening (time permitting).

The **final exam** will take place during the exam period (Dec 11 - 22). Date TBD

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 Considerations for Absence/Missed Assessments

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.

Requests for academic consideration should be directed to the Academic Advising Office of your faculty/college of registration using the extranet portal (www.extranet.uwo.ca). 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.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/medicalform.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.

In some cases, where instructors have built flexibility into their assessments, this flexibility will already address consideration needs and further consideration may be denied. Please refer to the course outline for each course.

Academic consideration for examinations scheduled by the Office of the Registrar always requires documentation.

The policy on academic consideration is found here:

https://uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/academic_consideration_Sep24.pdf

Absences from Final Examinations

If you miss the final examination, 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 examination). 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.

For policy on accommodation for religious holidays, see:

https://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/accommodation_religious.pdf

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-support-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/mental_wellbeing/

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

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/>

See also 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

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 are permitted in the course, including generative AI (e.g. ChatGPT, translation tools, grammar-checking tools). 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/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 of 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.