



Thanatology 3355F/G (670)
Winter 2026

Ethical Issues in Death, Dying and Bereavement

Course Information:

Calendar Description: Overview of ethical issues pertinent to end of life and bereavement aftercare. Exploration of various theoretical frameworks and specific relevant topics such as euthanasia, assisted suicide, informed choice and decision-making capacity, patient rights, research futility, resource allocation, and quality of life issues.

Prerequisite(s):

Anti-requisite(s):

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.

ETHICAL ISSUES IN DEATH, DYING AND BEREAVEMENT: THANAT 3355G 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 **January 5** and continues until **April 9**, honouring all important dates derived from University approved guidelines and academic policies.

<https://www.kings.uwo.ca/current-students/academic-resources/academic-dates-and-events/>

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.

Ethical Issues in Death, Dying and Bereavement

Thanatology 3355G 670

Winter Distance 2026

Instructor: Sherry Smith, Ph.D., FT

Email: ssmit534@uwo.ca

Zoom Office Hours: Mondays 1:00-4:00 PM or by appointment

Course Location: Online

HOW TO CONTACT ME

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

CALENDAR DESCRIPTION

Overview of ethical issues pertinent to end of life and bereavement aftercare. Exploration of various theoretical frameworks and specific relevant topics such as Medical Assistance in Dying, informed choice and decision-making capacity, patient rights, research ethics, medical futility, resource allocation, and quality of life issues.

COURSE OBJECTIVES

- To provide students with an introductory overview of the philosophical, historical, and medical concepts shaping ethical debates, particularly in a Canadian context.
- To introduce, compare, and contrast principled approaches to ethics at the end of life.
- To incorporate the studied ethical approaches to formulate and support with clear and careful reasoning a judgment of what ought to be done in typical health care ethical cases.
- To articulate alternative views on what ought to be done in such cases and evaluate and examine the reasons for or against these alternative views.

REQUIRED COURSE MATERIAL

- 1) Collier, C. & Haliburton, R. (2021). *Bioethics in Canada: A philosophical introduction*. (Third ed.). Canadian Scholar's Press Incorporated. [\$112.15 Print]. [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* (7th ed.). [\$47.90 Print]. American Psychological Association.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS AND EVALUATION OF GRADES

Participation	20%
Reflective Journal	25%
Research Essay	30%
Case Study Presentation	25%

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 or teaching assistant will facilitate discussions; however, they 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."

REFLECTIVE JOURNAL (25%)

Reflections will be based on our weekly lecture themes. They will be assigned weekly, and it is expected that students will complete them each week. Journal entries will be submitted twice during the semester. The first submission includes Modules 1-5 (10%) and is due Sunday February 8, 11:59 PM. The second submission includes Modules 6-12 (15%), and it is due Tuesday April 7, 11:59 PM. Evaluation is based on effort, quality, integration of course concepts and/or critical thinking (as applicable), organization, and completion of journal entries/exercises.

RESEARCH ESSAY (30%)

For this essay students will choose an aspect of bioethics that is of interest to them such as MAiD, medical research, reproductive technologies, ableism, treatment of human remains, transplant tourism, surrogacy etc. The objective is to give some additional thought to a bioethical issue, to examine some of the relevant theoretical and research literature, and to further student insight and self-awareness. This essay will set the groundwork for the presentation. The essay is due Sunday March 1, 11:59 PM. Please note that your essay topic will need to be approved by the instructor by Sunday February 1, 11:59 PM.

No late penalty will be imposed on the research essay for the first 72 hours after deadlines, in case of extenuating circumstances. Students should plan to submit by the deadlines.

Because the submission deadlines for this assessment already includes flexibility, the instructor reserves the right to deny academic consideration for assignments submitted past the 72-hour period.

CASE STUDY PRESENTATION (25%)

Students will choose a relevant bioethical case study *related* to their research essay. Presentations will apply course learnings to analyze and evaluate a case study, sharing research, analysis and engaging ethical issues/inquiries with small discussion groups for the final week of classes. Presentations are due Friday March 27, 11:59 PM.

No late penalty will be imposed on the case study presentation for the first 72 hours after deadlines, in case of extenuating circumstances. Students should plan to submit by the deadlines. Because the submission deadlines for this assessment already includes flexibility, the instructor reserves the right to deny academic consideration for assignments submitted past the 72-hour period.

BOUNDARIES AND CONFIDENTIALITY

Ethical Issues in Death, Dying and Bereavement 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 3355 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 Brightspace. 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

Graded assignments must be written using APA 7th Edition. This does not include the weekly forum discussions or the reflective journal. 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](#).

AI AND CHATGPT USE

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 instructor. Within this course, **use of artificial intelligence (AI) tools [such as Chat GPT] is not permitted** for written work submitted for evaluation.

LATE SUBMISSIONS/EXTENSIONS

Students must endeavor to submit assignments by the due date listed in the Course Outline and OWL. The assignments (excluding reflection journals) will be subject to a 72-hour 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 5% per day unless prior arrangements have been made with the instructor.

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

The final date to drop a half course without academic penalty is March 30, 2026.

COURSE SCHEDULE, READINGS AND DUE DATES

TOPIC	DATE	REQUIRED READINGS
Introduction to Case Studies and Bioethical Principles	Jan. 5	Haliburton, R., & Vendetti, R. (2021). <i>Choosing well: Case studies in bioethics</i> . Canadian Scholars, Chapters 1 & 2 Collier and Haliburton, Appendix, pp. 495-505
Ethical Theory	Jan. 12	Collier and Haliburton, Chapter 1
Distributive Justice	Jan. 19	Collier and Haliburton, Chapter 2
Relationships	Jan. 26	Collier and Haliburton, Chapter 3 Essay Topic due February 1, 11:59 PM
Research	Feb. 2	Collier and Haliburton, Chapter 4 Reflective Journal Part I due February 8, 11:59 PM
Reproductive Technologies	Feb. 9	Collier and Haliburton, Chapter 5
Genetics	Feb. 23	Collier and Haliburton, Chapter 6 Research Essay Due March 1, 11:59 PM
Abortion and Maternal-Fetal Conflicts	Mar. 2	Collier and Haliburton, Chapter 7
Death and Dying	Mar. 9	Collier and Haliburton, Chapter 8
Organ Transplantation	Mar. 16	Collier and Haliburton, Chapter 9

Medical Paradigms and Non-Standard Treatment	Mar. 23	Collier and Haliburton, Chapter 10 Presentations due March 27, 11:59 PM
Presentations	Mar. 30	Viewing and engaging with peer presentations Reflective Journal Part II due April 7, 11:59 PM

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.

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

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-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/>

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 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/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, 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/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.