



Thanatology 3606G (670)
Winter 2026
Personal and Professional Issues

Course Information:

Calendar Description: An exploration of the specialized care involved in loss, death, and grief, including complexities in care models, politics and structural issues, and challenges to the provision of compassionate care in thanatology-related contexts.

Prerequisite(s):

Anti-requisite(s): the former Grief and Bereavement Studies 6006 (Western Continuing Studies).

Extra Information: 3 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.

*King's University College
Western University*

**THANATOLOGY 3606G/670 ~ COURSE SYLLABUS
Personal and Professional Issues
Winter 2026**

Instructor: Adam Koenig M.A., RP, CCC, CT
Office location: Online
E-mail: akoenig@uwo.ca
Office hours: By appointment (Zoom)

HOW TO CONTACT ME

Contact me by email akoenig@uwo.ca and please include the class course number in the subject line. I will try and return a response within at least 48 business hours Monday – Friday 9am-5pm

OFFICE HOURS

To be determined but virtual or in-person options available. Email akoenig@uwo.ca to determine time and meeting location.

COURSE DESCRIPTION

An exploration of the specialized care involved in loss, death, and grief, including complexities in care models, politics and structural issues, and challenges to the provision of compassionate care in thanatology-related concepts.

Anti-requisite: Former Grief and Bereavement Studies 6006 (Western Continuing Studies).

Unless you have either the requisites for this course or written special permission for 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.

COURSE OBJECTIVES

- Develop a deeper understanding of ethical and structural issues in the field.
- Acknowledge the complex processes involved in service sector work.
- Cultivate awareness of the role of compassion in care delivery and responses to difficult situations.
- Identify compassionate care challenges and describe skills to address them.
- Become aware of the current and relevant research in supporting individuals in the thanatological related field.
- Identify current trends in the field and develop a deeper understanding of professional competencies related to the field

MODE OF INSTRUCTION

Thanatology 3606G is an academic university level course. 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. It is recommended that a student who is recently bereaved consider not taking Thanatology 3606. Please see the instructor privately if you have any questions.

This is a fully online course that will use King's learning platform, OWL, 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.**

This course begins on Jan 5th, 2026 and continues until Apr 9th, 2026, 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/>

COURSE MATERIALS

Required

- **Renzenbrink, I. (2011). *Caregiver stress and staff support in illness, dying, and bereavement*. Oxford University Press**
(Electronic version): <https://www.vitalsource.com/en-ca/products/caregiver-stress-and-staff-support-in-illness-v9780192640147> (most economical option is to rent, can buy physical copy through Indigo and other online retailers) (\$48.99-\$55.93+HST for rental or e-text)
- **Youngson, R. (2012). *Time to care: How to love your patients and your job*. Rebelheart. (\$9.99-\$38.63+HST)**
<https://www.amazon.ca/TIME-CARE-love-your-patients/dp/1475237847>
-Both required texts are physically available at the King's Library on 2 hour loan
- Access to **high-speed Internet** will likely be needed to stream video content for episode review assignment
- Access to streaming platform *Netflix* for Documentary Review Assignment (\$7.99 and up)

Recommended

- *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association 7th ed.*

Weekly lecture material may include PowerPoint presentations, film/youtube clips, case studies, podcasts, or lecture notes and will include material not contained in the texts. 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.*

There may be opportunities to present personal experiences and feelings to the class. We must respect each person's contribution of what may often be painful experiences (at the same time

appropriate limits to self-disclosure or to the time allotted to individuals will be upheld when personal narratives are shared) and agree to hold each other's contributions *strictly confidential*. This is an academic course and all participants are expected to complete the course requirements to a high standard in order to receive credit. One's strong feelings or experiences will not substitute for effort and academic achievement. While this course will be made richer by the sharing of personal narratives, it is NOT the purpose of this course to resolve emotions related to student life losses and experiences. As instructor of the course, I will be respectful of professional boundaries by not counselling any student on personal issues other than to suggest a referral to student services or another professional

METHODS OF EVALUATION

Documentary Review	30%
Professional Interview	30%
Participation	20%
Final Exam	20%

Documentary Review

Students will review assigned episodes of the documentary series *Lenox Hill* on Netflix and critically apply course content to what was witnessed during the episodes. The deadline for this assessment is **FEB 23rd 10am**. No late penalty will be imposed for the first 72 hours after the 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 window.

Professional Interview

Students will complete interviews with professionals who work in thanatological related fields, summarize the interviews, and critical apply content learned in the course to their professional interviews. The deadline for this assessment is **MAR 16th 10am**. No late penalty will be imposed for the first 72 hours after the 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 window.

Participation

Forum discussions are held through OWL. Participation in the discussion forums 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. Students will be expected to lead a week of forum discussion in smaller groups as well as actively engage with their group in the other designated forum discussion weeks. Your final mark will reflect your consistent participation, as well as the quality of each contribution. Details will be posted on OWL to review. Forum weeks are noted below. Because the submission deadlines for this assessment already includes flexibility, the instructor reserves the right to deny academic consideration for missed participation.

Throughout the course you are expected to interact regularly with other students, course activities, 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. 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. We will each be responsible for our own learning progress and also 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.

All students are expected to engage online in a professional and respectful manner. This includes all interactions with peers, as well as communication between TAs or 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

All assessment or examinations done online are expected to be done by the student registered in this course, following the instructions outlined by the Assignment.

There may be opportunities to present personal experiences and feelings to the class. We must respect each person's contribution of what may often be painful experiences (at the same time appropriate limits to self-disclosure or to the time allotted to individuals will be upheld when personal narratives are shared) and agree to hold each other's contributions *strictly confidential*. This is an academic course and all participants are expected to complete the course requirements to a high standard in order to receive credit. One's strong feelings or experiences will not substitute for effort and academic achievement. While this course will be made richer by the sharing of personal narratives, it is NOT the purpose of this course to resolve emotions related to student life losses and experiences. As instructor of the course, I will be respectful of professional boundaries by not counselling any student on personal issues other than to suggest a referral to student services or another professional

Final Exam (Date: TBD)

Final Exam will test knowledge of the lectures, text, videos, and supplementary readings/podcasts and will be on OWL. *The final exam is cumulative. Students are responsible for material covered in the lectures, all supplementary readings, as well as the assigned chapters in the texts. Final exam cannot be handed in "late" and student will receive 0% if the exam is not submitted on time.*

At the discretion of the instructor, when deemed necessary, tests and examinations in this course **may** be conducted using a remote proctoring service. By taking this course, you are consenting to the use of this software and acknowledge that you will be required to provide personal information (including some biometric data) and the session will be recorded. Completion of this course will require you to have a reliable internet connection and a device that meets the technical requirements for this service. More information about this remote proctoring service, including technical requirements, is available on Western's Remote Proctoring website at:

<https://remoteproctoring.uwo.ca>.

DROP DATE

Final date to drop a first-term half course without academic penalty is **Mar 30, 2026**.

ACADEMIC CONSIDERATIONS FOR ABSENCES, MISSED ASSESSMENTS

A student seeking academic considerations for any work worth less than 10% must contact the instructor. *Any absence for legitimate reasons will be dealt with by re-weighting the term work grade accordingly or setting a timeframe to submit work at a later date.* If documentation is required for either medical or non-medical academic accommodation, then such documentation must be submitted by the student directly to the appropriate Faculty Dean's Office and **not to the instructor**. Once the petition and supporting documents have been received and assessed, appropriate academic consideration shall be determined by the Dean's Office in consultation with the student's instructor. Whenever possible, students who require academic considerations should provide notification and documentation in advance of due dates, examinations, etc. These documents will be retained in the student's file, and will be held in confidence in accordance with the University's Official Student Record Information Privacy Policy. Once the petition and supporting documents have been received and assessed, appropriate academic accommodation shall be determined by the Academic Counselling/Dean's Office in consultation with the student's instructor(s)

Attendance Policy

Any student, who, in the opinion of the instructor, is absent too frequently from class will be reported to the Dean (after due warning has been given).

Debarment of Students from Writing the Final Examination

1. A student may be debarred from writing the final examination for failure to maintain satisfactory academic standing throughout the academic year.
2. 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 the Faculty, the student will be debarred from taking the regular examination (meaning they will be ineligible to write the final exam) Students who miss more than 3 classes will be recommended to be debarred from the final exam.

Late assignments/Make ups

All assignments are to be submitted on the due date and time. The penalty is 5 marks/day late when submitted past the submission window of 72 hours noted in the syllabus where relevant and papers that are more than 4 days late from the initial due date will receive 0%

Additionally:

Advise the instructor if you are having problems completing the assignment on time, prior to the due date of the assignment. When possible, illness and personal crises must be announced **prior to the deadline**.

2. **If seeking extensions for missed work or current circumstances, please consider the application for academic accommodation on Medical/Compassionate grounds from the academic advising office**
3. Be prepared to provide documentation.
4. AAO approved missed exam will have a make-up exam
5. If students are granted Academic Consideration, work will be due 2 days after the end of the period for which the student received Academic Consideration

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, at the following Web site:

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

Within this course, use of generative artificial intelligence (AI) tools (such as ChatGPT, 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

Notice of Turnitin Use: 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>).

Course Schedule

Week Of:

W1 Jan 5 Stressors in Hospice and Palliative Care

Reading: (1) Karapliagou, A., Kellehear, A., & Wegleitner, K. (2018). The public health end-of-life care movement: History, principles, and styles of practice. In M. Lloyd-Williams (Ed.), *Psychosocial issues in palliative care: A community-based approach for life limiting illness* (pp. 1-22). Oxford University.

Welcome Forum

W2 Jan 12 Communicating about Death and Dying in North American Society

Reading: (1) Youngson, Chapter 2, pp. 19-34
(2) Sutherland, R. (2018). Dying well-informed: The need for better clinical education surrounding facilitating end-of-life conversation. *Yale Journal of Biology and Medicine*, 92, 757-764. <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/31866792/>

Forum #1

W3 Jan 19 Role of Compassion and Compassion in End-of-Life Care

Reading: (1 + 2) Renzenbrink, Chapters 3 and 4, pp. 37-61
(3) Youngson, Chapter 8, pp. 109-124

Forum #2

W4 Jan 26 Workplace Environment and Well-being

Reading: (1) Renzenbrink, Chapter 2, pp. 25-48

(2) Youngson, Chapter 3, pp. 35-53

W5 Feb 2 **Working and Living with Cancer Death and Dying**

Reading: (1) Renzenbrink, Chapter 5, pp. 62-72
Forum #3

W6 Feb 9 **Staff Support and Leadership**

Reading: (1) Renzenbrink, Chapter 10, pp. 127-137
(2) Youngson, Chapter 11, pp. 165-182

W7 Feb 14-22 **READING WEEK**

W8 Feb 23 **Burnout and Compassion Fatigue**

Reading: (1) Renzenbrink, Chapter 8, pp. 98-110
(2) Youngson, Chapter 1, pp. 1-18

**Assignment 1 (Documentary Review) Due Monday Feb 23 10:00am*

W9 Mar 2 **Childhood Bereavement and Bereavement Support**

Reading: (1) Renzenbrink, Chapter 11, pp. 138-153
(2) Youngson, Chapter 9, pp. 125-140
Forum #4

W10 Mar 9 **Spiritual Care as a Tool for Healing**

Reading: (1) Renzenbrink, Chapter 14, pp. 179-188
(2) Youngson, Chapter 7, pp. 99-107

W11 Mar 16 **Life Threatening Illness in the Workplace and Workplace Culture**

Reading: (1) Renzenbrink, Chapter 6, pp. 73-81
(2) Youngson, Chapter 6, pp. 85-97

**Assignment 2 (Professional Interviews) Due Monday Mar 16th 10:00am*
Forum #5

W12 Mar 23 **Diversity and Social Inclusion**

Reading: 1) Larkin, P. J. (2018). The call to social inclusion: Psychosocial care for the marginalized in society. In M. Lloyd-Williams (Ed.), *Psychosocial issues in palliative care: A community-based approach for life limiting illness* (pp. 44-68). Oxford University Press.
(2) Acquaviva, K. D. (2017). The history and physical examination. In *LGBTQ-inclusive hospice and palliative care: A practical guide to transforming professional practice* (pp. 54-89). Harrington Park.
Forum #6

W13 Mar 30 **Reflective Practice in Palliative Care**

Reading: (1) Renzenbrink, Chapter 13, pp. 170-177
(2) Youngson, Chapter 12, pp. 183-196

W14: Apr 6 No Class – Start Studying for Final Exam