



PHILOSOPHY 3355F (570)
Ethical Issues in Death, Dying, and Bereavement
Fall 2026

Instructor: J. Heng
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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 ethics, medical futility, resource allocation, and quality of life issues.

Prerequisite(s):

Antirequisite(s):

Extra Information: 3 hours.

Course Weight: 0.50

Breadth: Category B

Subject Code: PHILOSOP

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

King's University College, Dept. of Philosophy & Thanatology Program

PHIL 3355F/G (cross-listed with THAN 3355F/G)

Instructor: Prof. John Heng (jheng@uwo.ca)

Office and office hours: As posted in Brightspace. Please feel welcome to meet me in person. Arranging a time beforehand, either in class or by email, is best so that you do not have to wait if I'm conversing with another when you drop by. Zoom meetings are also possible.

Ethical Issues in Death, Dying, and Bereavement (Fall 2026)

Description

This course examines and discusses ethical issues surrounding the end of life. We will engage in a method-based approach to ethics that highlights the importance of care relationships. Lectures are complemented by small-group discussions of concrete clinical and public health policy cases. Some topics we will cover include the meaning of a 'good death' in a diverse society, defining death, a relational approach to decision-making, palliative care, forgoing treatments, controversies surrounding Medical Assistance in Dying, bereavement care, recognizing and addressing moral distress in caregivers, and understanding the impact of iatrogenic suffering and of health inequities.

The learning outcomes of this course are:

- To be able to recognize ethical issues and raise ethical questions concerning health care;
- to make ethical claims by engaging in a systematic method for ethical deliberating;
- to learn about some ethical issues surrounding end-of-life care and bereavement care;
- to discover how certain unarticulated views or diverse understandings of certain terms such as a flourishing life, a good death, life after death, dignity, vulnerability, disability, suffering can underlie ethical disputes;
- to appreciate the role of inter-professional and family care relationships in health care;
- to appreciate how stigma, biases, and systemic barriers can affect palliative care, end-of-life care and bereavement care;
- to engage with peers in discussions of ethical cases from diverse perspectives.

Mode of Instruction

Instruction in this course is in person, consisting of lectures and case discussions. Your active participation in this course helps us all to learn. Please come to class with readings done and with questions that you have. Our class discussions are conducted with the expectation that all will feel free to participate, and that each participant's contribution is received by everyone with due attention and respect.

Course readings

All readings for this course will be provided on the course Brightspace site. Readings will be uploaded 2 weeks in advance. They will be drawn from online book chapters and articles available through Western University's Library and open-access sources.

Method of assessment

- 20% Case discussion (with partners, as assigned)
- Assume the role of members of an Ethics Committee.
 - Meet with instructor (by Zoom or in person).
 - Meet with partners to discuss case and formulate questions for class.
 - Present findings (not everyone in group needs to present), pose questions, engage in class discussion (instructor facilitates, all group members should be prepared to participate as needed).
 - One mark for the group.
- 10% Case discussion report (500 words), due 1 week after presentation.
- Each group member must submit.
 - Answer: What were the insights or residual questions that struck you most in the discussion of your assigned case?
 - Individual mark.
- 25% Test, handwritten in class on Nov. 4. Please inform me of need for accommodation.
- 35% Case analysis or Policy review (2000 words) due on Dec. 9 (instructions to follow)
- 10% Participation, including weekly handwritten in-class reflections (best 8/10)
- Reflections are assessed as Acceptable for credit (not returned) or Not Acceptable (returned for resubmission). See also Grading Policies below.

These are my expectations in grading your discussion report and case analysis or policy review:

A+	90–100	One could scarcely expect better from a student at this level
A/A-	80–89	Superior work; a few minor improvements needed
B+/B/B-	70–79	Good work but many minor improvements needed
C+/C/C-	60–69	Satisfactory work but a few major improvements needed
D	50–59	Meets requirements, but several major improvements needed
F	below 50	Does not meet requirements

Grading Policies

Case discussion report: Please submit only through Brightspace. You must be present in class for your assigned case discussion to be permitted to submit your report by a week later.

Weekly class reflections: You must be present in class to be permitted to hand in your reflection for the week. You are permitted up to 2 absences at your discretion (no need to explain). Please let me know if you have need for accommodation.

Case analysis or policy review: Please submit only through Brightspace.

Missed test: Please request academic consideration through the Academic Advising service at King's or your registered college or faculty. Make-up tests are written on Fridays.

Late assignments: 3% penalty per day late (including weekends).

Use of Artificial Intelligence (A.I.): I encourage developing your human capacities for ethical reflection and writing in this course, and for assuming responsibility for your own conclusions. The increasing integration of A.I. into health care, including to support deciding on clinical treatments and health policies, requires humans (such as you) who are educated and formed to guide the application of A.I. ethically. Hence it is my policy that (1) you must add a Disclosure Statement to your submitted assignments if you used A.I. specifying in what way(s); (2) you should always review whatever results you obtain from using A.I., mindful of the potential for errors and biases; (3) be prepared to discuss the content and work relating to your assignment with the instructor when requested.

Topics

	Topic
Sept. 9	Introduction: Dying and death
Sept. 16	Module 1: Is there a good death?
Sept. 23	Module 2: A method-based approach to ethics Case 1: Joyce Echaquan (death by indifference)
Sept. 30	No class (National Day for Truth and Reconciliation)
Oct. 7	Module 3: Relationships Case 2: Indi Gregory (disagreements regarding futility)
Oct. 14	No class (Reading Week)
Oct. 21	Module 4: Agency Case 3: Mrs. A. (interpreting an advance directive)
Oct. 28	Module 5: Flourishing and suffering Case 4: Monica (iatrogenic death in hospital)
Nov. 4	Test (in class)
Nov. 11	Module 6: Proportionate care

	Case 5: Greta (sedation at the end of life)
Nov. 18	Module 7: Cultural and societal issues Case 6: Monica (cultural and societal issues in palliative care ethics)
Nov. 25	Module 9: Economic issues Case 7: Sayed (access to intensive care during a pandemic)
Dec. 2	Module 10: Medical Assistance in Dying Case 8: Carla (request for MAiD)
Dec. 9	Module 11: A.I. and Death, Dying, and Bereavement Case 9: Jim (Chatbot bereavement counselling)

**KING'S UNIVERSITY COLLEGE
GENERAL COURSE POLICIES
2026-27**

1. Academic Accommodations (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](#).

2. Academic Consideration for Student Absences

Students must be approved to write a makeup exam or for an extension of the assignment deadline. If you need to miss an exam or the deadline for the assignment, please follow these instructions.

There are two ways to seek academic consideration:

(i) Academic consideration based on medical or compassionate grounds

If a student is unable to meet a course requirement due to substantial but temporary extenuating circumstances (medical or compassionate grounds), they should contact the Academic Advising Office. As a rule, documentation is required for academic consideration.

For academic consideration requests on medical grounds, the Student Medical Certificate (SMC) is the appropriate documentation. The SMC is available at <https://registrar.uwo.ca/academics/pdfs/student-medical-certificate.pdf>

- King's students: The Academic Advising Office website is located in DLH 104. The Academic Advising website is <https://mykings.ca/intranet/app/#/academics/academic-advising>.
- If your home faculty is Huron or at Western, please submit your documentation to your faculty's academic counselling office.
- Requests must be made as soon as possible and no later than 48 hours after the missed assessment.

You may submit requests for academic consideration through the **Student Absence Portal**, linked on this website: <https://mykings.ca/intranet/app/#/academics/academic-advising/academic-consideration-requests-and-student-absence-portal>

(ii) Academic consideration through an undocumented absence

Students are permitted one academic consideration request without supporting documentation per term per half-course (0.5) weight.

- Note that instructors may designate one assessment per half-course weight as requiring formal supporting documentation. Please refer to the course outline to confirm this assessment.
- If instructors have built flexibility into their assessments, this flexibility will already address consideration needs. (For example, if students need to submit X of Y assignments, this flexibility already provides consideration.)
- Undocumented absences can not be used as the basis for academic consideration for December or April exams.

For further information on the academic consideration policy, please see https://uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/academic_consideration_Sep24.pdf

c) Absences from Final Exams

If you miss the Final Exam, **contact your Academic Advising Office** 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 (i.e., you are scheduled to write 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](#)).

d) Religious Accommodations

Students should consult the University’s list of recognized religious holidays, and should give notice in writing to the instructor and their 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.

3. Support Services

Accessibility, Counselling and Student Development at King’s University College:
<https://mykings.ca/intranet/app/#/student-supports-and-services/accessibility-services>

Students experiencing emotional or mental health distress can access services at King’s University College: <https://kings.uwo.ca/campus-life/student-supports/>

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

Western’s Mental Health Services site provides a complete list of options on how to obtain help:
<https://www.uwo.ca/health/mental-health/index.html>

Academic Support Services at King's University College: <https://kings.uwo.ca/academics/academic-supports/>

4. Statement on Gender-Based Sexual Violence

King's and Western are committed to reducing incidents of gender-based sexual 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](#).

You can reach supports at King's 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 (health@uwo.ca) or by calling 519-661-3568. Additional support services can be found <https://www.uwo.ca/health/gbsv/support/index.html>

5. 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://kings.uwo.ca/sites/2025/assets/files/campus/Kings_Code_of_Student_Conduct.pdf

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.

6. 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 https://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/scholastic_offences.pdf

It is expected that students will submit work that is truly their own, completed without external assistance (human or artificial) except as explicitly permitted by the course instructor. **Check with you instructor to check which tools, including generative AI (ChatGPT, translation tools, grammar-checking tools) are permitted in each course.** Note that although some courses may permit the use of such tools, it does not mean use of such tools 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.

7. 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.

8. 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.

9. 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.