

Lingnan University
Department of Philosophy

Course Title	: Life and Death
Course Code	: PHI3222
Recommended Study Year	: 3 rd or 4 th Year
No. of Credits/Term	: 3
Mode of Tuition	: Sectional mode
Class Contact Hours	: 3 hours/week
Category in Major Programme	: Programme Elective - Ethics and Practical Philosophy Profile
Prerequisite(s)	: N/A
Co-requisite(s)	: N/A
Exclusion(s)	: N/A
Exemption Requirement(s)	: N/A

Brief Course Description

In this course, students will study the meaning of life and death from philosophical as well as from religious standpoints. Though it is not likely that we can understand death intellectually, it is hoped that we can learn how much weight we should give to it in our lives, what sense it can contribute to the meaning of life, and how we should face it and deal with it.

Aims

This course aims at:

1. introducing various approaches to thinking about death.
2. examining the relationship between life and death.
3. stimulating students to reflect on the meaning of life.

Learning Outcomes

At the end of the course, students are expected:

1. to be able to reflect on a variety of philosophical issues related to life and death;
2. to be able to respond to the question “What does death mean to him/her?”
3. to be aware of the relevancy of death to life.

Indicative Content

1. The Definition of Life and Death
2. The Meaning of Life
3. The Evil of Birth (Antinatalism)
4. Midlife
5. The Evil of Death
 - 5.1. Fear of Death
 - 5.2. Bereavement

- 5.3. Suicide
- 6. Immortality
- 7. After Death
 - 7.1. Posthumous Harm
 - 7.2. The Possibility of Resurrection
 - 7.3. The Afterlife

Teaching Method

Lecture, tutorial-style discussion of texts, experiential activities such as film screening and discussion.

Measurement of Learning Outcomes

Assessment will be based on the performance in tutorials, one term paper and two examinations.

1. Students will discuss an assigned topic in the tutorials. They are expected to be able to reflect deeply on the issues related to life and death. They are encouraged to draw on sources from their own experiences in supporting their views. LO1; LO2
2. Students will write a term paper. They are expected to be able to integrate what they have learned in class in order to apprehend concrete situations. LO1; LO2; LO3
3. Examination will assess students' understanding of philosophical issues concerning life and death. LO1; LO2; LO3
4. A survey by questionnaire with simple questions will be conducted both at the beginning and in the end of the course. It will show the changes (if any) of students' attitude towards life and death and their perception of the relationship between these two.

Assessment

Term paper 30%

Mid-term examination 30%

Class participation 10%

Final examination 30%

Required Readings

A selection of readings from:

Benatar, David, ed. (2010) *Life, Death, and Meaning: Key Philosophical Readings on the Big Questions*. 2nd edition. Lanham, Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers.

Westphal, Jonathan, and Carl Levenson, eds. (1993) *Life and Death*. Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company.

Supplementary Readings

Aristotle (2004) *Nicomachean Ethics*. Trans. Roger Crisp. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Benatar, David (2006) *Better Never to Have Been: The Harm of Coming into Existence*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Feldman, Fred (2012) *Confrontations with the Reaper: A Philosophical Study of the Nature and Value of Death*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Fischer, John Martin (1993) *The Metaphysics of Death*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.

- Fischer, John Martin (2020) *Death, Immortality, and Meaning in Life*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Kagan, Shelly (2012) *Death*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.
- Luper, Steven (2009) *The Philosophy of Death*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Metz, Thaddeus (2013) *Meaning in Life*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Metz, Thaddeus (2019) *God, Soul and the Meaning of Life*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Nagel, Thomas (1979) *Mortal Questions*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Scheffler, Samuel (2013) *Death and the Afterlife*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Setiya, Keiran (2017) *Midlife: A Philosophical Guide*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Taylor, James Stacey, ed. (2013) *The Metaphysics and Ethics of Death: New Essays*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- van Inwagen, Peter (1978) 'The Possibility of Resurrection,' *International Journal for Philosophy of Religion* 9:2, 114-121.
- Wiggins, David (1976) 'Truth, Invention, and the Meaning of Life,' reprinted in Id. (1998[1987]) *Needs, Values, Truth: Essays in the Philosophy of Value*. 3rd ed. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- Wolf, Susan (2010) *Meaning in Life and Why It Matters*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Wolterstorff, Nicholas (1987) *Lament for a Son*. Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans.

Important Notes

- (1) Students are expected to spend a total of 9 hours (i.e. 3 hours of class contact and 6 hours of personal study) per week to achieve the course learning outcomes.
- (2) Students shall be aware of the University regulations about dishonest practice in course work, tests and examinations, and the possible consequences as stipulated in the Regulations Governing University Examinations and Course Work. In particular, plagiarism, being a kind of dishonest practice, is "the presentation of another person's work without proper acknowledgement of the source, including exact phrases, or summarised ideas, or even footnotes/citations, whether protected by copyright or not, as the student's own work". Students are required to strictly follow university regulations governing academic integrity and honesty.
- (3) Students are required to submit writing assignment(s) using Turnitin.
- (4) To enhance students' understanding of plagiarism, a mini-course "Online Tutorial on Plagiarism Awareness" is available on <https://pla.ln.edu.hk/>