

Fall 2020
 Philosophy of Death
 Philosophy 316—01

Professor:

Charles Joshua Horn, Ph.D.

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Individual Office Hours: Friday, 9:00am—10:00am; By Appointment

Group Office Hours: Thursday, 10:15am—10:45am

<http://charlesjhorn.webstarts.com/index.html>

Course Information:

Fully Online, Administered on Canvas

“ALL WHO ACTUALLY ENGAGE IN PHILOSOPHY ARIGHT
 ARE PRACTICING NOTHING OTHER THAN DYING AND BEING DEAD.”
 PHAEDO 64A

Course Description:

Questions concerning the nature and phenomena of death are as old as philosophical inquiry itself. The philosophy of death may cover any number of issues in a number of different fields of academia including legal, ethical, and religious aspects. In this particular course we will devote our attention primarily to a wide range of metaphysical and epistemological topics.

In the first part of the course, we will examine some traditional perspectives on death and dying in both Western and Eastern cultures. Included in this section of the course will be an analysis of Christianity, Islam, Plato, Hinduism, Taoism, and other historical and philosophically rich traditions. Additionally, we will investigate reflections on death and dying from different contemporary perspectives.

In the second part of the course, we will focus our attention on the philosophy of parapsychology by examining several supernatural cases which seem to suggest survival after death. Included in this part of the course will be an analysis of alleged cases of trance mediumship, reincarnation, possession, lingering spirits, and out of body experiences.

In the third part of the course, we will consider questions related to the meaning of life and death by examining some classical issues in existentialism. Included in this part of the course will be an analysis of good and bad death, the importance of dying in particular ways, and whether immortality is desirable.

Some of the questions to be examined in this course will be:

- (1) What attitude should we have about death?
- (2) How is death significant?
- (3) How do Eastern conceptions of death differ from traditional conceptions of death in the West?
- (4) Is there any evidence, empirical or rational, for the survival of the self after death?
- (5) Is there something morally repugnant about merciful acts of killing?
- (6) How do we confront death?
- (7) In what way does death make our lives meaningful?
- (8) How does immortality relate to the meaning of life?

Texts:Rental:

Immortal Remains: The Evidence for Life after Death (IR)
 Stephen E. Braude
 Rowman and Littlefield Publishers
 ISBN: 978-074251472

The Eternal Pity: Reflections on Dying (EP)
 Ed. Richard Neuhaus
 University of Notre Dame Press
 ISBN: 978-0268027575

Death and Philosophy (DP)
 Ed. J.E. Malpas, Robert C. Solomon
 Routledge
 ISBN: 978-0-415-19144-9

Life, Death, & Meaning: Key Philosophical Readings on the Big Questions (LDM)
 Ed. David Benatar
 Rowman and Littlefield Publishers
 ISBN: 978-1-4422-0170-5

Supplemental:

Phaedo (PH)
 Plato
 Oxford
 ISBN: 978-0199538935

Expectations:

Students are expected to check into Canvas daily in order to check for class announcements, complete assignments, use the discussion board, etc. Please follow the checklist to best increase the chances for success in the class.

1. All assignments are set on a weekly schedule. Be sure to complete the reading assignment, quizzes, essays, and exams during the week specified on the course schedule.
2. In order to provide maximum flexibility to student schedules, all lectures have been pre-recorded and uploaded to Canvas. Please do not share these with anyone outside of the class. See the “Intellectual Property Notice” in the syllabus.
3. There will be discussion-based Group Office Hours via Zoom once a week (Thursday mornings from 10:15am—10:45am). Although these sessions are optional and ungraded, they provide a way to get real-time feedback on questions related to the course and to discuss course content. Scheduled sessions can be found in the Zoom tab on Canvas.
4. Take advantage of individual office hours. See Canvas “Announcements” tab for full invitation URL and password to join. Please note that a waiting room is enabled so you may have to wait to join in case I am with another student.

Course Goals:

- Demonstrate an ability to read carefully, speak clearly, think critically, or write persuasively about cultures and cultural works/artifacts (including texts, images, performances, and technologies, as well as other expressions of the human condition).
- Identify and analyze how beliefs, values, languages, theories, or laws shape cultures and cultural works/artifacts.
- Engage a variety of ideas and worldviews critically by formulating reflective and informed moral, ethical, or aesthetic evaluations of cultures and cultural works/artifacts.

Grading Criteria:

Late work will never be accepted unless an extension has been granted by Dr. Horn prior to the due date or a university approved excuse is given. Late work must be complete within one week of returning to the class. Extensions will only be granted in extreme circumstances. Additionally, this course will utilize the Canvas online system to facilitate certain aspects of the class. Canvas will automatically calculate and update grades as the semester progresses. In order to determine your current grade in the class, take the score in the “Total” column and divide by 100. Then use the grading scale below. The goal for the class is to try to earn as many points as possible. Final grades will be calculated based upon the following. Assignments can be completed at any point during the week they are assigned (Sunday—Saturday).

- (1) Three Essays 60% Total (20% Each)

Each essay should be one single-spaced page. Students should consult the “Tips for Writing” on Canvas and “Writing Philosophy Papers” on pg. 14 of the textbook for help with writing their persuasive essay. It would also be helpful to complete an outline of your paper before starting. Look at the “Essay Construction Handout” for a blueprint. Essays should be uploaded to Canvas as PDFs.

- (2) Twenty Reading Quizzes 40% Total (2% Each)

There are quizzes associated with most of the readings in the class. Students will have 5 minutes to answer questions on the readings designated on the course schedule (look for Q# on the schedule to see which quiz is associated with each reading). Because there are 25 quizzes on the course schedule, students may earn up to 10% bonus in extra credit for the semester. This also means that you can skip up to 5 quizzes and still earn the full 40% for this part of your grade!

A Range (90—100%)	B Range (80—89%)	C Range (70—79%)	D Range (60—69%)	F Range (0—59%)
	B+ (87—89)	C+ (77—79)	D+ (67—69)	F (<60)
A (94—100)	B (84—86)	C (74—76)	D (60—66)	
A- (90—93)	B- (80—83)	C- (70—73)		

Academic Integrity:

Cheating, fabrication, plagiarism or helping others to commit these acts will not be tolerated. Academic dishonesty will result in severe disciplinary action including, but not limited to, failure of the student assessment item or course, and/or dismissal from the University.

Academic integrity violations include, but are not limited to:

- 1) Cheating: Intentionally using or attempting to use unauthorized materials, information, notes, study aids, or other devices in any academic exercise. This definition includes unauthorized communication of information during an academic exercise.
- 2) Fabrication and Falsification: Intentional and unauthorized alteration or invention of any information or citation in an academic exercise. Falsification is a matter of inventing or counterfeiting information for use in any academic exercise.
- 3) Multiple Submissions: The submission of substantial portions of the same academic work for credit (including oral reports) more than once without authorization.
- 4) Plagiarism: Intentionally or knowingly presenting the work of another as one's own (i.e., without proper acknowledgment of the source). The sole exception to the requirement is when the ideas, information, etc., is common knowledge.
- 5) Complicity in Academic Dishonesty: Intentionally or knowingly helping or attempting to help another to commit an act of academic dishonesty.

Additional information can be found at:

<http://www.uwsp.edu/stuaffairs/Documents/RightsRespos/SRR-2010/rightsChap14.pdf>

Disability Information:

Students with disabilities should register with the ADA coordinator on campus and let me know at the beginning of the semester. I would be happy to accommodate you in any way that I can. Just let me know. More information can be found at:

<http://www.uwsp.edu/stuaffairs/Documents/RightsRespos/ADA/rightsADAPolicyInfo.pdf>

Intellectual Property Notice:

Lecture materials and recordings for Philosophy 316 are protected intellectual property at UW-Stevens Point. Students in this course may use the materials and recordings for their personal use related to participation in this class. Students may also take notes solely for their personal use. If a lecture is not already recorded, you are not authorized to record my lectures without my permission unless you are considered by the university to be a qualified student with a disability requiring accommodation. [Regent Policy Document 4-1] Students may not copy or share lecture materials and recordings outside of class, including posting on internet sites or selling to commercial entities. Students are also prohibited from providing or selling their personal notes to anyone else or being paid for taking notes by any person or commercial firm without the instructor's express written permission. Unauthorized use of these copyrighted lecture materials and recordings constitutes copyright infringement and may be addressed under the university's policies, UWS Chapters 14 and 17, governing student academic and non-academic misconduct.

Course Schedule:**Part I: Perspectives on Death**

Week 1	(August 30—September 5) Syllabus/Course Introduction	
Week 2	(September 6—September 12) Academic Holiday	
Q1	PH—Plato, Phaedo	57a—85b
Week 3	(September 13—September 19)	
Q2	PH—Plato, Phaedo	85b—118a
Q3	EP—The Life of the World to Come, Book of Common Prayer	173—178
	EP—The Quran (Fate as the Will of God)	74—82
Q4	EP—Katha Upanishad (The Figure of Death)	42—45
	DP—Robert Wicks, Death and Enlightenment	71—82
Week 4	(September 20—September 26)	
Q5	DP—Roger Ames, Death as Transformation in Classical Daoism	57—70
Q6	DP—Tem Horwitz, My Death	5—15
	EP—Montaigne “To Philosophize Is to Learn to Die” (Acceptance Beyond Fear)	66—70
Week 5	(September 27—October 3)	
Q7	DP—Graham Parkes, Death and Detachment	83—97
Q8	DP—Kathleen Higgins, Death and the Skeleton	39—49
	DP—Betty Flowers, Death, the Bald Scenario	50—56
Week 6	(October 4—October 10)	
Q9	DP—Peter Loftson, The Antinomy of Death	135—151
Q10	DP—Robert Solomon, Death Fetishism, Morbid Solipsism	152—176
Week 7	(October 11—October 17) Essay I Preparation Essay I Due	

Part II: Death and Beyond—Philosophy of Parapsychology

Week 7	(October 11—October 17)		
	Q11	IR—Chapter 1: Preliminaries	1—30
Week 8	(October 18—October 24)		
	Q12	IR—Chapter 2: Drop-In Communicators	31—52
	Q13	IR—Chapter 3: Trance Mediumship	53—79
Week 9	(October 25—October 31)		
	Q14	IR—Chapter 3: Trance Mediumship	79—100
	Q15	IR—Chapter 4: The Case of Sharada: Psychopathology and Xenoglossy	101—132
Week 10	(November 1—November 7)		
	Q16	IR—Chapter 5: The Case of Patience Worth	133—151
	Q17	IR—Chapter 5: The Case of Patience Worth	151—175
Week 11	(November 8—November 14)		
	Q18	IR—Chapter 6: Reincarnation and Possession	177—198
	Q19	IR—Chapter 6: Reincarnation and Possession	198—224
Week 12	(November 15—November 21)		
	Q20	IR—Chapter 7: Lingering Spirits	225—244
	Q21	IR—Chapter 8: Out-of-Body Experiences	245—282
Week 13	(November 22—November 28)		
		Essay II Preparation	
		Essay II Due	

Part III: Life, Death, Immortality, and Meaning

Week 13	(November 22—November 28)	
	Q22 LDM—Richard Taylor, <i>The Meaning of Life</i>	21—30
	LDM—Thomas Nagel, <i>The Absurd</i>	31—43
Week 14	(November 29—December 5)	
	Q23 EP—Leo Tolstoy “ <i>The Death of Ivan Ilych</i> ”	92—99
	EP—Gilbert Meilaender, “ <i>I Want to Burden My Loved Ones</i> ”	117—120
	Q24 LDM—Bernard Williams, <i>The Makropulos Case: Reflections on the Tedium of Immortality</i>	345—362
Week 15	(December 6—December 12)	
	Q25 LDM—John Martin Fischer, Why Immortality Is Not So Bad	363—377
	EP—Jeffrey Ford, “ <i>Mercy Killing at Golgotha</i> ”	122—124
	Essay III Preparation	
Week 16	(December 13—December 19)	
	Essay III Due	
	Course Evaluations	