

Life & Death
PY4626
Semester 2, 2016-17
University of St Andrews

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LECTURE:

Tuesday 9 - 11, St Mary's College, Lecture Room 2

TUTORIALS:

Group 1: Thursday 12 - 1, Edgecliffe 104

Group 2: Thursday 1 - 2, Edgecliffe 104

Group 3: Thursday 2 - 3, Edgecliffe 104

DESCRIPTION:

This module is an examination of moral problems regarding life and death. The first half of the semester will cover questions about the goodness of life and the badness of death. In the second half of the semester our focus will be the ethics of killing and saving lives.

LEARNING OUTCOMES:

By the end of this module, students should have gained a good critical understanding of the complexities of the moral questions addressed, and of the various approaches that have been taken in moral theorizing. Students will be able to analyze and evaluate critical discussion of these issues in recent and contemporary literature, formulate and articulate their own views on these issues, and provide a rational defence of these views in written work and discussion.

COURSE MATERIALS:

All of the course materials can be found online; hyperlinks are provided below. You will in many cases need to be gaining access through the university library (e.g., to access the books available on Oxford Scholarship Online).

POLICIES:

Please read the latest version of the booklet 'Philosophy Handbook for Undergraduates' very carefully regarding absences, lateness of essays, academic

alerts, plagiarism etc. Copies are available from the main office in Edgecliffe or online at: <http://www.st-andrews.ac.uk/philosophy/current/ugrad/>.

ASSESSMENT:

Your final grade for this module will be determined by:

- A Short Essay of at most 2500 words (35% of overall module grade)
- A Long Essay of at most 3500 words (50% of overall module grade)
- A Weekly Tutorial Blog (15% of overall module grade)

About the Two Essays:

- *Deadlines & Format:* The Short Essay must be submitted to MMS by Monday 20 February at 11.59pm (beginning of week 5), and the Long Essay by Friday 5 May at 11.59pm (end of week 13). Essays should be written in double-spaced 12-point Times New Roman font with normal margins; submitted in MS Word format; any internally consistent citation format is fine.
- *Extensions:* Any requests for extensions or anything of an administrative nature should be addressed to the module coordinator (Pummer).
- *Topic Selection:* The Short Essay should be on a topic of your choosing relating to any of the topics spanning weeks 1 through 4, and the Long Essay to any of the topics spanning weeks 5 through 12 (see below for the schedule of topics). You will need to have your topic approved in advance: to have your topic approved, please simply add two to three sentences outlining the topic of your paper and the main claim you plan on defending at the end of your blog posts for weeks 3 and 11 (week 3 for the Short Essay and week 11 for the Long Essay; see below for details of the blog assignment). If you hear nothing back from us within a week, your topic is approved. We will contact you if we think you need to revise your focus. Please do get in touch at any point if you are at all unsure about the appropriateness of your topic.
- *Advice on Writing:* The Philosophy Handbook for Undergraduates contains lots of valuable information and advice about writing your essay. In addition, you may benefit from the resources and tips gathered here: "[Tips on Writing a Philosophy Paper](#)" (Doug Portmore).

About the Blog:

You are required to post a blog each week on the module's Moodle page (no blogs are required for week 1, making a total of 11 blogs). You are required to post to the blog by Wednesday of the relevant week at 11.59pm. Post one question, comment, or objection regarding one of the assigned readings for the week. Your post should be no longer than two paragraphs.

Blog contributions will be scored on simple scale: '2' is full credit (thoughtful and clear contribution), '1' is partial credit (for unclear contributions,

or contributions that lack any independent thinking or analysis), and '0' is no credit (for very confused, very minimal, or off topic posts, or for failing to submit a post by the set deadline). Obviously you must be concise if you aren't to exceed the two paragraph limit. Don't bother mentioning whether you enjoyed the assigned reading; this isn't literary criticism. Your question, comment, or objection should help with the assessment of a philosophical claim or argument found in the required reading.

There is one blog for each seminar group. You should have access to the blog for your seminar group only. The module coordinator (Pummer) will start each discussion with an initial post merely announcing the topic of the week (e.g. 'Week 2: Problems about the Badness of Death'). You should enter your post as a response to this initial post, instead of as a new discussion topic. You won't get any credit for responding to others' posts, but it would be great if you did so anyway!

ADVICE AND EXPECTATIONS:

This is a 30-credit module, so it should occupy about half of your working week – around 18-20 hours per week. If you feel that you are having trouble keeping up, even though you're spending 18-20 hours per week on this module, come and talk to us.

You should come to lectures and tutorials each week prepared to discuss the material from the assigned readings. Since most of the readings have been written with an audience of professional philosophers in mind, this will likely require reading, making notes, and re-reading. Remember that only three of the 18-20 hours per week will be spent in class, so you should expect and plan to spend 15-17 hours per week thinking about the material on your own. In preparing for the lectures and tutorials, you need to think about what you hope to get out of them: what you don't understand, what you'd like to understand better, what you think about the issues. Make a note of these points in advance of lectures and tutorials. Make time afterwards to look at those notes again, to see how you've progressed. If you don't feel you've progressed, then come and talk to one of us.

Lectures will be primarily for introducing the issues. But since the class is two hours long, we expect there to be a significant amount of discussion even in lectures. Thus, you should read through the material at least once before lecture. Your blogs will be due on Wednesdays – in between the lectures (Tuesdays) and tutorials (Thursdays). The idea behind this placement of the blog deadline is that you will have the chance to refine your thoughts further in light of the lecture, post your blog, and subsequently use the blog as a kicking off point for discussion in tutorial.

You also need to plan ahead for your essays. Beyond the required reading for lectures and tutorials, you may also want to explore the recommended readings, and you will also need to read more deeply on the topic you select for

your essay. In addition to those listed below, we will be happy to suggest further readings if you talk to us about your interests; you can also make use of the following resources:

- Google Scholar (<http://scholar.google.com>)
- Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy (<http://plato.stanford.edu>)
- Philosophy Compass (<http://philosophy-compass.com/>)
- PhilPapers (<http://philpapers.org>)

PROVISIONAL SCHEDULE OF TOPICS AND READINGS:

Note: black dots represent required readings; indented white dots represent recommended readings.

Week 1: The Goodness of Life

- Ben Bradley, *Well-Being and Death*, chapter 1
 - Eden Lin, "[Monism and Pluralism](#)"
 - Eden Lin, "[How to Use the Experience Machine](#)"

Week 2: Problems about the Badness of Death

- Ben Bradley, *Well-Being and Death*, chapter 2
 - Frances Kamm, *Morality, Mortality, Volume 1*, chapter 1
 - Elizabeth Harman, "[Fischer and Lamenting Nonexistence](#)"

Week 3: More Problems about the Badness of Death

- Ben Bradley, *Well-Being and Death*, chapter 3
 - Jeff McMahan, "[Death and the Value of Life](#)"
 - Travis Timmerman, "[Reconsidering Categorical Desire Views](#)"

Week 4: Death and Psychological Connectedness

- Ben Bradley, *Well-Being and Death*, chapter 4
 - Jeff McMahan, *The Ethics of Killing*, chapter 6.1
 - David Velleman, "[Well-Being and Time](#)"

Week 5: Do You Really Want to Live Forever (and Ever)?

- Larry Temkin, "[Is Living Longer Living Better?](#)"
 - Bernard Williams, "[The Makropulos Case: Reflections on the Tedium of Immortality](#)"
 - Connie Rosati, "[The Makropulos Case Revisited: Reflections on Immortality and Agency](#)"

Week 6: Killing & Letting Die: Doing versus Allowing Harm

- Shelly Kagan, *The Limits of Morality*, Ch. 3 [ebook]
 - Richard Trammel, "Saving Life and Taking Life", *Journal of Philosophy* 72 (1975), pp. 131-137

- Samuel Scheffler, *The Rejection of Consequentialism* (Oxford: OUP 1994), Ch. 4 [ebook]
- Judith Lichtenberg, "Negative Duties, Positive Duties, and the 'New Harms'", *Ethics* 120 (2010): 557-578.
- Jonathan Glover, *Causing Death and Saving Lives* (London: Penguin, 1977), Ch. 7

Week 7: Killing & Letting Die: Intending versus Foreseeing Harm

- Warren Quinn, "Actions, Intentions and Consequences: the Doctrine of Double Effect", *Philosophy and Public Affairs* 18 (1989), pp. 334-51
- Shelly Kagan, *The Limits of Morality*, Ch. 5 [ebook;]
 - Kamm F. M. Kamm, "Harming Some to Save Others", *Philosophical Studies* 57 (1989), pp. 227-60
 - Frances Kamm, [Intricate Ethics](#), chapter 4

-SPRING VACATION-

Week 8: Is It Better to Exist than Never to Exist at All?

- Elizabeth Harman, "[Can We Harm and Benefit in Creating?](#)"
 - Krister Bykvist, "[The Benefits of Coming into Existence](#)"
 - Gustaf Arrhenius and Wlodek Rabinowicz, "[The Value of Existence](#)"

Week 9: What Makes Killing Wrong

- Jeff McMahan, [The Ethics of Killing](#), chapter 3 (pp. 189-199 and 232-265)
- Peter Singer, [Practical Ethics](#), chapters 2 and 4

Week 10: Saving the Greater Number

- Michael Otsuka, '[Saving Lives, Moral Theory, and the Claims of Individuals](#)', *Philosophy & Public Affairs*, 34 (2006): 109-35
 - Frances Kamm, [Intricate Ethics](#), chapter 2
 - Tom Dougherty, "[Rational Numbers: A Non-Consequentialist Explanation Of Why You Should Save The Many And Not The Few](#)"

Week 11: Saving Identified versus Statistical Lives

(All four readings can be found in [Identified versus Statistical Lives: An Interdisciplinary Perspective](#))

- Dan Brock, "Identified vs. Statistical Lives: Some Introductory Issues and Arguments"
 - Norman Daniels, "Can There be Moral Force to Favoring an Identified over a Statistical Life?"

- Johann Frick, "Treatment vs Prevention in the Fight Against HIV/AIDS and the Problem of Identified vs Statistical Lives"
- Nir Eyal, "Concentrated Risk, the Coventry Blitz, Chamberlain's Cancer"

Week 12: Slippage Week / Overview