

PHIL 51650 / DVPR 42806

Death: Some Aspects

Winter term 2016

Swift 400

Thursdays, 9:00-11:50

Instructors: Dan Arnold (d-arnold@uchicago.edu), Dan Brudney (dbrudney@uchicago.edu)

Office hours: **Dan Arnold** (Swift 401A, 702-8276), Fridays, 9:30-11:00 (or by arrangement with instructor); for appointments during regular office hours, contact instructor's secretary, Susie McGee (Martin Marty Center); **Dan Brudney** (Stuart 218, 702-7546), Mondays, 2-3:45 (or by appointment)

Required Readings:

All readings are available on reserve at Regenstein Library; all non-book-length readings can be found electronically on Chalk (chalk.uchicago.edu), where they are to be found under "Library Course Reserves." The following books are (or will soon be) available for purchase at the Seminary Coop Bookstore; students found to have purchased them instead on Amazon may be subjected to stern rebuke.

- J. J. Valberg, *Dream, Death, and the Self* (Princeton U. Press, 2007)
- Mark Johnston, *Surviving Death* (Princeton U. Press, 2010)
- Samuel Scheffler, *Death and the Afterlife* (Oxford U. Press, 2013)
- Anne O'Byrne, *Natality and Finitude* (Indiana U. Press, 2010)
- Franklin Miller and Robert Truog, *Death, Dying, and Organ Transplantation* (Oxford U. Press, due in January 2016)

Course Requirements:

In addition to exemplifying regular attendance and spirited participation in discussion, students will be required to submit a paper of moderate length (15-25 pages), on a topic to be developed in consultation with the instructors. Papers will be DUE MARCH 18TH.

Schedule of Topics & Readings:

Week 1 (Thursday, January 7; *Prof. Brudney away*): "To study philosophy is nothing but to prepare one's self to die" (Cicero). **Course introduction, logistics, etc.**

Week 2 (Thursday, January 14): Some classic framings of the issues. **Reading:** Epicurus and Lucretius (selections from Long and Sedley, *The Hellenistic Philosophers*, and from Inwood and Gerson, *The Epicurus Reader*); Marcus Aurelius (selections from the *Meditations*, ed. G. M. A. Grube); Thomas Nagel, "Death"

Week 3 (Thursday, January 21): Would it be desirable to survive death? **Reading:** Bernard Williams, "The Makropulos case: Reflections on the Tedium of Immortality"; Jorge Luis Borges, "The Immortal"; Iain Thomson and James Bodington, "Against Immortality: Why Death is Better than the Alternative"

Week 4 (Thursday, January 28): Is death *bad*? (If so, when, and for whom?) **Reading:** Fred Feldman, “Some Puzzles about the Evil of Death”; Jeff McMahan, “Death and the Value of Life”; John Martin Fischer, “Epicureanism about Death and Immortality”; Martha Nussbaum, “The Damage of Death: Incomplete Arguments and False Consolations”

Week 5 (Thursday, February 4): When push comes to shove: On prioritizing survival. **Reading:** Govind Persad, Alan Wertheimer, Ezekiel Emanuel, “Principles for Allocation of Scarce Medical Interventions”; Ruth Tallman, “Valuing Lives and Allocating Resources: A Defense of the Modified Youngest First Principle of Scarce Resource Distribution”; Sam Kerstein and Greg Bognara, “Complete Lives in the Balance”; Galen Strawson, “Against Narrativity”

Week 6 (Thursday, February 11): What is the *subject* of anxiety about death? Death and its implication in other philosophical puzzles. **Reading:** J. J. Valberg, *Dream, Death, and the Self* (Princeton University Press, 2007), parts I and II (pp.1-236)

Week 7 (Thursday, February 18): A naturalist account of what it could mean to survive death. **Reading:** Mark Johnston, *Surviving Death*

Week 8 (Thursday, February 25): On the difference it makes that *others* survive us. **Reading:** Samuel Scheffler, *Death and the Afterlife*

Week 9 (Thursday, March 3): Not that we *die* but that we were *born*: An alternative take on what essentially characterizes being human. **Reading:** Anne O’Byrne, *Nativity and Finitude*

Week 10 (Thursday, March 10; *Prof. Arnold away*): Do we have the *right* to die? **Reading:** Daniel Bergner, “Death in the Family”; Dan Brock, “Voluntary Active Euthanasia”; J. David Velleman, “A Right of Self-Termination?”; Timothy Quill, “Death and Dignity: A Case of Individualized Decision Making”; Leon Kass, “Is There a Right to Die?”; Ronald Dworkin, John Rawls, et al, “Assisted Suicide: The Philosophers’ Brief”; “It’s Over, Debbie” (anonymous piece published in the *Journal of the American Medical Association*)

TBD: (Monday, March 7?): Other ways of thinking about how concern for the future figures in thinking about death: The case of organ transplantation. **Reading:** Franklin Miller and Robert Truog, *Death, Dying, and Organ Transplantation: Reconstructing Medical Ethics at the End of Life*

Final papers due Friday, March 18th!