

The Chinese University of Hong Kong
2025/26 2nd semester
UGED2901 Death and Immortality 死亡與不朽
Course Outline

Instructor: Dr. Kwok Pak Nin, Samson
Time: Tuesday 16:30-18:15
Venue: LHC G04

Course overview:

This course examines the issues of human death from the philosophical as well as cultural, psychological, medical and sociological perspectives. Students will develop an interdisciplinary perspective in the fields of philosophy, sociology, psychology, cultural studies, and medical science by understand how these studies have responded to key questions concerning death and immortality. Topics to be discussed include: What is the definition of life and death? What is the nature and badness of death? Should we choose for immortality? The practical issues related to death such as suicide, human extinction, and the meaning of life will be discussed as well.

Learning outcomes:

Upon completion of the course, students will be able to:

- cite the major arguments in the current philosophical debates over the issues of death;
- recount the historical, scientific, social and cultural contexts of the debate;
- discuss the broad range of practical issues about life and death;
- form a conclusion about their own view on death and defend it with a strong, logical reasoning.

Learning activities and workload:

- 1. Lecture:** 3 hours each week.
- 2. Class Discussion:** Students are required to discuss reading material assigned in class.

Assessment:

Task nature	Description	Weight
Discussion	Class Discussion (group)	20%
Mid-term	In-class Quiz	30%
Term Paper	Term-end Paper	50%
<i>Participation*</i>	<i>Students who actively participate in both class and online discussions may receive a bonus of up to 5% on their final grade</i>	

Grade Descriptors:

http://phil.arts.cuhk.edu.hk/~phidept/UG/Grade_descriptors.pdf

Late submission policy:

Assignments submitted after the due date will incur a 5% grade reduction per day. Extensions will only be granted in cases of unexpected or exceptional circumstances beyond the student's control.

Details of course website:

Lecture notes and information on assignments will be posted on the Blackboard Learn website.

Course schedule:

Week	Date	Topic	Reading	Remarks
1	Jan 6	Introduction	關子尹，『死亡的意義—論生死之間與幽明之際』	
2	Jan 13	The religious and cultural perspectives on death	《生死愛欲 I》，第三與第八章	
3	Jan 20	The psychological and sociological perspectives on death	《凝視死亡—死與人間的多元省思》，第十三章	
4	Jan 27	The definition of life and death	《令人著迷的生與死》，第二與第五章	
5	Feb 3	The nature of death	《令人著迷的生與死》，第六與第八章	
6	Feb 10	The badness of death	《令人著迷的生與死》，第十章	<u>Mid-term Question announcement</u>
7	Feb 17	<u>Lunar New Year Holiday</u>		
8	Feb 24	<u>In-class Midterm</u>		
9	Mar 3	<u>Reading Week</u>		
10	Mar 10	Immortality	《令人著迷的生與死》，第十一章	
11	Mar 17	Suicide	《令人著迷的生與死》，第十五章	<u>1st class discussion</u>
12	Mar 24	Human Extinction	James Lenman, "On becoming extinct"	
13	Mar 31	Death and the meaning of life	Brooke Alan Trisel, "Does Death Give Meaning to Life?"	<u>Term Paper Guideline announcement</u>
14	Apr 7	<u>Public Holiday</u>		
15	Apr 14	Living with death	《令人著迷的生與死》，第十四章	<u>2nd class discussion</u>

Recommended learning resources:**Main Text:**

Shelly Kagan, *Death*. Yale University Press. 2012. (雪萊·卡根著，陳信宏譯：《令人著迷的生與死：耶魯大學最受歡迎的哲學課》，台灣，先覺出版，2015年。)

Reference:

Christopher Belshaw, *The Value and Meaning of Life*, Routledge, 2021.

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

David Benatar & David Wasserman, *Debating Procreation: Is It Wrong to Reproduce?* Oxford University Press, 2015.

Douglas Davies, *A Brief History of Death*, Wiley-Blackwell, 2005.

Emile Durkheim, *Suicide*, Routledge Classics, Routledge, 2005.

John Bowker, *The meaning of death*, Cambridge University Press, 1993.

Jeff McMahan, *The Ethics of Killing: Problems at the Margins of Life*, Oxford University Press, 2003.

Kubler-Ross Elisabeth, *On death and dying*, London: Tavistock, 1970.

Michael Cholbi (ed.), *Immortality and the Philosophy of Death*, Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2016.

Michael Hviid Jacobsen(ed.), *Postmortal Society-Towards a Sociology of Immortality*, Routledge, 2017.

Michael C. Kearl, *Endings-A Sociology of Death and Dying*, Oxford University Press, 1989.

Paul Badham & Paul Ballard (ed.). *Facing Death-An Interdisciplinary Approach*, University of Wales Press, 1996.

Robert Neimeyer, *Death Anxiety Handbook*, Taylor and Francis, 1994.

Samuel Scheffler, *Death and the afterlife*, Oxford University Press, 2014.

Tony Walter, *What Death Means Now: Thinking Critically about Dying and Grieving*, Bristol University Press, Policy Press, 2017.

海德·沃瑞棋著，朱怡康譯：《二十一世紀生死課》，台灣，行路出版，2018年。

葛文德著，廖月娟譯：《凝視死亡：一位外科醫師對衰老與死亡的思索》，台北，天下文化，2015年。

唐君毅，《人生之體驗續篇》，台北：學生書局，1992年。

梁美儀、張燦輝編：《凝視死亡—死與人間的多元省思》，香港，中文大學出版社，2005年。

張燦輝：《生死愛欲 I：從希臘神話到基督教》，香港，漫遊者文化，2016年。

郭柏年：《定見之外：生活日常的哲學短篇-增訂版》，香港：牛津大學出版社，2024年。

郭柏年：《流光之中：時間向度的人生哲學短篇》，香港：牛津大學出版社，2024年。

Contact:

Lecturer	
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Feedback for evaluation:

1. Students are strongly encouraged to provide feedback on the course via email or meetings with lecturer.
2. Students evaluate the course through a survey and written comments at the end of the term as well as via regular feedback between teacher and students. This information is highly valued and is used to revise teaching methods, tasks, and content.

Academic honesty and plagiarism:

Attention is drawn to University policy and regulations on honesty in academic work, and to the disciplinary guidelines and procedures applicable to breaches of such policy and regulations.

Details may be found at <http://www.cuhk.edu.hk/policy/academichonesty/> .

With each assignment, students will be required to submit a signed **declaration** that they are aware of these policies, regulations, guidelines and procedures. For group projects, all students of the same group should be asked to sign the declaration.

For assignments in the form of a computer-generated document that is principally text-based and submitted via VeriGuide, the statement, in the form of a receipt, will be issued by the system upon students' uploading of the soft copy of the assignment. Assignments without the receipt will not be graded by teachers. Only the final version of the assignment should be submitted via VeriGuide.

Guidelines on the Use of Artificial Intelligence Tools**Use only with prior permission**

Students may use AI tools for Term Paper, but not for other assignments. These tools can be used for: 1. Checking grammar and 2. Polishing arguments. All use of AI tools must be cited or acknowledged.