

PHIL 225: Death and Dying (1.5 units)

Course Information:

PHIL 225 A01 (CRN 12747)

Course Schedule: TWF 9:30-10:20 in COR A225

Prerequisites: None

Instructor Information:

Name: Dr. Audrey Yap (they/she) (you can call me Dr. Yap, Professor Yap, or Audrey)

Email: ayap@uvic.ca

Office: CLE B307

Appointments: In-person drop-in hours Tuesdays 12:30pm-1:20pm in CLE B307 or schedule a Zoom appointment with me on Thursdays between 9-11 at

<https://calendly.com/ayap/office>

If those options don't work for you, please email me with some suggested dates and times.

Territorial Acknowledgement (Contributed by Scow and Underwood):

The University of Victoria is situated on the unceded territory of the lək̓ʷəŋən and W̱SÁNEĆ peoples. This is their land—a reality that all of us who have come here must acknowledge. We must also recognize how our presence here interrupts ancient ways of being in this world. We all have a responsibility to prevent further intrusion into lək̓ʷəŋən and W̱SÁNEĆ lives and, if called upon, to support expressions of lək̓ʷəŋən and W̱SÁNEĆ nationhood. We must also recognize that we are living on someone's home—spread across Greater Victoria are the hunting and fishing grounds, village sites and ceremonial places of Salish people, and we must acknowledge how our presence here can either disrupt or repair the relationships between the original people and their territory.

Course Logistics and Technologies:

Course website and all readings posted on Brightspace (<https://bright.uvic.ca/d2l/home>)

While course will be taught face-to-face, all essay assignments will be turned in through the course website, on Brightspace. I will record and post some lecture components of each week's instruction, but not in-class activities. Recordings will not be a substitute for attending class yourself. Philosophy isn't just something you learn by listening to a professor talk about it, or by reading a book, it's also something you need to *do*. As a result, your classes are going to be structured with a mixture of activities in mind. You can expect some classes to have more lecture-style content, while others will involve activities like small group discussion, depending on what our goals for that particular week might be.

Learning Objectives and Strategies:

Death can be a great source of anxiety for many people. It can be hard to deal with the knowledge that we (and everyone) will someday die. Maybe that's why it can be very hard to have conversations with people about death, even though it affects all of our lives.

Euphemisms for death are common, and a lot of common conventions hide it from general view. But it's also extremely common to have had one's life touched by death in some way or other. Many people's first encounters with death are with the deaths of others, like family members or animals. So, one thing we'll start off by talking about is grief, which I'm assuming is something that many people in the class will have encountered. But we will also talk about different philosophers' views about what death is, and we'll also consider death in the non-human world. This is by no means an exhaustive treatment of the different things that philosophers have said about death and its significance, as there's only so many things that we can cover during a semester. But my goal as your instructor is to help you achieve the following learning objectives:

- Familiarity with a variety of philosophical views relating to death, dying, and related issues.
- The ability to understand, clearly explain, and talk to each other about philosophical ideas and arguments.
- The ability to write both sensitively and rigorously about topics that can be very personal and relate to our everyday lives.

Assessment:

There will be two midterm assignments, each worth 25% of your grade, and a final assignment worth 40%. The remaining 10% will be based on regular engagement with the class material.

Engagement:

One of the learning objectives I have for this class is that you be able to talk philosophy with each other. This doesn't necessarily mean knowing how to use big philosophy words, although being familiar with technical terms is generally very useful too! That means I expect you to come to class regularly, though, and have conversations with other students about the course material. I try to include a lot of opportunities for you to talk to each other in my classes, and so one aspect of your grade will simply be that you are present for in-class discussions and other interactive activities. When we do these (approximately once a week), I'll have a sign-in sheet that will go around the room while we're doing the activity in question. You only need to be present for 10 of these to get full marks, and there will be at least 12 occasions to earn them, so missing a small number of classes will not negatively impact your grade. The objective for this is continuing engagement in the class, so **no extensions on engagement marks** will be given. However, if you end up getting sick or having to miss an extended period of class time, please do talk to me about it to make alternate arrangements.

Assignments:

The midterm and final assignments will all be take-home and open book work. However, they will be scaffolded in ways that might be different from some of your other classes, so please do read this section so you understand how they'll work!

At least two weeks before the submission deadline, the assignment questions will be released. Assignment questions will typically take the form of essays where you will be asked to explain and apply the ideas we have been learning about, but they will also often have components where you consider your relationship to the topics we're discussing, and reflect on the process of learning itself. After the questions are released, there will be an in-class session where you will draft an outline for your essay. You're welcome to talk through your ideas with other students, but must write the outline independently, and with no AI assistance. The outline you draft here will not be graded, but must be included when you turn in your assignment. This means that to receive full marks for your assignment, you need to be in class when we draft the outlines. If you know you will have to miss that day, please talk to me about how to make that up.

Essays for the midterm assignments will be approximately 750 words or 3-4 double spaced pages. Essays for the final assignment will be approximately 1250 words or 4-6 pages. However, I know that sometimes things do not go as planned. You may have **3 days' worth of extensions on assignments**, to be distributed among the assignments as you like. Please let me know before the due date if you are using an extension, and how long an extension you need, though you do not need to tell me why you need it. If you end up needing more than 3 days' worth of extensions during the semester, I highly encourage you to make an appointment with me to talk about how we can plan for you to keep up with the course schedule.

Completing at least one midterm assignment as well as the final assignment means that you will be considered to have **completed the course**. If you do not turn in at least this amount of work, this will result in an N grade regardless of the cumulative percentage on other elements of the course.

Gradeable Item	Description	Value	Total
Engagement	Continuing engagement with the material, assessed weekly	1% x 10 weeks	10%
Midterm Assignments	Short essays about the readings	25% x 2 assignments	50%
Final Assignment	Medium length essay about the readings	40%	40%
		Total	100%

Final course grades will be given as percentile marks, in accordance with the standard university grading scheme:

<https://www.uvic.ca/calendar/future/undergrad/index.php#/policy/S1AAgoGuV?bc=true&bcCurrent=16%20-%20Grading&bcGroup=Undergraduate%20Academic%20Regulations&bcItemType=policies>.

Academic Integrity:

You are welcome and encouraged to talk to others about your assignments. They are also entirely open book, which means you can consult any past lectures, notes, or course material, with the understanding that you are ultimately responsible for all the content that you submit. You do not need to cite lectures, but you do need to cite readings. You may not, however, use generative AI to produce any of your work for this class. This means that you may not use it to generate ideas for your graded work, or produce work based on your own ideas. I consider its use on any graded work a violation of academic integrity, and as such, any work produced by it will **not be given credit**. More importantly, using it will not actually help you learn. If there is something you genuinely think you would need it for, I'd encourage you instead to come talk to me about how the course could be more accessible for you.

I teach this course under the assumption that you are here to learn. If you are having trouble with the material, then my expectation is that you will ask me for help or for an extension instead of using a generative AI tool.

You can find UVic's policy on Academic Integrity here:

https://www.uvic.ca/calendar/future/undergrad/index.php#/policy/Sk_0xsM_V

Conduct and Communication:

I do not run a formal classroom and I do not insist on titles. You can refer to me as Dr. Yap, Professor Yap, or Audrey, and I genuinely have no preference which you use. They and she are both correct pronouns for me, and if you think I wouldn't know which pronouns you use, please don't hesitate to make me aware.

Email is the best way to get in touch with me outside of class time, particularly if you have any official requests. If you ask me a question over email, you can expect a reply within about 1 working day. If you don't hear back from me after that time frame, feel free to try again in case your message went astray. If you are nervous about sending me an email or asking a question, feel free to include a picture of a puppy (or cute animal of your choice) with your request. This will not affect whether I will be able to help you with your request but will give you an excuse to look for pictures of puppies or other cute creatures. In fact, it will make me happy to know that you have read the course outline to this point, so feel free to send me a picture of a cute animal now.

I also consider you to be the best authority on your needs in the classroom. That means if you need to do things like eat or drink during class, leave the room, knit, stim, or anything else, the only thing I ask is that you respect others in the room and try not to distract them. This course will involve material that can be challenging to talk about, and I will trust you to attend to your needs.

Course Schedule:

Week One (Sep 9, 11): Preparing to Talk about Death and Dying

Week Two (Sep 15, 16, 18): Grief and Loss

C.S. Lewis, Chapter One of *A Grief Observed*

Catherine Fullarton, "Grief, Phantoms, and Re-membering Loss" in *The Journal of Speculative Philosophy*

Week Three (Sep 22, 23, 25): Relationships with the Dead

Kathryn Norlock, "Real (and Imaginal) Relationships with the Dead" in *The Journal of Value Inquiry*

Week Four (Sep 29, Oct 2): Memory and the Future

Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada: Calls to Action

Sue Campbell, "Remembering for the Future", in *Our Faithfulness to the Past: The Ethics and Politics of Memory*

Week Five (Oct 6, 7, 9): What is Death?

Tem Horwitz, "My Death: Reflections on my Journey into Non-Being", in *Death and Philosophy*

Cody Gilmore, "What it is to Die", in *Exploring the Philosophy of Death and Dying*

Assignment One Outline Oct 6

Week Six (Oct 13, 14, 16): Whether it is Bad to Die

Lucretius, "On the Nature of Things (excerpts), in *Exploring the Philosophy of Death and Dying*

Thomas Nagel, "Death", in *Mortal Questions*

Assignment One Due Oct 18

Week Seven (Oct 20, 21, 23): Fear of Death

Amélie Okensburg Rorty, "Fearing Death", in *Philosophy*

Week Eight (Oct 27, 28, 30): Death and Enlightenment

Robert Wicks, "Death and Enlightenment: The Therapeutic Psychology of the *Tibetan Book of the Dead*", in *Death and Philosophy*

Weeks Nine and Ten (Nov 3, 4, 6, 13): Beyond Human Exceptionalism

Lori Gruen, "Facing Death and Practicing Grief" in *Ecofeminism*

Val Plumwood, "Tasteless: A Food-Based Approach to Death" in *The Eye of the Crocodile*

Assignment Two Outline Nov 3

Assignment Two Due Nov 15

Week Eleven (Nov 17, 18, 20): Death and Non-Human Animals
Susana Monsó "How to tell if Animals can Understand Death", in *Erkenntnis*

Week Twelve (Nov 24, 25, 27): Old Age
Excerpts from Simone de Beauvoir, *Old Age*

Week Thirteen (Dec 1, 2, 4): Wrap-up week
This week will involve some preparatory activities for final papers, as well as covering any additional topics you'd like to discuss

Final Assignment Outlines Dec 1

Final Assignment Due Dec 10

Death, suicide, and mental health support

You don't have to face things alone. The University of Victoria offers confidential support for any/all students experiencing mental, emotional, or spiritual challenges. You can find the services here: <https://www.uvic.ca/student-wellness/wellness-resources/mental-health/index.php>

In case of a crisis (involving yourself or others), Canada and BC offer free, confidential emergency helplines: <https://helpstartshere.gov.bc.ca/resource/1-800-suicide-0>
CRISIS LINE: Call 1-800-784-2433, or call/text 9-8-8 if you are experiencing feelings of distress or despair, including thoughts of suicide
MENTAL HEALTH SUPPORT LINE: 310-6789 (no area code needed)

AVI also operates a non-police community led crisis response team:
<https://avi.org/service/crcl/> You can reach them at (250)818-2454.

Other Resources:

Student Resources

- a. [UVic Learn Anywhere](#). UVic Learn Anywhere is the primary learning resource for students that offers many learning workshops and resources to help students with academics and learning strategies.
- b. Library resources
- c. Indigenous student services ([ISS](#))
- d. Centre for Academic Communication ([CAC](#))
- e. Math & Stats Assistance Centre ([MSAC](#))
- f. Learning Strategies Program ([LSP](#))
- g. Community-Engaged Learning ([CEL](#))
- h. [Academic Concession Regulations](#)
- i. [Academic Concession and Accommodation](#)
- j. Academic Accommodation – [Policy AC1205](#)

University statements and policies

- a. University Calendar - Section "[Information for all students](#)"
- b. [Creating a respectful, inclusive and productive learning environment](#)
- c. [Accommodation of Religious Observance](#)
- d. [Student Conduct](#)
- e. [Non-academic Student Misconduct](#)
- f. [Accessibility](#)
- g. [Diversity / EDI](#)
- h. [Equity statement](#)
- i. [Sexualized Violence Prevention and Response](#)
- j. Discrimination and Harassment [Policy](#)

Student groups and resources

- a. [Student wellness](#)
- b. [Ombudsperson](#)