

Philosophy 471: Death and Dying

Instructor: Diana Buccafurni
Sam Houston State University
Fall 2007

TTH: 11:00-12:20pm, AB4 205
Section 3; 03 Credits
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Office Hours:
MWF: 11-12pm; TTH: 1-2pm & by appt.
Office: LDB 337; Office Ph: TBA

Course Description:

This course is a survey course of philosophical issues in the context of death and dying, with a focus on the ethical and moral considerations relevant to these issues. As a course in philosophy, we will examine various positions on end-of-life issues (e.g., suicide), the arguments given for them and against them, and objections against these arguments.

Course Goals/Objectives: By the conclusion of this course, you should:

1. be able to recognize arguments and provide objections against arguments. This is the “skill” goal of the course.
2. be familiar with various arguments for and against different views in the end-of-life literature. This is the “content” goal of the course.

Required Texts:

1. *The Last Dance: Encountering Death and Dying*, DeSpelder and Strickland, 7th ed., McGraw-Hill, New York, 2005, ISBN: 0-07-292096-3.
2. Additional readings as listed on syllabus are located on e-reserve (ER).

Blackboard:

The syllabus and any handouts I give in class will be posted on Blackboard. You can access Blackboard via the SHSU homepage.

Course Requirements:

1. There will be four exams as announced on the syllabus. Exams 1, 2 and 3 will each count for 20% of your course grade. The final exam is cumulative and counts for 30% of your course grade. Exams will be multiple choice. Make-up exams will only be given in extraordinary circumstances and will be essay exams. Be advised that make-up exams will be *markedly more difficult* than regularly scheduled exams.
2. Participation: This will count for 10% of your grade. Integral to learning philosophy is doing philosophy. Weekly, substantive participation is required for full participation points.
3. Regular, punctual attendance. I will take roll at the beginning of every class. If I see that you are not paying attention, you will be counted as absent for that day of class, even if you are physically in class. That is, to get credit for attendance, you must be mentally present. (In theory, you can get marked as present at the beginning of class, but get

marked absent if your attention is not present during class.) You can miss up to three classes without being penalized. If you miss more than 3 classes, I will deduct half a letter grade from your final course grade (e.g., a final grade of “B+” becomes a “B” after more than 3 absences). You can view the attendance policy required by SHSU under Academic Policy Statement 800401.

Tentative Reading and Exam Schedule

- T 8/21 Introduction to death and dying; Introduction to philosophy;
Introduction to logic

Unit 1: Euthanasia and Physician Assisted Suicide

- TH 8/23 Introduction, Chapter 7: End-of-Life Issues and
Decisions, 219-245
- T 8/28 The Wrongfulness of Euthanasia, Gay-Williams ER
Voluntary Active Euthanasia, Brock ER
- TH 8/30 When Self-Determination Runs Amok, Callahan ER
- T 9/4 Active and Passive Euthanasia, Rachels ER
- TH 9/6 Voluntary Euthanasia: A Utilitarian Perspective, Singer ER
- T 9/11 The Fear of a Slippery Slope, Frey ER
PAS: A Conservative Critique of Intervention, Lee ER
- TH 9/13 Exam 1

Unit 2: Medical Futility: End-of-Life Decisions at the Beginning of Life

- T 9/18 Discontinuing Life Support in an Infant of a Drug- ER
Addicted Mother: Whose Decision Is It?, Jain and
Thomasma
Decision Making in the Nursery: An Ethical Dilemma, ER
Jones and Freeman
- TH 9/20 Withholding Nutrition from Seriously Ill Newborn ER
Infants: A Parent’s Perspective, Miraie and Mahowald
- T 9/25 Tackling Medical Futility in Texas, Truog ER
Introduction, Chapter 5: Death Systems, pp. 153-181 ER

Unit 3: Definitions of Death

- TH 9/27 Brain Death: Reconciling Definitions, Criteria, and Tests ER
Halevy and Brody
- T 10/2 Is it time to abandon brain death?, Truog ER
Reconsidering Brain Death, Morioka ER
- TH 10/4 As Good as Dead, Greenberg ER
- T 10/9 Exam 2

Unit 4: Life After Death

- TH 10/11 Chapter 14: Beyond Death/After Life, pp. 495-527 ER
- T 10/16 Problems with Accounts of Life After Death, Badham ER
- Resurrection of the Person, Hick ER
- The Soul Needs a Brain to Continue to Function, Swinburne ER

Unit 5: Future-Oriented End-of-Life Decisionmaking

- TH 10/18 Advance directives, pp. 245-253
- T 10/23 Availability and use of advance directives, Darr ER
- The Evanescence of Living Wills, Francis ER
- TH 10/25 Advance directives and personal identity
- T 10/30 Advance directives and the Personal Identity Problem, Buchanan ER
- Advance Directives and the Severely Demented, Harvey ER
- TH 11/1 Exam 3

Unit 6: The Costs of Dying

- T 11/6 Introduction, Chapter 4: Health Care Systems, pp. 125-151
- TH 11/8 The High Cost of Dying, Scitovksy ER
- Medical Futility, Jecker and Pagon ER
- T 11/13 Gov. Lamm Asserts Elderly, If Very Ill, Have 'Duty to Die', AP ER
- Is There a Duty to Die?, Hardwig ER
- TH 11/15 How Long Before They Turn the Right to Die Into a Duty to Die?, Edwards ER

Unit 7: Suicide

- T 11/20 Introduction, Chapter 12: Suicide, pp. 409-447
- TH 11/22 No class
- T 11/27 History and Contemporary Opinion, Barry ER
- The Ethics of Suicide, Szasz ER
- TH 11/29 The Morality and Rationality of Suicide, Brandt ER
- T 12/4 Whether it is Lawful to Kill Oneself, Aquinas ER
- TH 12/6 Review Session: Q and A

Thursday**December 13****FINAL EXAM: 11:00-1:00PM**

****SHSU POLICIES****

****It is your responsibility as a student to familiarize yourself with all of these policies to which you will be held accountable. There will be no exceptions to any of these policies.****

Classroom Conduct:

Please familiarize yourself with classroom conduct requirements at SHSU. Please see: <http://www.shsu.edu/students/guide/dean/codeofconduct.html>. I expect all students to follow conduct requirements. **Please do not bring cell phones to class. If you need to bring them for some legitimate reason, you must: 1) get permission to bring them and 2) keep them in vibrate mode. Please be respectful to your instructor and fellow classmates. I will extend the same courtesy to you.**

Academic Dishonesty:

As stated at: <https://www.shsu.edu/syllabus/>: "All students are expected to engage in all academic pursuits in a manner that is above reproach. Students are expected to maintain honesty and integrity in the academic experiences both in and out of the classroom. Any student found guilty of dishonesty in any phase of academic work will be subject to disciplinary action. The University and its official representatives may initiate disciplinary proceedings against a student accused of any form of academic dishonesty including but not limited to, cheating on an examination or other academic work which is to be submitted, plagiarism, collusion and the abuse of resource materials. For a complete listing of the university policy, see: <http://www.shsu.edu/administrative/faculty/sectionb.html#dishonesty>".

Students with Disabilities Policy:

As stated at: <https://www.shsu.edu/syllabus/>: "It is the policy of Sam Houston State University that individuals otherwise qualified shall not be excluded, solely by reason of their disability, from participation in any academic program of the university. Further, they shall not be denied the benefits of these programs nor shall they be subjected to discrimination. Students with disabilities that might affect their academic performance are expected to visit with the Office of Services for Students with Disabilities located in the Counseling Center. They should then make arrangements with their individual instructors so that appropriate strategies can be considered and helpful procedures can be developed to ensure that participation and achievement opportunities are not impaired. SHSU adheres to all applicable federal, state, and local laws, regulations, and guidelines with respect to providing reasonable accommodations for students with disabilities. If you have a disability that may affect adversely your work in this class, then I encourage you to register with the SHSU Counseling Center and to talk with me about how I can best help you. All disclosures of disabilities will be kept strictly confidential. NOTE: No accommodation can be made until you register with the Counseling Center. For a complete listing of the university policy, see: <http://www.shsu.edu/~vaf/www/aps/811006.pdf>."

Student Absences on Religious Holy Days Policy:

As stated at: <https://www.shsu.edu/syllabus/>: "Section 51.911(b) of the Texas Education Code requires that an institution of higher education excuse a student from attending classes or other required activities, including examinations, for the observance of a religious holy day, including travel for that purpose. Section 51.911 (a) (2) defines a religious holy day as: "a holy day observed by a religion whose places of worship are exempt from property taxation under Section 11.20...." A student whose absence is excused under this subsection may not be penalized for that absence and shall be allowed to take an examination or complete an assignment from which the student is excused within a reasonable time after the absence. University policy 861001 provides the procedures to be followed by the student and instructor. A student desiring to absent himself/herself from a scheduled class in order to observe (a) religious holy day(s) shall present to each instructor involved a written statement concerning the religious holy day(s). The instructor will complete a form notifying the student of a reasonable timeframe in which the missed assignments and/or examinations are to be completed. For a complete listing of the university policy, see: <http://www.shsu.edu/~vaf/www/aps/documents/861001.pdf>."