

# Life and Death

PHIL-UA 4

Spring 2016

## Course Objective

We will make use of the methods of analytic philosophy in order to reflect on essential and often troubling questions about human existence. What am I, and why am I still the same person I was twenty years ago? What is a good life, and how should *I* live *my* life? Should I be afraid of death? What is the meaning of life, and how can I give *my* life meaning? Students will have the occasion, and are highly encouraged, to use the theories and practices we will consider to reflect on their own lives.

## Schedule

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| January 25: | <b>Introduction</b>   |
| January 27: | <b>The Good Life: Hedonism (day 1)</b><br>John Stuart Mill, <i>Utilitarianism</i> , Ch. 2<br>Robert Nozick, <i>Anarchy, State, and Utopia</i> , pp. 42-45 |
| February 1: | <b>The Good Life: Hedonism (day 2)</b><br>Fred Feldman, <i>Pleasure and the Good Life</i> , Chs. 4 and 5  |
| February 3: | <b>The Good Life: Buddhism (I): Conditioned Existence</b><br><i>In the Buddha's Words</i> , Ch. VI  |
| February 8: | <b>The Good Life: Buddhism (II): The Eightfold Path to Liberation from Suffering: Introduction</b><br><i>In the Buddha's Words</i> , Ch. VII              |

- February 10:           **The Good Life: Buddhism (III): The Eightfold Path to Liberation from Suffering: Mental Control and Insight**  
*In the Buddha's Words*, Chs. VIII-IX
- February 17:           **Minfulness 101 with Reka Prasad**
- February 22:           **The Good Life: Aristotle (day 1)**  
*Aristotle, Nicomachean Ethics*, Books I and II (pp. 3-36)
- February 24:           **The Good Life: Aristotle (day 2)**
- February 29:           **The Good Life: Aristotle (day 3)**  
*Aristotle, Nicomachean Ethics*, Book III sections 1-9, Book VI sections 12-13, Book VII sections 1-10 (pp. 37-54, 115-118, 119-136)
- March 2:               **The Good Life: Aristotle (day 4)**
- March 7:               **Aristotle on Friendship (day 1)**  
*Aristotle, Nicomachean Ethics*, Books VIII and IX (pp. 192-247)
- March 9:               **Aristotle on Friendship (day 2)**
- March 21               **Trust**  
Annette Baier, "Trust and Anti-Trust"
- March 23               **Love**  
David Velleman, "Love as a Moral Emotion"
- March 28:              **Personal Identity and the Self: Introduction**  
John Perry, *A Dialogue on Personal Identity and Immortality*
- March 30:              **Personal Identity and the Self: Locke**  
John Locke, "Of Identity and Diversity"  
Thomas Reid, "Of Mr. Locke's Account of Our Personal Identity"
- April 4                 **Personal Identity and the Self: Parfit**  
Derek Parfit, "Personal Identity"
- April 6                 **Personal Identity and the Self: Hume**  
David Hume, "Of Personal Identity"
- April 11:               **Personal Identity and the Self: Buddhism (day 1)**  
*In the Buddha's Words*, pp. 301-20, 338-45, 353-55, 364-69

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|-----------|---|
| April 13: | <b>Personal Identity and the Self: Buddhism (day 2)</b>   |
| April 18: | <b>Death (day 1)</b><br>Leo Tolstoy, <i>The Death of Ivan Ilyich</i>                                      |
| April 20  | <b>Death (day 2)</b><br>Leo Tolstoy, <i>The Death of Ivan Ilyich</i>                                      |
| April 25  | <b>The Harm of Death</b><br>Anthony Brueckner and John Martin Fischer, "Why Is Death Bad?"                |
| April 27  | <b>Birth</b><br>Seana Shiffrin, "Wrongful Life, Procreative Responsibility, and the Significance of Harm" |
| May 2     | <b>The Meaning of Life (day 1)</b><br>Thomas Nagel, "The Absurd"  |
| May 4     | <b>The Meaning of Life (day 2)</b><br>David Velleman, "Family History"                                    |
| May 9:    | <b>Review</b>   |

## Required Texts

Please acquire copies of the books listed below. They will be available at the NYU book store. All other materials will be made available at the following URL: <http://www.max-barkhausen.com/Teaching/LifeDeath2016/LifeDeath2016.html>

- Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, ed. Roger Crisp (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000)
- Leo Tolstoy, *The Death of Ivan Ilyich & Confession* (New York: Liveright, 2014)
- Bhikku Bhodi, ed., *In the Buddha's Words. An Anthology of Discourses from the Pali Canon* (Somerville: Wisdom, 2015)

## Requirements

- Four essays due on February 21, March 13, April 17 and May 9 (these due dates may be subject to change depending on how we progress).
- A final exam

## Course Policies

- All assigned work must be handed in to receive a passing grade in the course.
- Papers should be handed in on time. If there is an emergency and you need extra time, please contact me in advance to request an extension. Papers handed in late without an extension will be graded down in proportion to their lateness.
- Any student who is found to have cheated on an examination or to have committed plagiarism will receive an F grade in the course and the matter will be referred to the office of the relevant dean for consideration of further disciplinary action.
- Regular attendance is a requirement to receive a passing grade in the class.

## Office Hours

Wednesdays, 3-5 pm and by appointment