371: The Philosophy of Death and Dying Syllabus
Fall 2021

Instructor: Martin Lin
Email: mlin@philosophy.rutgers.edu
Place: Tillett Hall 246
Time: MW 3pm-4:20pm
Office Hours: by appointment on Zoom
Course site: Canvas

Course Description: In this course we will examine various philosophical issues relating to the nature and value of death and dying. What is death? Could we survive the death of our bodies? What are we such that we may or may not survive death? What does it mean for us to believe that we will die? What is the value of death? Is it a bad thing? Would it be a good thing to live forever? Is it ever morally permissible to take your own life or the life of another? We will conclude by considering moral issues surrounding death and dying during a global pandemic.

Assignments:

Midterm exam: 35%
Final essay outline and annotated bibliography: 10%
Final essay: 45% (~2,000 words)
Participation in class discussion: 10%

Plagiarism: You are required to know what plagiarism is and how to avoid it. You can find the University’s plagiarism policy here:

http://nbacademicintegrity.rutgers.edu/

If you have any questions, you must ask me.

Text: The textbook, Shelley Kagan, Death, is available from the University Bookstore. Other readings will be distributed on Canvas.

Module 1: Arguments for the existence of an immortal soul: Descartes, The Sixth Meditation; Plato’s Phaedo; Kagan, chaps. 4 and 5.


Module 4: Believing you will die: Tolstoy, The Death of Ivan Ilyich; Kagan, chap. 9.


Important dates:

October 13th: Midterm study guide distributed
Wed. October 20th: Midterm (in class).
Thurs. Nov. 24th – Sunday Nov. 28th: Thanksgiving recess.
Wed. Dec. 13th: Last class.
Final paper due: TBD.