

PHIL 550 (Term 1 2020-21): Metaphysics
Restricted to Philosophy Graduate (M.A. and Ph.D.) students
Professor Evan Thompson evan.thompson@ubc.ca

This seminar will happen via remotely via Zoom.
Time: Tuesday 2-5 PM.

DEATH AND THE SELF

This seminar will focus on the metaphysics and phenomenology of the self and death. We will examine phenomenological approaches to death, issues about death and consciousness, the denial of death and Terror Management Theory, Stoicism on death, Zhuangzi on death, and death and our collective human future.

Assignments: (i) mid-term paper, (ii) final paper. Your midterm paper can be a draft of part of your final paper, or you can write two separate papers, as you choose.

Please send me your preferred email address. All readings will be made available electronically.

I haven't assigned my own writings on death as readings, but if you're interested in what I've done so far on this topic, you can read the following:

Chapter 9 of *Waking, Dreaming, Being: Self and Consciousness in Neuroscience, Meditation, and Philosophy* (which can be downloaded as a separate short ebook here: https://www.amazon.ca/Dying-Consciousness-Neuroscience-Meditation-Philosophy-ebook/dp/B00NF0CFYG/ref=sr_1_1?dchild=1&keywords=evan+thompson+dying&qid=1597336888&sr=8-1)

“Death: The Ultimate Transformative Experience,”
<https://evanthompsondotme.files.wordpress.com/2017/11/thompson-revised-death-the-ultimate-transformative-experience.pdf>

INTRODUCTION

Week 1: Sept. 8

The first meeting will be to introduce ourselves and to go over procedures, requirements, etc.

PHENOMENOLOGY

Week 2: Sept. 15.

Françoise Dastur, *How Are We to Confront Death? An Introduction to Philosophy*. (Available online through the UBC library.)

Week 3: Sept. 22

Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, §§46-53.
 Leo Tolstoy, *The Death of Ivan Ilyich*

Week 4: Sept 29

Sara Heinamaa, "The Many Senses of Death: Phenomenological Insights into Human Mortality"

Sara Heinamaa, "Being Towards Death"

James Dodd, "Death and Time in Husserl's C Manuscripts"

DEATH AND THE SELF

Week 5. Oct 6.

Thomas Nagel, "Death"

Thomas Nagel, *The View from Nowhere*, focus on the Introduction and Chapter XI.

Week 6. Oct 13.

J. J. Valberg, *Dream, Death, and the Self*, Preface, Introduction, Chapters 7, 8.

Week 7. Oct. 20.

J. J. Valberg, *Dream, Death, and the Self*, Chapters 9, 10, 11.

DEATH DENIAL AND TERROR MANAGEMENT THEORY

Week 8. Oct. 27.

Ernest Becker, *The Denial of Death*, Chapters 1-6.

Week 9. Nov. 3

Ernest Becker, *The Denial of Death*, Chapters 7-11.

Week 10. Nov. 10.

Tom Pyszczynski, Sheldon Solomon, and Jeff Greenberg, "Thirty Years of Terror Management Theory: From Genesis to Revelation"

Lee A. Kirkpatrick and Carlos David Navarrete, "Reports of My Death Anxiety Have Been Greatly Exaggerated: A Critique of Terror Management Theory from an Evolutionary Perspective"

ANCIENT PERSPECTIVES

Week 11. Nov. 17.

Cicero, "Against Fear of Death"

Seneca, *How to Die*

Martha Nussbaum, "The Damage of Death: Incomplete Arguments and False Consolations"

Week 12. Nov. 24.

Chuang Tzu, *Basic Writings* (Burton Watson translation)

Jung H. Lee, "The Great Returning: Death and Transformation in the Zhuangzi" (in *The Ethical Foundations of Early Daoism*)

Eric Schwitzgebel, "Death, Self, and Oneness in the Incomparable Zhuangzi" (in *The Oneness Hypothesis*)

DEATH AND OUR COLLECTIVE FUTURE

Week 13. Dec. 1.

Samuel Scheffler, *Death and the Afterlife*