

The University of Western Ontario
School of Health Studies
Health Sciences: Palliative & End of Life Care
HS 4710B
January - April 2025

Instructor: Dr. Afshin Vafaei
Email: avafaei2@uwo.ca
Office Hours:
Location:

GTA:

Lecture Times:
Tutorials:
Location:
Course Website:

Prerequisite Checking

Health Sciences 2711B

Course Description

This course will explore, from an inter-disciplinary perspective, critical issues related to death, dying, palliative and end of life care relevant to health professionals working in a variety of settings. Topics include an introduction to death and dying in Canadian society, socio-cultural influences on our understanding of death, theories used to guide practice, an understanding of the dying person's experience, principles of palliative care, ethical and legal issues, and health system initiatives and challenges.

Learning Objectives

This course offers an introduction to death, dying, palliative, and end-of-life care with a focus on the Canadian context. This course will examine factors that influence individuals' end of life experiences from a wide variety of perspectives. By the end of this course students will be able to:

- explain current best palliative care practices, as well as the individual and systemic challenges of palliative care within the health system
- offer future directions to improve the end-of-life experiences of individuals across the age spectrum
- have a better understanding of the dying person's experience, as well as the experiences of those around them
- recognize the special palliative care needs of various age and disease groups

Textbook & Reading List

Most reading are selected chapters of these two textbooks that are available in electronic format through [Western Libraries](#). You do not need to purchase a copy.

- Bruera et al (2021). Textbook of Palliative Medicine and Supportive Care.

Western Library link: https://ocul-uwo.primo.exlibrisgroup.com/permalink/01OCUL_UWO/1hdoga6/alma991045469819105163

- Blank et al (2007). Choices in Palliative Care. Issues in Health Care Delivery.

Western Library link: <https://books.scholarsportal.info/en/read?id=/ebooks/ebooks2/springer/2011-04-28/5/9780387708751>

Additional readings will be posted in OWL.

Class Schedule (subject to change)

Week/Date	Topic/Focus	Readings
Section 1: Defining Palliative Care		
1: Jan. 9; 2025	Approach to palliative care as public health and primary care issues	Chapters 1, 2 & 3 of Bruera (2021)
2: Jan. 14, 16; 2025	Medical Needs	Chapters 10 & 20 of Bruera (2021)
3: Jan. 21, 23; 2025	Psycho-social Needs	Chapter 77 of Bruera (2021) Rego & Nunes (2016). The interface between psychology and spirituality in palliative care. <i>J. Health Psychol</i> ; 24 (3): 279-289 doi: 10.1177/1359105316664138 Balboni & Peteet (2017). "Religion and Spirituality in Palliative Medicine" Chapter 10 of <i>Spirituality and Religion Within the Culture of Medicine: From Evidence to Practice</i> , Oxford University Press. pp. 147-164 https://ocul-uwo.primo.exlibrisgroup.com/permalink/01OCUL_UWO/r0c2m8/alma991044851548905163
4: Jan. 28, 30; 2025	Achieving Excellence in Palliative Care: Outcome Measurement and Ethics	Chapters 12 & 13 of Bruera (2021)
Section 2: The Act of Palliative Care		
5: Feb. 4, 6; 2025	Research in Palliative Care	Chapters 9 & 11 of Bruera (2021)
6: Feb. 11, 13; 2025	Tutorial and Midterm	
Fall Reading Week: February 17-21, 2025		
7: Feb. 25, 27; 2025	Palliative Care in Institutions; Hospitals & Long-term Care	Chapters 1 & 2 of Blank
8: March 4, 6; 2025	Palliative Care in Home Hospice Care	Chapters 3 & 4 of Blank Chapter 18 of Bruera (2021)
9: March 11, 13; 2025	Families and Friends of a Dying Person Time for group work on presentations	Chapters 78, 79 & 80 of Bruera (2021)
Section 3: Special Populations and Palliative Care		
10: March 18, 20; 2025	Individuals with Intellectual Disability Guest lecturer: Dr. Rachel Forrester-Jones Presentations 1-3	Chapter 2 of Stancliffe et al 2022: Experience of End-of-Life Issues by People with Intellectual Disability. Western library link: https://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/west/reader.action?pq-origsite=primo&ppg=59&docID=7015861
11: March 25, 27; 2025	Older Adults Presentations 4-6	Chapter 11 of Blank
12: April 1,3; 2025	Children and Youth Presentations 7-9	Chapter 10 of Blank

Evaluation and assignments

By **March 7, 2025**, students will know 20% of their final grade.

Assessment	Weight of Final Mark	Due Date
Midterm	20%	Feb. 13, 2025
Tutorial activities	20%	Jan. 17 until the last week (including)
Group Assignment		Varies
Presentation	10%	
Written paper	20%	
Final exam	30%	During the exam period (April 7-30, 2025)

Tutorial Activities: 20% of the overall grade

Starting in the second week, every **Tuesday from 4:30 to 5:30** students are expected to attend and **actively** participate in tutorial sessions. Concepts learned in the week before will be discussed and expanded upon during tutorials. For full marks, **active** participation in 8 tutorials is required (2.5 each, *8=20).

Group Assignment: 30% of the overall grade (Presentation 10%; Paper 20%)

The goal of this assignment is a deep evaluation of palliative care approach for a specific population and their specific care needs. Students will apply what they learned in sections 1 and 2 in their work. This assignment, to be completed in groups of 5-6 students, includes two components: a short (7-8 minutes) in-class presentation in weeks 10 to 12 and a written paper to be submitted **two weeks** after the presentation day. As a group or individually students select a specific population in need of palliative care and send it to the instructor before Jan. 24, 2025 for approval. Examples of **specific** populations: individuals with HIV, older adults with dementia, youth with end stage leukemia.

The presentation provides an opportunity for receiving feedback from the instructor and fellow classmates. **Please check your timing during a practice run.** It is expected that the written paper considers all valid feedback and be a reliable scientific work.

There will be measures to ensure a fair participation within groups for a more equitable experience. Half of the mark for this group assignment will be based on the individual performance either by peer evaluation or by grades for itemized components of the assignment. Therefore, students in the group might receive different grades. Details about the logistics and content of the assignment will be discussed throughout the semester.

Midterm (20%) and Final (30%) Exams:

Two exams will evaluate students' deep understanding of course materials. The midterm exam will take place at the regular meeting time (4:30-6:30 PM) on February 13, 2025 and the final exam will be scheduled by the *Exam Central* during the formal exam period (April 7 to April 30; 2025). Both exams will be in multiple choice, fill in blanks, short answer format. **The final exam is cumulative.**

Missed Work:

This is a discussion-based course and attendance in all lectures and tutorials is essential for learning. It is not possible to provide equal opportunity to make-up for the missed classes. **All materials covered in all classes are testable.**

Missed Exams:

If you are too ill to write a quiz or exam or there are other 'extenuating circumstances beyond your control' you **must** document this either with a medical certificate (if available) or by notifying the instructor in writing (with your signature). If you are ill for an extended period of time, it is your responsibility to contact the instructor immediately on your return to campus.

Only **one** make-up time will be scheduled for missed midterm in the week after the reading week on **Friday February 28th, 2025**. **TENTATIVE final examination common make-up** dates in May 2025 will be provided when the Final Exam schedule is released by the *Exam Central*.

Course/University Policies

1. The website for Registrar Services is <http://www.registrar.uwo.ca>.

In accordance with [policy](#), the centrally administered e-mail account provided to students will be considered the individual's official university e-mail address. It is the responsibility of the account holder to ensure that e-mail received from the University at his/her official university address is attended to in a timely manner.

2. Academic Offences

Scholastic offences are taken seriously and students are directed to read the appropriate policy, specifically, the definition of what constitutes a Scholastic Offence, in the [Academic Calendar \(westerncalendar.uwo.ca\)](#).

Plagiarism

Student work is expected to be original. Plagiarism is a serious academic offence and could lead to a zero on the assignment in question, a zero in this course, or your expulsion from the university. You are plagiarizing if you insert a phrase, sentence or paragraph taken directly from another author without acknowledging that the work belongs to him/her. Similarly, you are plagiarizing if you paraphrase or summarize another author's ideas without acknowledging that the ideas belong to someone else. All papers may be subject to submission for textual similarity review to the commercial plagiarism detection software under license to the University for the detection of plagiarism. All papers submitted will be included as source documents in the reference database for the purpose of detecting plagiarism of papers subsequently submitted to the system. Use of the service is subject to the licensing agreement, currently between Western University and Turnitin.com (www.turnitin.com).

Re-submission of Previously Graded Material

Without the explicit written permission of the instructor, you may not submit any academic work for which credit has been obtained previously, or for which credit is being sought, in another course or program of study in the University or elsewhere.

Use of Statistical Pattern Recognition on Multiple Choice Exams

Computer-marked multiple-choice tests and/or exams may be subject to submission for similarity review by software that will check for unusual coincidences in answer patterns that may indicate cheating.

3. Use of Electronic Devices

During Exams: Unless you have medical accommodations that require you to do so, or explicit permission from the instructor of the course, you may not use any electronic devices during ANY tests, quizzes, midterms, examinations, or other in-class evaluations.

During Lectures and Tutorials: Although you are welcome to use a computer during lecture and tutorial periods, you are expected to use the computer for scholastic purposes only, and refrain from engaging in any

activities that may distract other students from learning. From time to time, your professor may ask the class to turn off all computers, to facilitate learning or discussion of the material presented in a particular class.

Unless explicitly noted otherwise, you may not make audio or video recordings of lectures – nor may you edit, re-use, distribute, or re-broadcast any of the material posted to the course website.

Personal Response Systems (“clickers”) may be used in some classes. For those classes in which we use this technology, it is your responsibility to ensure that the device is activated and functional. You must speak with the course instructor immediately, if you have any concerns about whether or not your clicker is malfunctioning.

You must use only your own clicker. For all components of this course in which clicker records are used to compute a portion of the grade:

- The use of somebody else’s clicker in class constitutes a scholastic offence;
- The possession of a clicker belonging to another student will be interpreted as an attempt to commit a scholastic offense

4. Academic Considerations and Absences from Lectures and Assessments

Religious Accommodation

When a course requirement conflicts with a religious holiday that requires an absence from the University or prohibits certain activities, students should request (in writing) any necessary academic considerations at least two weeks prior to the holiday to the academic counsellors in their Home Department. Additional information is provided in the [Western Multicultural Calendar](#).

Academic Accommodation

Please contact the course instructor if you require lecture or printed material in an alternate format or if any other arrangements can make this course more accessible to you. Students with ongoing accommodation needs within this course are also encouraged to contact [Accessible Education](#), which provides recommendations for accommodation based on medical documentation or psychological and cognitive testing. The policy on Academic Accommodation for Students with Disabilities can be found [here](#).

Academic Consideration

The University recognizes that a student’s ability to meet their academic responsibilities may, on occasion, be impaired by extenuating circumstances that are medical or compassionate in nature. These extenuating circumstances may be acute (short term), or it may be chronic (long term), or chronic with acute episodes. In all cases, students are advised to consult with the academic counsellors in their home units, at their earliest opportunity. Academic counsellors may refer students to [Accessible Education](#) for ongoing academic accommodations.

Most forms of academic consideration require documentation, and this documentation is to be submitted to academic counsellors within five (5) business days of their return to academic responsibilities. Any such documents will be retained in the student’s file, and will be held in confidence in accordance with the University’s [Official Student Record Information Privacy Policy](#). Once the petition and supporting documents have been received and assessed, appropriate academic considerations shall be determined by academic counseling, in consultation with the student’s instructor(s). Academic considerations may include extension of deadlines, waiver of attendance requirements for classes/labs/tutorials, arranging Special Exams or Incompletes, re-weighting course requirements, or granting late withdrawals without academic penalty. Academic considerations shall be granted only where the documentation indicates that the onset, duration and severity of the illness are such that the student could not reasonably be expected to complete their academic responsibilities. (Note – it will not be sufficient to provide documentation indicating simply that the student “was seen for a medical reason” or “was ill.”).

Whenever possible, students who require academic considerations should provide notification and documentation in advance of due dates, examinations, etc. Under no circumstances are students expected to submit rationales for (or documentation of) any absences, to course instructors. Students are, however, required to follow-up with course instructors, in a timely fashion, to identify the ways in which the academic consideration will be implemented.

Examination Conflicts

A student completing tests or examinations with flexible submission times (e.g., where one or more evaluation is a take-home assessment) cannot request alternative arrangements unless a conflict cannot be avoided by rescheduling writing the exam to a different time within the window specified by the instructor. This applies to direct conflicts as well as “heavy load” conflicts (e.g., three exams within a 23-hour period). The student should discuss any concerns about a potential conflict and/or request academic considerations with their academic counselling unit prior to the deadline to drop a course without academic penalty

In the case of online tests and examinations, use of a “Conflict Room,” wherein student can write two proctored exams concurrently, will be interpreted as arrangements for continuous proctoring.

5. Contingency Plan for an In-Person Class Pivoting to 100% Online Learning

In the event of a situation that requires this course to pivot to online content delivery, all remaining course content will be delivered entirely online, either synchronously (i.e., at the times indicated in the timetable) or asynchronously (e.g., posted on OWL for students to view at their convenience). The grading scheme will **not** change. Any remaining assessments will also be conducted online as determined by the course instructor.

Note that disruptive behaviour of any type during online classes, including inappropriate use of the chat function, is unacceptable. Students found guilty of Zoom-bombing a class or of other serious online offenses may be subject to disciplinary measures under the Code of Student Conduct.

6. Online Proctoring

Tests and examinations in this course may be conducted using a remote proctoring service. By taking this course, you are consenting to the use of this software and acknowledge that you will be required to provide **personal information** (including some biometric data) and the session will be **recorded**. Completion of this course will require you to have a reliable internet connection and a device that meets the technical requirements for this service. More information about this remote proctoring service, including technical requirements, is available on Western’s Remote Proctoring website at: <https://remoteproctoring.uwo.ca>.

7. Grades

Where possible assignment objectives and rubrics will be posted on OWL.

Generally, students can expect some form of feedback on their performance in a course before the drop date.

A+	90-100	<i>One could scarcely expect better from a student at this level</i>
A	80-89	<i>Superior work that is clearly above average</i>
B	70-79	<i>Good work, meeting all requirements and eminently satisfactory</i>
C	60-69	<i>Competent work, meeting requirements</i>
D	50-59	<i>Fair work, minimally acceptable.</i>
F	below 50	<i>Fail</i>

Rounding of Grades (for example, bumping a 79 to 80%):

This is a practice some students request. The final grade documented is the grade that you have achieved. There is no rounding to the next grade level, or ‘giving away’ of marks. Please don’t ask me to do this for you; the response will be “please review the course outline where this is presented”.

Appealing a Grade Within this Course

You have the right to appeal any grade within this course. The grounds for a grade appeal may be one or more of: medical or compassionate circumstances, extenuating circumstances beyond the student's control, bias, inaccuracy, or unfairness. All grounds advanced in a request for relief must be supported by a clear and detailed explanation of the reasons for the request together with all supporting documentation.

Appeals generally proceed in this order:

1. Course instructor (informal consultation)
2. Department Chair (submission of written request)
3. The Dean of the Faculty (submission of written request)

In the case of perceived procedural unfairness, steps 2 and 3 are carried out within the Department and Faculty offering the course. In the case of extenuating medical or compassionate circumstances that impact on a grade, steps 2 and 3 are carried out within a student's Home Department and Faculty.

A request for relief against a mark or grade must be initiated with the instructor as soon as possible after the mark is issued. In the event that the instructor is not available to the student, or fails to act, or if the matter is not resolved satisfactorily with the instructor, a written request for relief must be submitted to the Chair of the Department within three weeks of the date that the mark was issued. In the case of a final grade in a course, the written request for relief must be submitted to the Chair of the department by January 31st (for first-term half courses) or June 30th (for second-term half courses or full-year courses)

8. Support Services

Health and Wellness:

Information regarding health and wellness-related services available to students may be found at <http://www.health.uwo.ca/>.

Students who are in emotional/mental distress should refer to Mental Health@Western (<http://www.health.uwo.ca/>) for a complete list of options about how to obtain help.

There are various support services around campus and these include, but are not limited to:

Student Development Centre -- <http://www.sdc.uwo.ca/ssd/>

Ombudsperson Office -- <http://www.uwo.ca/ombuds/>

9. Student Code of Conduct

The purpose of the Code of Student Conduct is to define the general standard of conduct expected of students registered at Western University, provide examples of behaviour that constitutes a breach of this standard of conduct, provide examples of sanctions that may be imposed and set out the disciplinary procedures that the University will follow. For more information, visit <https://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/board/code.pdf>