

Death, Dying, and End Times

University of Alberta Philosophy Graduate and Postgraduate Conference

April 26-28, 2019

Edmonton, Alberta, Canada

We invite graduate students and postgraduates to submit papers to the graduate and postgraduate philosophy conference that will take place on April 26–28th, 2019 at the University of Alberta, Edmonton, Canada.

While every generation has come to the belief, at one time or another, that our world or species is coming to an end, our generation is constantly reminded of the fragility of our planet, the instability of our ecosystems, and the precariousness of our species. We have a fixation on the prospect of societal collapse, a propensity to obsess over the thought of catastrophe that has always been present in art, literature, and philosophy. The belief we live in the end appears to have been with us from the beginning. How are we affected, individually and collectively, by the awareness of our mortality? Why do we tend towards eschatological thinking? Would we live differently if we did not know that our lives will come to an end? Although there can be no certainty about what death is, there appears to be no theoretically neutral way to conceive of it. If death is merely an end, the cessation, not only of suffering, but of the ability to suffer, can it be considered a harm? Should one have the right to die as one sees fit, as one has the right to live as one may choose? Even when we consider medical or biological conceptions of death, we find that there are competing definitions, that the word ‘death’ may not have a single meaning. Is there a single, biological concept of death that applies across living things, all the way from humans to vegetation and microorganisms? Is it possible that death is an unavoidably vague concept? If so, how is our thinking affected by the attempt, or even the necessity, of delimiting its vagueness? From globalization to the re-emergence of authoritarian political discourses and practices, the way we relate to our time and to others are in need of change. How should we respond to violence? Is there anything that would outlast the end of the world?

The purpose of this conference is to bring into the open how the way we think about death affects all areas of philosophical and ethical discourse, with the aim of surmounting the opacity that normally characterizes the topic. As we live in a time that is increasingly seen as the end, as the point past which our planet and species can no longer return, we invite not only submissions that consider the realities of sustainability and climate policy, but those that address, from a historical or contemporary lens, the role of rationality in times of crisis, the political circumstances that emerge in times of impending catastrophe, and the possibilities of ethical life in the face of moral and political decay.

We strongly encourage submissions from all areas of philosophy and from related disciplines, and especially encourage submissions from groups underrepresented in the profession.

Keynote Speaker:

Leonard Lawlor

Edwin Erle Sparks Professor of Philosophy

Department of Philosophy

Pennsylvania State University

Submission Guidelines: Submissions are to be received no later than **January 20th, 2019**. Papers should not exceed 3000 words. They should be prepared for anonymous review, include a bibliography, and be sent as a PDF to uofaphilconference@gmail.com. In a separate PDF attachment, please include your name, academic affiliation, e-mail address, paper title, and an abstract of no more than 150 words. For more information, please contact us at uofaphilconference@gmail.com. Exceptionally, accommodations may be available to presenters during the conference.