

PY4665

FIRST CONTACT

Semester 1 | 2021-2022

30 Credits

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Key Module Information	1
General information	2
Assessment	3
Readings	6

KEY MODULE INFORMATION

Lecture: **Tuesday 11am-1pm (Online)**

Seminars: **Wednesdays 10am-11am (Edgecliffe G03)**

Wednesday 11-12pm (Edgecliffe G03)

Wednesday 12-1pm (Castle House – Barbara Murray Lecture [English])

Module Coordinator: **Dr Adam Etinson (ae45)**

Office Hour: Fridays 1-2pm, or by appointment (On Teams).

Assessment: **Tutorial Presentation (15%)**, 10-15 minutes, due **TBD**

Reflection (30%), 1500 words, due **October 25th**

Essay Plan (Ungraded), 750 words, due **November 15th**

Final Essay (55%), 3500 words, due **December 8th**

GENERAL INFORMATION

Course Description

This module explores the philosophical significance of “first encounters,” e.g., with alien phenomena, life-forms, persons, experiences, and ways of thought. The first four weeks of the module examine the experiential component of such encounters, including the nature and aptness of relevant emotions such as wonder, awe, surprise, and terror - and attendant events such as "epiphanies" and "conversion." The remainder of the module examines specific circumstances of first contact, and their significance. These include encounters with extraterrestrials, non-human animals, foreign cultures and languages, as well as with death and profound social and environmental change. Because of its subject matter, each week combines readings in philosophy with readings in other sciences, as well as fiction. To the extent possible, the module will draw on interdisciplinary expertise within and beyond the university, to discuss topics of overlapping interest across various disciplines.

Seminars

Seminars are a crucial part of the module. They provide students with an opportunity to ask questions about the week’s readings, to think things through, and are very much student led. Seminars will include at least one student presentation each week. The presenter will also raise general questions for discussion. But it is expected that every student will come prepared with questions of their own.

Note: In this module, seminars begin in Week 1, so please make sure to sign up to a seminar group before Week 1. Please note whether the reading list notes special required readings for the week’s seminar.

Learning Outcomes

By the end of the module, students should have gained familiarity with some of the philosophical questions raised by first contact experiences and events. Students will be

able to analyse and critically evaluate arguments, and to link philosophical analysis to work in other disciplines. The main requirements of the module are: attendance at all classes; a careful reading of the assigned readings, allowing time to critically reflect on the arguments; preparation for both lectures and seminars; participation in tutorial discussions; and completion of all formal assessment.

ASSESSMENT

Workload

This module is worth 30 credits; hence it should typically occupy half of your working week, i.e., approximately *18 hours per week, of which only three are spent in class*. You will neither achieve the grade of which you are capable, nor gain much satisfaction from the course, unless you plan your study accordingly.

Module requirements

Adequate reading, demonstrable engagement with the module content, regular attendance at tutorials and lectures, submission of all coursework, are all compulsory requirements of this module. Students with four or more absences for whatever reason from lectures and/or seminars will fail the module with a grade of OX, which does not permit re-assessment. Please note that at Honours level, accurate lecture attendance records are kept. Students are required to submit all elements of the coursework in order to pass the module as a whole. Reassessment will be permitted for those who fail the module with an overall grade of at least 4.0.

Weighting & Components

Note: all coursework must be submitted via MMS, and should not include your name.

Marking and grading is on the University 20-point scale. For a full description of marking bands and grade classification, see the Undergraduate Marking Criteria on p. 35 of the Undergraduate Handbook.

Tutorial Presentation (15%):

Deadline: **TBD** in consultation with the instructor.

Task: The presentations should guide us through one of the week's main (longer) required readings. If two students are presenting one week, they should make sure to present on different readings. If only one student is presenting, they may present on whichever reading they prefer. The presentation should give an overview of the text and alert us to problems and possible answers that may not be immediately obvious. Each presentation should last for about **10-15** minutes and should take into account the recommended reading. The presentation should be accompanied by a handout (of a maximum of two pages), which must be uploaded to MMS. Presenters should be able to answer some questions from their peers after the presentation, and are responsible for raising 2-3 questions for discussion.

Evaluation Criteria: Clarity of presentation (40%); Critical engagement (40%); Delivery (20%).

Note: In tutorial sessions in general, *all* students will be expected to come to class prepared with questions: not just that week's presenter(s).

Reflection (30%):

Word Limit: a maximum of **1500** words.

Deadline: **Monday, October 25th (Week 7)**

Task: For this short exercise, you are asked to reflect on how something you've experienced (as a firsthand witness), read (e.g., in a newspaper article, journal article, or book), seen (e.g., in a movie), or otherwise learned of *outside* the course syllabus bears on one of the debates discussed *in* the assigned course readings. For instance, you might think about how one of your own experiences of wonder (e.g., at a seascape or work of architecture) – or that of some relevant author – fits with the accounts of wonder debated in Week 1. Or you might analyze how some compelling work of science fiction, a relevant scientific innovation, or some other fact bears on the question of how we might communicate with extraterrestrial life. The basic idea is to get you to think about, and apply the debates discussed in class, to something encountered in your own life, experience, and learning. Because the outside material is likely to be something the instructor is unfamiliar with, it is very important that you explain as much about it, as clearly and carefully, as possible. As

a general rubric, make sure you: (i) Clearly and carefully explain the reading, experience, insight, fact, or event that you want to bring forward for discussion; (ii) show exactly how it bears on a central debate discussed in the module; and (iii) outline further questions or concerns raised by (i) and (ii).

Criteria: The criteria for this assignment will be essentially the same as for an essay. So, consider this practice for the final essay. Generally, research papers will be assessed on the basis of: (i) lucidity, (ii) effort, (iii) independence of thought, (iv) argumentative charity; and (v) comprehension of the relevant readings.

Essay Plan (Ungraded):

Word Limit: a maximum of 750 words.

Deadline: **Monday, November 15th (Week 10)**

Task: In preparation for the final essay, you must submit an *essay plan* no later than three weeks before the essay is due. This will not be marked, but you are required to submit it in order to receive a mark on your essay. This should include your topic, a plan for how the essay will go, and some readings you'll use. Students are encouraged to speak with the instructors about their choice of topic in advance.

Final Essay (55%):

Word Limit: a maximum of 3500 words.

Deadline: **Wednesday, December 8th (Week 13)**

Task: The purpose of the final essay is for students to critically reflect on a key issue and/or author discussed in the course materials - or closely related thereto.

Criteria: See undergraduate student handbook. Generally, research papers will be assessed on the basis of (i) lucidity, (ii) effort, (iii) relevance to the chosen question, (iv) independence of thought, (v) argumentative charity; and (vi) comprehension of the relevant readings.

Note: Essays must not exceed 3500 words; you must provide a word count at the end of your essay. Include everything in the word count except your bibliography and title page; that is to say, the word count must include footnotes, quotations, etc. Please note that we implement the word count policy very strictly indeed. Where the word limit is exceeded, *even by one word*, the following penalties will be applied: 1 mark for work that is over-length to any extent, then a further 1 mark per additional 5% over.

Formatting: Essays must be word-processed and double-spaced. Please use the essay template provided on the Moodle page for the module. No other format will be accepted. In particular, you must submit any coursework in Word format only (the exception is logic assignments that may require LaTeX). Essays will be marked anonymously so do not include your name anywhere in the document. On the first page of your essay, write your matriculation number, the module name and number, your tutor's name, the essay question you've answered, and the word count.

READINGS

1. Wonder, Admiration, and Surprise

As a start to the module, we consider some of the standard reactions to unusual, unfamiliar, and rare things: such as wonder, terror, admiration, and surprise. We consider, in particular, the nature of emotions like wonder, and what importance they may have to science and, indeed, philosophy.

- (1) Rachel Carson, "Help Your Child to Wonder" in *Woman's Home Companion*, July 1956, pp. 24-7, 46-8.
- (2) Blaise Pascal, *Pensées* [1670] (London: Penguin, 1966), Ch. XV, Secs. 197-199, pp. 88-92.
- (3) Adam Smith, "The History of Astronomy" [1795] in *Essays on Philosophical Subjects* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1980), eds. W.P.D. Wightman, J.C. Bryce, & I.S. Ross, Secs I-III, pp. 33-53.
- (4) Dacher Keltner & Jonathan Haidt, "Approaching Awe: A Moral, Spiritual, and Aesthetic Emotion" in *Cognition & Emotion* (2003), Vol. 17, No. 2, pp. 297-314.

Further Reading:

- (A) Persis Berlekamp, "Introduction" in *Wonder, Image, and Cosmos in Medieval Islam* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2011), pp. 1-35.

- (B) René Descartes, *The Passions of the Soul* [1649] in *The Passions of the Soul and Other Late Philosophical Writings* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), pp. 220, 223-6.
- (C) Albert Einstein, “Religion and Science” & “The Religious Spirit of Science” in *Ideas and Opinions* (London: Souvenir Press, 2005), pp. 36-40.
- (D) Zeev Harvey, “Maimonides on Human Perfection, Awe, and Politics” in *The Thought of Maimonides: Philosophical and Legal Studies* (Lewiston: Edwin Meller Press), eds. Ira Robinson, Lawrence Kaplan, & Julien Bauer, pp. 1-15.
- (E) R.W. Hepburn, “Wonder” in *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society* (1980), Vo. 54, pp. 1-23.
- (F) Jonathan Lear, *Aristotle: The Desire to Understand* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), Ch. 1, pp. 1-15.

2. The Sublime

Wonder, surprise, terror, and admiration are common reactions to things that are novel, unusual, and surprising. But they are also common reactions to the “sublime” – i.e., that which exceeds our understanding, imagination, or overwhelms our sense of beauty. Week 2 looks at some historical and contemporary literature that tries to delineate the category of the sublime.

- (1) Elizabeth Carter, “Letter XLIII” in *Letters from Mrs. Elizabeth Carter to Mrs. Montagu* (1762) in *The Sublime Reader* (London: Bloomsbury, 2019), ed. Robert Clewis, pp. 103-104.
- (2) Helen MacDonald, “How to Stay Sane During a Solar Eclipse” in *The New York Times*, August 18th, 2017. (Available online: <https://nyti.ms/3lTDzhB>)
- (3) Immanuel Kant, *Observations on The Feeling of the Beautiful and Sublime* (1764), in *Observations on the Feeling of the Beautiful and Sublime and Other Writings* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), eds. Patrick Frierson and Paul Guyer, Secs. 1-2, pp. 13-25.
- (4) Edmund Burke, *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Sublime and Beautiful* (1757) [Oxford: Oxford World Classics, 2015], Part I(VII), Part II, & Part III(XXVII), pp. 33-34, 47-73, 100-103.

- (5) Seminar Reading: Tom Cochrane, “The Emotional Experience of the Sublime” in *Canadian Journal of Philosophy* (2012), Vol. 42, No. 2, pp. 125-48.

Further Reading:

- (A) Margherita Arcangeli, Marco Sperduty, Amelie Jacquot, Pascale Piolino, and Jerome Dokic, “Awe and the Experience of the Sublime: A Complex Relationship” in *Frontiers in Psychology* (2020), Vol. 11, pp. 1-5.
- (B) Emily Brady, *The Sublime in Modern Philosophy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013).
- (C) Malcolm Budd, “Delight in the Natural World: Kant on the Aesthetic Appreciation of Nature” in *British Journal of Aesthetics* (1988), Vol. 38, No. 1, pp. 1-18.
- (D) Marjorie Hope Nicolson, *Mountain Gloom and Mountain Glory: The Development of the Aesthetics of the Infinite* (Cornell: Cornell University Press, 1959), pp. 1-33.
- (E) Guy Sircello, “How is a Theory of the Sublime Possible?” in *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* (1993), Vol. 51, pp. 541-550.

3. **Epiphanies (Guest Lecture: Sophie-Grace Chappell)**

Sometimes we come into contact with objects and experiences that have a special revelatory character. Suddenly, we see something new, or something old in a new way, acquiring fresh understanding. These are what we normally call “epiphanies.” But what is an epiphany, exactly, and how does it feature in the average human life?

- (1) Sophie-Grace Chappell, “Introducing Epiphanies” in *Epiphanies: An Ethics and Metaethics of Experience* (Oxford University Press, Forthcoming), DRAFT.

Further Reading:

- (A) Charles Taylor, “Introduction” in *A Secular Age* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2007), pp. 1-22.

- (B) William James, *The Varieties of Religious Experience: A Study in Human Nature* [1902] (New York: Penguin, 1982) [Selections].
- (C) Marghanita Laski, "Criteria for Ecstasies" in *Ecstasy in Secular and Religious Experiences* (Los Angeles: Jeremy P. Tarcher, Inc., 1961), Ch. 3, pp. 37-47.

4. Conversion Experiences

Some experiences alter our fundamental beliefs and commitments. In so doing, they change our identity in a profound sense. We might call these "conversion experiences." But are such experiences any different from a simple change of mind, or a change of belief, which happen all the time? And if so, how? How might others induce a genuine conversion in us?

- (1) Joshua Rothman, "Seeing and Hearing for the First Time, on YouTube" in *The New Yorker*, August 18th, 2015 (Online: <https://bit.ly/3yHqxao>).
- (2) Kevin Roose, "The Making of a YouTube Radical" in *The New York Times*, June 19th, 2019 (Online: <https://nyti.ms/3jO7vsI>).
- (3) "The Conversion of St Paul on the Road to Damascus" in *The New Testament*, "Acts," Chs. 9 (1-19), 22 (6-21), 26 (12-18).
- (4) L.A. Paul, "Who Will I Become?" in *Becoming Someone New: Essays on Transformative Experience, Choice, and Change* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020), Ch. 1, pp. 16-36.
- (5) Helen de Cruz, "Religious Conversion, Transformative Experience, and Disagreement" in *Philosophia Christi* (2018), Vol. 20, No. 1, pp. 265-275.

Further Reading

- (A) Richard Dees, "Moral Conversions" in *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* (1996), Vol. 56, No. 3, pp. 531-550.
- (B) Adam Etinson, "Conversation" in *New Literary History* (2018), Vol. 94, No. 2, pp. 267-73.
- (C) Paul Faulkner, "The Nature and Rationality of Conversion" in *European Journal of Philosophy* (2019), Vol. 27, No. 1, pp. 821-836.
- (D) Jane Friedman, "Epistemically Transformative Experience" (Online Draft: <https://jfriedmanphilo.github.io/APATET.pdf>)

- (E) William James, “Conversion” in *Varieties of Religious Experience* [1902] (New York: Penguin, 1982), Lectures IX-X, pp. 189-258.
- (F) L.A. Paul, *Transformative Experience* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014).
- (G) Charles Taylor, “Explanation and Practical Reason” in *The Quality of Life* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), pp. 208-232.
- (H) Mark Wynn, “Renewing the Senses: Conversion Experience and the Phenomenology of the Spiritual Life” in *International Journal for Philosophy of Religion* (2012), Vol. 72, No. 3, pp. 211-226.

5. Encountering the Ordinary

The ordinary is, well, ordinary. But, seen with a certain detachment, ordinary things (chairs, spoons, and ice cream) can suddenly appear alien and strange. We can begin to wonder at realities we normally take for granted. But what happens, really, when such new perspectives on the ordinary are taken, and what can they accomplish?

- (1) Georges Perec, “The Apartment” [1974] in *Species of Spaces and Other Pieces* (New York: Penguin, 1997), pp. 26-39.
- (2) Soetsu Yanagi, “The Beauty of Miscellaneous Things” & “A Painted Karatsu as Food for Thought” in *The Beauty of Everyday Things* (New York: Penguin, 2017), tr. Michael Brase, pp. 27-59.
- (3) Michael Pollan, *The Botany of Desire: A Plant’s Eye View of the World* (New York: Bloomsbury, 2002), pp. 157-160, 171-193.
- (4) Yuriko Saito, “The Aesthetics of the Ordinary and Familiar” in *Aesthetics of the Familiar: Everyday Life and World-Making* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), Part. I.1, pp. 9-36.
- (5) Seminar Reading: Jonathan Lear, *A Case for Irony* (Cambridge: HUP, 2011), Part I.1, pp. 3-41.

Further Reading:

- (A) John Berger, *Ways of Seeing* [1972] (NYC: Penguin, 2008), Ch. 1, pp. 7-34.

- (B) Chris Hadfield, *An Astronaut's Guide to Life on Earth* (New York: Little, Brown & Company, 2013), Part III, pp. 243-283.
- (C) Aldous Huxley, *The Doors of Perception* (New York: Harper Collins, 2009).
- (D) Thomas Leddy, "Everyday Aesthetics and the Sublime" in *The Extraordinary in the Ordinary: The Aesthetics of Everyday Life* (Peterborough: Broadview Press, 2012), Ch. 8, pp. 237-58.
- (E) Carl Sagan, "Mr. X" in *Marihuana Reconsidered* (1971). Available online at <https://www.organism.earth/library/document/mr-x>
- (F) Yuriko Saito, "The Aesthetics of Laundry" in *Aesthetics of the Familiar: Everyday Life and World-Making* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), Part II.5, pp. 115-138.
- (G) VIDEO: Emmanuel Vaughan-Lee, "Earthrise" (30mins – NYTimes, available online: <https://nyti.ms/3AsYHPI>).

6. Independent Learning Week

7. Meeting Strangers

First encounters with foreign cultures are inherently fraught: epistemologically, linguistically, morally, and politically. While such encounters are fascinating, they are also dangerous. The inability to understand and communicate with a group can lead to suspicion, projection, and unchecked bias. We may deem practices we don't understand "barbaric," and decide to suppress them as a result. This week examines some powerful firsthand accounts of first contact, and reflects on some of the dangers they involve.

- (1) Pedro Vaz de Caminha, "Letter to King Manuel" [1500]. (Available Online: <https://bit.ly/37BxMEW>).
- (2) Kenneth Mills, William B. Taylor, & Sandra Lauderdale Graham, *Colonial Latin America: A Documentary History* (Oxford: SR Books, 2004), pp. 43-45.
- (3) Aparecida Vilaça, "The Motives of the Whites," in *Strange Enemies: Indigenous Agency and Scenes of Encounters in Amazonia* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2010), Ch. 8, pp. 197-209.
- (4) Nathan Wachtel, *The Vision of the Vanquished: The Spanish Conquest of Peru Through Indian Eyes* (Hassocks: Harvester Press, 1977), Part I.1, pp. 12-32.

- (5) Davi Kopenawa & Bruce Albert, “First Contacts” in *The Falling Sky: Words of a Yanomami Shaman* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2013), translated by Nicholas Elliot and Alison Dundy, Ch. 10, pp. 168-185.
- (6) Michel de Montaigne, “On the Cannibals” [1580] in *The Complete Essays* (New York: Penguin, 1993), Ch. 31, pp. 228-241.
- (7) Seminar Reading: Adam Etnison, “Some Myths About Ethnocentrism” in *Australasian Journal of Philosophy* (2018), Vol. 96, No. 2, pp. 209-224.

Further Reading:

- (A) Juan Ginés de Sepulveda, *Democrates Alter* [~1552, excerpt], from *Introduction to Contemporary Civilization in the West* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1961) [<https://bit.ly/3iIQGAp>].
- (B) Bartolomé de Las Casas, *In Defense of the Indians* [1552-3] (DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 1992), tr. S Poole.
- (C) Lesley Nicole Braun, “Window of the World: Sino-African Encounters Through Copies and Simulations” in *Journal of Asian and African Studies* (2021), Online First.
- (D) Stephen Greenblatt, *Marvellous Possessions: The Wonder of the New World* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991), Ch. 3, pp. 52-86.
- (E) Claude Lévi-Strauss, “We Are All Cannibals” in *We Are All Cannibals, and Other Essays* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2016), Ch. 9, pp. 83-90.
- (F) W.E.H. Stanner, “The Dreaming” (1953) in *The Dreaming & Other Essays* (Colingwood: Black Inc, 2009), pp. 57-73.
- (G) Rick Steves, *Travel as a Political Act: How to Leave Your Baggage Behind* (Berkeley: Hachette Book Group, 2018), Ch. 1, pp. 1-29.
- (H) Aparecida Vilaça, *Strange Enemies: Indigenous Agency and Scenes of Encounters in Amazonia* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2010), “Introduction” pp. 1-27.
- (I) Voltaire, “L’Ingénu” in *Zadig and L’Ingénu* [1767] (London: Penguin, 1964, pp. 105-191.
- (J) VIDEO: “Une Belle Leçon de Civilization” (Online: <https://bit.ly/2VMIK9p>).
- (K) VIDEO: Bob Connolly & Robin Anderson, “First Contact” (Online: <https://bit.ly/3iAe7M4> [Part 1] <https://bit.ly/3CEU8Uf> [Part 2]).

8. Talking to Aliens (Guest Lecture: Derek Ball)

It is a topic of longstanding fascination and intrigue: what would it be like to talk to an alien? How might communication with radically different lifeforms even work? This week's readings combine some compelling fictional accounts of such encounters, with some recent work in linguistics (or "xenolinguistics") that addresses this question. We connect these discussions to topics in the philosophy of language and interpretation as well.

- (1) Ted Chiang, "Story of Your Life" in *Stories of Your Life and Others* (London: Picador, 2014), pp. 109-72.
- (2) Catherine Hobaiter, Adriano Lameira, & Derek Ball, "Recognizing Intentional Signals and Their Meaning in Non-Human Communication" in *Xenolinguistics: Toward a Science of Extraterrestrial Linguistics* (Forthcoming), eds. Douglas Vakoch & Jeffrey Punske.
- (3) Seminar Reading (Guest Tutorial: Emily Finer): David Samuels, "Alien Tongues" in *E.T. Culture: Anthropology in Outer Spaces* (Duke University Press, 2005), ed. Deborah Battaglia, pp. 94-129.

Further Reading:

- (A) Noam Chomsky, "Knowledge of Language as a Focus of Inquiry" in *Knowledge of Language: Its Nature, Origin, and Use* (New York: Praeger, 1986), Ch. 1, pp. 1-14.
- (B) Katherine Denning, "Unpacking the Great Transmission Debate" in *Acta Astronautica* (2010), Vol. 67, Nos. 11-12, pp. 1399-1405.
- (C) Willard Van Orman Quine, "Translation and Meaning" in *Word and Object* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1960), Ch. 2, pp. 26-79.
- (D) Carl Sagan, *Contact* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1985)
- (E) Carl Sagan, Lida Salzman Sagan, & Frank Drake, "A Message from Earth" in *Science* (25 February 1972), Vol. 175, pp. 881-4.

- (F) Anna Wierzbicka, "Different cultures, different languages, different speech acts" in *Cross-Cultural Pragmatics* (Berlin: De Gruyter-Mouton, 1991), Ch 2, pp. 25-66.
- (G) Voltaire, "Micromégas" [1752] in *Micromégas and Other Short Fictions* (London: Penguin, 2002), pp. 17-35.
- (H) Richard Adams Locke, "The Moon Hoax, or A Discovery that the Moon Has a Vast Population of Human Beings" in *The Extraterrestrial Life Debate, Antiquity to 1915: A Source Book* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame, 2008), ed. Michael J. Crowe, pp. 275-296.
- (I) Peter Godfrey-Smith, "Mischievous and Craft" in *Other Minds: The Octopus and the Evolution of Intelligent Life* (London: William Collins, 2016), Ch. 3, pp. 43-77.
- (J) Amia Srinivasan, "The Sucker, The Sucker!" in *London Review of Books* (2017), Vol. 93, No. 17.
- (K) Adrienne Matei, "Bored? These Americans are Teaching Their Dogs to Talk" in *The Guardian* (December 8th, 2020).
- (L) VIDEO: "My Octopus Teacher" (Netflix)

9. **Other Worlds (Guest Lecture: Tim Mulgan & Emma Puranen)**

What would the discovery of life on other planets mean for our understanding of life on earth, and indeed, of the universe in general? What ethical implications might follow, for example, from the discovery of alien life? What duties might we have to such agents? And how might such discoveries alter our concept of life itself?

- (1) Tim Mulgan, "The Ethics of ET" in *Aeon* (December 5th 2017) [Available online at: <https://bit.ly/3s6Vpij>].
- (2) Tim Mulgan, "Arguments from Scale" in *Purpose in the Universe: The Moral and Metaphysical Case for Ananthropocentric Purposivism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), Ch. 7, pp. 193-220.

Further Reading:

- (A) *The Extraterrestrial Life Debate, Antiquity to 1915: A Source Book* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame, 2008), ed. Michael J. Crowe.

- (B) Katherine Denning, “Is Life What We Make of It?” in *Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society* (2011), Vol. 369, pp. 669-678.
- (C) Stephen J. Dick, *Astrobiology, Discovery, and Societal Impact* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018).
- (D) Michael Faber, *The Book of Strange New Things* (London: Canongate, 2015)
- (E) Adam Frank, *Light of The Stars: Alien Worlds and the Fate of The Earth* (New York: Norton & Company, 2019).
- (F) Erik Persson, “The Moral Status of Extraterrestrial Life” in *Astrobiology* (2012), Vol. 12, No. 10, pp. 976-984.
- (G) Alexander Wendt & Raymond Duvall, “Sovereignty and the UFO” in *Political Theory* (2008), Vol. 36, No. 4, pp. 607-633.
- (H) Carl Sagan, “Extraterrestrial Intelligence” & Extraterrestrial Folklore: Implications for the Evolution of Religion” in *The Varieties of Scientific Experience* (New York: Penguin, 2006), Chs. 4-5, pp. 103-147.

10. Approaching Death

As mortal beings, we have no choice but to confront death – both our own and that of those we care about. Death is a part of life, as they say. But death is also the absolute negation of life. As living beings, it is utterly foreign and mysterious to us. How should we manage this mystery, particular when death seems near at hand? Should we fear death? And what, if anything, do we know about “life” beyond death?

- (1) Michael Pollan, “Dying” in *How to Change Your Mind: What the New Science of Psychedelics Teaches Us About Consciousness, Dying, Addiction, Depression, and Transcendence* (New York: Penguin, 2018), pp. 331-58.
- (2) Sherwin B. Nuland, *How We Die: Reflections on Life’s Final Chapter* (London: Vintage, 1993), Chs. 11-12, pp. 222-263.
- (3) Epicurus, “Letter to Menoecus” (Online: <https://bit.ly/3AzuQoQ>).
- (4) Thomas Nagel, “Death” in *Mortal Questions* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979), Ch. 1, pp. 1-10.

- (5) *Seminar Reading*: Stephen E. Rosenbaum, “How to Be Dead and Not Care: A Defense of Epicurus” in *American Philosophical Quarterly* (1983), Vol. 23, No. 2, pp. 217-225.

Further Reading:

- (A) Fyodor Dostoevsky, *The Idiot* [1869] (London: Vintage Books, 2003)
- (B) Roland R Griffiths, Matthew W Johnson, Michael A Carducci, Annie Umbricht, William A Richards, Brian D Richards, Mary P Cosimano, and Margaret A Klinedinst, “Psilocybin produces substantial and sustained decreases in depression and anxiety in patients with life-threatening cancer: A randomized double-blind trial” in *Journal of Psychopharmacology* (2016), Vol. 30, No. 12, pp. 1181-1197.
- (C) *Japanese Death Poems: Written by Zen Monks and Haiku Poets on the Verge of Death* (Rutland: Charles E. Tuttle Company, 1986), ed. Yoel Hoffman.
- (D) Immanuel Kant, “Thoughts on the Occasion of Mr. Johann Friedrich von Funk’s Untimely Death” (1760) in *Observations on the Feeling of the Beautiful and Sublime and Other Writings* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), eds. Patrick Frierson and Paul Guyer, pp. 3-8.
- (E) Immanuel Kant, “The End of All Things” (1794) in *Religion and Rational Theology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), Allen Wood & George di Giovanni, pp. 221-31.
- (F) Raymond A. Moody, “The Experience of Dying” in *Life After Life: The Investigation of a Phenomenon – Survival of Bodily Death* (London: Rider, 2015), pp. 10-102.
- (G) Yuriko Saito, “Appearance of Ageing” in *Everyday Aesthetics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), Ch. IV.2, pp. 173-204.
- (H) Evan Thompson, “Death: The Ultimate Transformative Experience” in *Becoming Someone New: Essays on Transformative Experience, Choice, and Change* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020), Ch. 15, pp. 269-288.
- (I) Leo Tolstoy, *The Death of Ivan Ilyich* [1886].
- (J) James Warren, “Fears of Death” in *Facing Death: Epicurus and His Critics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), Ch. 1, pp. 1-17.

11. Navigating Change

The world can sometimes change in drastic ways around us. The pandemic is one example of this. On such occasions, ordinary cultural practices, identities, and meaning-creating activities (such as going to work) can suddenly become obsolete. This can disrupt our sense of identity in profound ways. And navigating such change can require profound imaginative and creative effort. Sometimes cultures must change drastically to survive. But how does this work, and how can we ensure continuity (and hope) amidst such change and reinvention?

- (1) Jonathan Lear, *Radical Hope: Ethics in the Face of Cultural Devastation* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2006), pp. 1-52, 66-73, 80-82, 91-100, 103-108, 136-142.
- (2) Jennifer M. Morton, *Moving Up Without Losing Your Way: The Ethical Costs of Upward Mobility* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2019), Ch. 1, pp. 17-42.
- (3) Seminar Reading: Jennifer M. Morton, *Moving Up Without Losing Your Way: The Ethical Costs of Upward Mobility* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2019), Ch. 5, pp. 120-149

Further Reading:

- (A) M. Foucault, G. Agamben, S. Benvenuto, “Coronavirus and Philosophers” in *European Journal of Psychoanalysis* (Online: <https://bit.ly/3m79r2v>).
- (B) Stephen M. Gardiner, *A Perfect Moral Storm: The Ethical Tragedy of Climate Change* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011).
- (C) Jedediah Purdy, *After Nature: A Politics for the Anthropocene* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2015), esp. pp. 1-50.
- (D) Adrienne M. Martin, *How We Hope: A Moral Psychology* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2014), Chs. 1 & 4, pp. 11-35, 98-118.
- (E) Martha Nussbaum, “Hope, Love, Vision” in *The Monarchy of Fear: A Philosopher Looks at Our Political Crisis* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), Ch. 7, pp. 197-247.

- (F) Byron Williston, "Climate Change and Radical Hope" in *Ethics & The Environment* (2012), Vol. 12, No. 2, pp. 165-186.
- (G) VIDEO: Alan Saunders & Jonathan Lear, "The Dreams of Plenty Coups" (23 mins - <https://bit.ly/3yHgtyp>).
- (H) VIDEO: "Moving Up Without Losing Your Way: A Talk with Jennifer Morton" (1hr - <https://bit.ly/3iGarZh>).