



VIU summer SCHOOL ethics and Health care

**Ethics and Health Care:
End of Life from a Global and Multicultural Perspective**

June 15-18, 2026

**Venice International University
Isola di San Servolo, Venice**

VIU Summer School

Ethics and Health Care

End of Life from a Global and Multicultural Perspective

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University

Scientific Coordinator:

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The VIU Summer School on Ethics and Health Care is an initiative of VIU in partnership with its member universities Ca' Foscari University of Venice, Tor Vergata University of Rome, and the University of Lausanne.

The program offers students and early career researchers the opportunity to critically reflect, with the help of highly qualified experts, on topical issues that raise ethical and deontological dilemmas, relating to health care ethics. A fundamental feature of the school concerns its method, which is characterized by a continuous and intense interdisciplinary exchange.

The questions that will be at the center of this fifth edition of the Summer School will be the following: 1) How do different cultures, traditions, and societies understand end of life? 2) What ethical, medical, and spiritual frameworks shape the way we care for people in their final stages? This Summer School offers a unique opportunity to explore end-of-life issues through a global and multicultural lens. Participants will engage with leading scholars, clinicians, and ethicists to examine diverse approaches to dying, death, and bereavement, across continents and traditions.

Faculty

Stefano Beggiora, Ca' Foscari University of Venice
Carlo Casalone, Pontifical Gregorian University
Luca Mastrantonio, IULM University, Milan
Jürgen Maurer, University of Lausanne
Massimo Raveri, Ca' Foscari University of Venice
Antonio Rigopoulos, Ca' Foscari University of Venice
Francesca Romana Romani, Roma Tre University
Roberta Sala, San Raffaele University, Milan
Luca Scarantino, University of Bari
Stefano Semplici, Tor Vergata University of Rome
Fabrizio Turollo, Ca' Foscari University of Venice

Topics

Life expectancy and end of life at a global level:

Global life expectancy has risen steadily over the past decades, but the Global Burden of Disease (GBD) study shows that gains are uneven, fragile, and deeply shaped by social, economic, and health system factors. End-of-life patterns reveal a shift from infectious diseases to chronic, non-

communicable conditions as the dominant causes of death worldwide.

Global bioethics and dialogue between cultures at the end of life: Global bioethics emphasizes that end-of-life care cannot be reduced to medical decisions alone: it requires intercultural dialogue that respects diverse values, traditions, and conceptions of dignity. End-of-life care is shaped by cultural, religious, and philosophical traditions. Western bioethics often emphasizes autonomy and individual choice, while many non-Western traditions stress family, community, or spiritual dimensions. Scholars note that modern medicine tends to frame dying as a technical process, but intercultural bioethics insists on preserving the symbolic, existential, and relational aspects of death.

Transversal ethical values and end-of-life care: There is growing recognition that bioethics must move beyond Euro-American frameworks and include voices from the Global South, indigenous traditions, and marginalized communities. Dialogue across cultures is not about finding a single universal rule, but about creating spaces of negotiation where different moral worlds can coexist and inform care. Health professionals often face dilemmas when patients or families interpret suffering, dignity, or medical interventions differently. For example, some cultures prioritize collective family decisions over individual consent. Global bioethics calls for humility—recognizing that no single culture owns the meaning of death, and dialogue is the path to ethically sound care.

End of life in major spiritual traditions: Major spiritual traditions offer distinct visions of death: Hinduism and Buddhism emphasize rebirth and liberation, Christianity and Islam stress eternal life with God, while shamanism views death as a transition to other realms. Each tradition shapes rituals, ethics, and care practices in unique ways. All traditions converge on the importance of ritual, community, and spiritual preparation at the end of life.

Cultural, religious, and value conflicts regarding end-of-life choices: End-of-life choices often

generate cultural, religious, and value conflicts because different traditions interpret autonomy, dignity, and medical intervention in profoundly different ways. These conflicts arise when medical norms clash with spiritual beliefs, family expectations, or cultural understandings of death. Western bioethics emphasizes individual autonomy (advance directives, informed consent). In many Asian, Middle Eastern, and African cultures, families or communities make collective decisions, sometimes overriding individual wishes. In some cultures, full disclosure of terminal illness is considered cruel or disrespectful. Families may ask clinicians to withhold information from the patient. Western medical ethics generally requires transparency and truth-telling.

Alternative medicine and end-of-life care: Alternative medicine in end-of-life care refers to practices outside formal biomedical systems—such as traditional healing, folk remedies, spiritual healing, shamanic rituals, herbal remedies, etc.—that patients and families often turn to when facing death. These practices are not formally recognized by biomedical institutions and can complement or conflict with official medical care, reflecting cultural values. Sometimes these practices can reflect distrust of medical institutions, perception of over-medicalization of dying, desire for holistic care that includes spiritual, emotional, and cultural dimensions, etc.

Who is it for?

Professionals in the health care sector, PhD students and post-doc scholars, graduates, and undergraduates in philosophy, medicine, political sciences, sociology, social work, economics, and statistics sciences. PhD students and researchers will have the opportunity to present their own research in a presentation or poster session.

Methodology and structure

- Presentations in the fields of moral philosophy, political philosophy, ethics, bioethics, history of religions, sociology, philosophy of science, epidemiology, patient care, health economics, public health and demography;

- Interactive sessions, such as “tutoring sessions”, aimed at giving participants the opportunity to discuss their own research ideas with senior speakers in individual or small group meetings.

Learning outcomes

The course allows students, researchers and professionals from various fields to hone important skills that are located in an interdisciplinary terrain. Professional ethics and deontology are in fact transversal sectors, useful and necessary in the most diverse professional contexts. Philosophers, physicians, nurses, anthropologists, theologians, experts of religious thought, economists, sociologists and political scientists will have the opportunity to test different perspectives of thought and different theoretical systems in the light of extremely important and current case studies. Healthcare professionals will be able to reflect on the various implications that their decisions entail and which often go beyond the strictly sanitary sphere.

Application procedure and costs

Applications

December 2, 2025 – February 28, 2026
via the VIU website

Full fee: **€600 incl. VAT**

Applicants from VIU member universities: **€300 incl. VAT**

The fee will cover tuition, teaching materials, lunches in the San Servolo cafeteria and social events. Student participants will be responsible for covering their own travel expenses to and from Venice, local transportation, and evening meals.

The Program will admit 25 participants.

Accommodation costs on campus

Venice International University offers its support to book accommodation on San Servolo Campus, in multiple rooms with other participants for the duration of the Summer School. Cost: **€260 incl. VAT** for 5 nights. Further information will be available in the Application Form.

Applicants must submit: the Application Form, a brief motivation letter including candidate's interests and research, and a curriculum vitae with photo.

Admitted candidates will be notified by: **March 7, 2026**. Payment of the tuition fee and accommodation by: **March 14, 2026**

Credits

Number of **ECTS** equivalence: **2**

A Certificate of attendance will be issued at the end of the program.

Venice International University

Venice International University is a consortium of 23 universities, representing 14 countries throughout the world. The mission of VIU is to foster cooperation among VIU member institutions while facilitating the exchange of knowledge and ideas, by developing, promoting, and organizing joint academic, research and training programs. Students from non-member universities may participate in selected academic programs, which are distinguished by a markedly interdisciplinary approach to the topics, and by the international perspectives that the participants contribute to the discussions. The VIU campus is on the island of San Servolo in Venice, Italy.



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