Course Title	**:**	**Brain Science and the Ethics of Life and Death** **腦科學與生死倫理**
Course Code	**:**	**GEH2020**
Department	**:**	**International Education and Lifelong Learning**

Synopsis

Contemporary understanding of the science of the brain has enabled philosophers, medical practitioners, and ethicists to arrive at a more precise and consistent position regarding the debates of abortion, euthanasia and animal ethics, etc. It is clear to all sides of the debates that the nature of persons consists in their being able to engage in rational thinking, self-awareness and autonomous decisions, etc. Agents will not be able to exercise these abilities if they do not have a well-developed upper brain, or cerebral cortex. Thus, along this line we can derive a range of ethical judgments with regard to the moral importance of an early fetus (whose has hardly developed synaptic connection in its brain), of a PVS patient (usually the patient in a persistent vegetative states does not have an intact cerebral cortex), and of certain highly intelligent mammals like chimpanzees (whose cerebral cortex has a large amount of folds like those of human brains), etc. In short, since some of the beings do not have a well-developed upper brain, they cannot claim to have an important moral status; at the same time, some beings, like the chimpanzees, we can understand why they should deserve a higher moral status than they have now.

This course is not merely about the biology of the brains, but more important ethics and the reasons of why certain living organisms matter. Personal identity, brain science and bioethics are interrelated subjects. Students who take this course will learn about the functions and basic constitution of the human brains, and will apply these thoughts and distinctions to patients of euthanasia, assessing the moral importance of embryos, and fetuses of various stages, etc. At the end of the course, students will apprehend the biological grounds of the special moral statues of persons, and why the survival of certain organisms may mean less than that of others.