

## **Bioethics (Spring 2014)**

### COURSE DESCRIPTION

This class is designed to give students the tools to think critically about moral issues in Bioethics including the ethically appropriate treatment of patients and experimental subjects, the moral status of reproductive technologies, and moral issues concerning life and death. The course is divided into three main units:

*Moral theories:* First, we consider moral theories which attempt to provide a general view about the nature of morality. We will ask: are there such things as good, bad, right, and wrong. Is there one true universal morality that applies to everyone, or does each individual or culture possess their own moral system? Does an action's rightness or wrongness depend entirely on its consequences? Is it wrong for me to harm others but okay for me to fail to benefit them? Do people have rights that constrain what it is morally okay to do to them?

*Ethical treatment of patients and experimental subjects:* Second, we will consider the ethical treatment of patients and experimental subjects. Topics will include the fair allocation of resources between patients, taking into consideration age and severity of medical condition; the fair allocation of funds in the health-care budget; the fair allocation of organs; the requirement for doctors not to lie to their patients; autonomy and informed consent; and moral controversies surrounding human experimentation on vulnerable populations.

*Topics in Bioethics:* Third, we will discuss major moral topics in bioethics. This section will be subdivided into two smaller units: issues in reproduction including surrogacy, genetic engineering, and abortion; and issues concerning life and death including voluntary euthanasia and medically assisted suicide, advance directives and posthumous harm.

---

### REQUIRED READING:

Most readings come from: *Bioethics: an Anthology*, 2nd ed., Helga Kuhse & Peter Singer, eds., Blackwell Publishing 2006. Supplementary pdf files can be found on the course website.

---

### COURSE SCHEDULE

#### **Unit 1: Moral Foundations**

#### Week 1 (1/13-1/7) Arguments and Moral Objectivity

---

Mon., 1/13: Intro to the course/Syllabus

Wed., 1/15: Arguments

Perry, Bratman, Fischer, "Philosophical Toolkit"

Fri., 1/17: Moral Relativism and Nihilism

Rachels, "The Challenge of Cultural Relativism" (pdf)

Huemer, "Ethical Intuitionism" section 5.5 (pdf)

## Week 2 (1/20-1/24) General Moral Theories

---

Mon., 1/20: Utilitarianism

Mill, "Utilitarianism" (52-54 pdf)

Rachels, "Debate over Utilitarianism" (pdf)

Nozick, "The Experience Machine (pdf)

Wed., 1/22: Deontology

Kant, "The Moral Law" (54-60 pdf)

"Deontology" (pdf from *What's Wrong*, pp. 26-27)

Fri., 1/24: Deontology

Greene, "Moral Dilemmas and 'The Trolley Problem'" (Pdf)

## Unit 2: Ethical Treatment of Patients and Experimental Subjects

### Week 3 (1/27-1/31) Patient Autonomy and Consent

---

Mon., 1/27: Mill, "On Liberty" (70)

Wed., 1/29: Veatch, "Abandoning Informed Consent" (73)

Fri., 1/31: Savulescu, "Rational Desires and the Limitation of Life-Sustaining Treatment" (74)

### Week 4 (2/3-2/7) Patient Autonomy and Consent II

---

Mon., 2/3: Kant, "On a Supposed Right to Lie from Altruistic Motives" (67)

Wed., 2/5: Collins, "Should Doctors Tell the Truth?" (68)

Fri., 2/7: Higgs, "On Telling Patients the Truth" (69)

### Week 5 (2/10-2/14) Resource Allocation and Healthcare

---

Mon., 2/10: Menzel, "Rescuing Lives: Can't We Count?" (43)

Wed., 2/12: Lockwood, "Quality of Life and Resource Allocation (48: pp. 451-464)

Fri., 2/14: No New Reading

### Week 6 (2/17-2/21) Resource Allocation and Healthcare II

---

Mon., 2/17: Daniels, "A Lifespan Approach to Healthcare (49: pp. 465-474)

Wed., 2/19: Veatch, “How Age Should Matter: Justice as the Basis for Limiting Care to the Elderly” (47)

Fri., 2/21: No New Reading

Week 7 (2/24-2/28) Organ Allocation

---

Mon., 2/24: Moss and Siegler, “Should Alcoholics Compete for Liver Transplants?” (45: 421-427)

Wed., 2/26: Radcliffe-Richards, “The Case for Allowing Kidney Sales, Radcliffe-Richards et. al. (52: 487-490)

Fri., 2/28: No New Reading

Week 8 (3/3-3/7) Human Experimentation

---

Mon., 3/3: Torbjorn Tannsjo, “The Morality of Research: A Case Study” (57)

Wed., 3/5: The President’s Council on Bioethics, “[Human Cloning and Human Dignity: An Ethical Inquiry](#)” (pdf, section II.C)

Fri., 3/7: TBD

Week 9 (3/10-3/14) Animal Experimentation

---

Mon., 3/10: Singer, “All Animals Are Equal” (64)

Wed., 3/12: Cohen, “The Case for the Use of Animals in Biomedical Experimentation” (pdf)

Fri., 3/14: Engel, “The Immorality of Biomedical Animal Experimentation” (pdf)

**Unit 3: Topics in Bioethics**

Week 10 (3/17-3/21) Surrogacy

---

Mon., 3/17: Purdy, “Surrogate Mothering: Exploitation or Empowerment?” (7)

Wed., 3/19: Dodds and Jones, “A response to Purdy” (8)

Fri., 3/21: Hanscombe, “The Right to Lesbian Parenthood” (9)

Week 11 (3/24-3/28) **Spring Break**

---

Week 12 (3/31-4/4) Genetic Engineering

---

Mon., 3/31: Glover, “Questions About Some Uses of Genetic Engineering” (18)

Wed., 4/2: Resnik, “The Moral Significance of the Therapy-Enhancement Distinction in Human Genetics.” (20)

Fri., 4/4: No New Reading

Week 13 (4/7-4/11) Abortion

---

Mon., 4/7: Thomson, “A Defense of Abortion” (3)

Wed., 4/9: Marquis, “Why Abortion is Immoral” (4)

Fri., 4/11: No New Reading

Week 14 (4/14-4/18) Euthanasia

---

Mon., 4/14: Sacred Congregation for the Doctrine on the Faith, “Declaration on Euthanasia” (26)  
and Rachels, “Active and Passive Euthanasia” (28)

Wed., 4/16: Nesbitt, “Is Killing No Worse than Letting Die?” (29)

Fri., 4/18: Kuhse, “Why Killing is Not Always Worse—And Sometimes Better—than Letting Die” (30)

Week 15 (4/21-4/25) Advance Directives

---

Mon., 4/21: Dworkin, “Life Past Reason” (37)

Wed., 4/23: Dresser, “Dworkin on Dementia: Elegant Theory, Questionable Policy” (38)

Fri., 4/25: No New Reading

Week 16 (4/28-5/2) Posthumous Harm/Review

---

Mon., 4/28: TBD

Wed., 4/30: TBD

Fri., 5/2: Review for Final Exam

---