

Bioethics

Instructor

Eli Shupe

Email

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Office Location

106 Somerset, 5th floor

Office Hours

Tuesdays
1-2 PM

Course Overview

This course covers a range of topics in applied ethics that are relevant to medicine and medical research.

This class meets at 2:15-3:35 PM on Mondays and Wednesdays, in HCK-210, Douglass/Cook.

Required Texts

This class has no required texts. I will make all readings freely available on Sakai. Students who would like a hardcopy book containing many of the readings should purchase *Bioethics: An Anthology* (Blackwell Philosophy Anthologies), 3rd Edition.

Plagiarism

You must properly quote and/or cite all of the sources that you draw on in your written work. All written work for this course will be uploaded to Sakai and checked for plagiarism by Turnitin. Plagiarism will result in a failing grade for the assignment in question or the course as a whole. Plagiarism will also be reported to the Office of Student Conduct, which may result in suspension or expulsion.

Grading

At the end of the semester, your letter grade will be determined by your numerical grade, as follows.

A: 90 – 100
B+: 85 – 89.99
B: 80 – 84.99
C+: 75 – 79.99
C: 70 – 74.99
D: 60 – 69.99
F: 0 – 59.99

Your numerical grade, in turn, will be the average of the scores that you receive for each of the five categories listed below. This will be a weighted average, so that each component has an equal effect on your grade for the semester.

Peer Evaluation (20%)

In-Class Work (20%)

Homework (20%)

Midterm Assignment (20%)

Final Assignment (20%)

Peer Evaluation

The class will be divided up into teams of 5 – 6 people, and each team will work together for the rest of the semester. As described below, much of your grade will depend on the performance of your team members. Some students will be inclined to do less than their fair share of work. The use of peer evaluations is meant to provide students with an incentive to contribute to team-based activities and assignments, as well as to reward those who do contribute. At several points during the semester, you will be asked to provide a numerical score and written comments for each member of your team. The scores and comments that you provide (and receive) will be anonymized, though I will know who assigned which scores and wrote which comments. The details of the peer evaluations will be discussed later in the semester.

In-Class Work

Class sessions will often begin with a multiple-choice reading quiz. Some of the questions should be easy to answer if you have done the assigned reading for the day, while other questions will be quite difficult. After taking the quiz individually, you will meet with your team to discuss the questions. Each team will complete its own version of the quiz, which will be followed by a class discussion. There may be answers that you or your team think are correct (or partially correct) but which I claim are not. If you make a convincing case for your answer during the class discussion, then that answer will receive credit (or partial credit). Your score for in-class work will depend equally on your individual performance on the reading quizzes and on your team's performance. Other team-based class activities may be introduced later. If you miss an individual reading quiz because you are absent, you can take a makeup quiz. You can do this either by coming to my next set of office hours or by making an appointment to meet at another time. Except in the case of an extended illness or other special circumstances, you will have one week from the date of your absence to make up the quiz, after which a score of zero will be recorded. If you miss an individual reading quiz because you are late to class, you will not be allowed to take a makeup quiz. Once you have been present for a class discussion of the assigned reading, there is little point in taking a quiz designed to test whether you have done that reading. Exceptions to this policy may be made for extreme and unforeseeable circumstances.

Homework

There will be one homework assignment due each week. The assignment will typically involve writing out answers to questions about one of the week's readings or responding to cases that are relevant to the week's topic. Each team will submit a single set of answers. Team members are expected to work on the assignment

together outside of class, communicating through a Slack channel that I will monitor. (We'll talk about what Slack is, and how to use it, in class.)

You are allowed to discuss homework assignments with your teammates by other means, including in person. If you do so, then you should enter a summary of the discussion into your team's Slack channel so that I can see it. Be sure to specify which contributions were made by which team members. The score that you receive on a homework assignment will be determined as follows: I will begin by assuming that your score for the week should be equal to the numerical grade assigned to the assignment that your team submits. I will then look at your team's Slack channel and modify your score, either increasing it or decreasing it, depending on your contribution to the team's discussion of the assignment. If you are doing significantly less than your share of work, I will decrease your score. If you are doing significantly more than your share of work, I will increase your score. Both quantity and quality of contributions will be taken into account.

Each week's homework assignment must be uploaded to the 'Assignments' tab in Sakai as a word-processing document (not a PDF, and not a link to a Google doc). Sakai will close for submissions 48 hours before the start of the class period in which the homework is to be discussed. Late assignments will not be accepted. If your team has not completed the assignment, then submit whatever portion of the assignment has been completed. If one or more members of your team are ill or otherwise unable to submit the assignment, then another member of your team should submit it. I will return a graded copy of the assignment, with written comments, to each member of your team at least 24 hours before the start of class. The homework questions will then be discussed in class. There may be answers that you or your team think are correct (or partially correct) but which I claim are not. If you make a convincing case for your answer during the class discussion, then that answer will receive credit (or partial credit).

Midterm Assignment

The midterm assignment is a group assignment and consists of **two** components.

The **first** component is a group presentation on a bioethical issue that is *not* covered on the course syllabus (example: the decriminalization or legalization of recreational drugs). The presentation should provide a general introduction to the topic, and should demonstrate knowledge of some of the philosophical work that has been done on the topic. Presentations should last approximately twenty to twenty-five minutes and may include visual materials such as posters, hand-outs, or powerpoint presentations. The group should plan to answer questions and lead class discussion for approximately ten minutes.

The **second** component is a pair of philosophical essays. Each essay should be able to be read separately and be 800-1000 words long. One essay should argue for a thesis related to your topic. The other essay should argue for an opposing thesis. For example, if the group project is about the legalization of recreational drugs, then one

essay might argue that most recreational drugs should be freely and legally available, while the other essay might argue that most recreational drug use should be criminalized.

Groups are free to divide up their labor on the various parts of the midterm assignment.

All groups should clear their topics with me before beginning work on the assignment. I am happy to suggest topics.

The essay component of the midterm assignment is due **Monday, March 4**. *Note that this may be before or after the class in which your group presents the first component of the midterm assignment.*

Final Assignment

The final assignment is an individual philosophical essay containing an argument that pertains to a topic covered on the course syllabus. The essay should be 1200-1500 words long. Jim Pryor has written a helpful guide to writing philosophy papers, available here: <http://www.jimpryor.net/teaching/guidelines/writing.html>.

Please check your topic with me before beginning to write your final assignment. I am happy to suggest topics during office hours if you are not sure what you would like to write about.

The final assignment is due **Monday, April 29**.

Course Schedule

Class	Subject	Readings
Wed Jan 23	Introduction to Bioethics	Syllabus; Childress, "Methods in Bioethics"
Mon Jan 28	No class	
Wed Jan 30	No class	
Mon Feb 4	Physician-assisted death	American Medical Association, "Decisions Near the End of Life"
Wed Feb 6		James Rachels, "Active and Passive Euthanasia"
Mon Feb 11		Willard Gaylin et al., "Doctors Must Not Kill" Chris Hill, "The Note"
Wed Feb 13	Abortion	Judith Jarvis Thomson, "A Defense of Abortion"
Mon Feb 18		Don Marquis, "Why Abortion is Immoral"
Wed Feb 20		McMahan, "Infanticide"

Class	Subject	Readings
Mon Feb 25	Severely disabled newborns	Hare, "The Abnormal Child" Davis, "Right to Life of the Handicapped"
Wed Feb 27		Group presentations
Mon Mar 4		Group presentations
Wed Mar 6		Group presentations
Mon Mar 11	Issues in reproduction	Purdy, "Genetics and Reproductive Risk: Can Having Children Be Immoral?" Pence, "Multiple Gestation and Damaged Babies"
Wed Mar 13		Robertson et al, "Conception to Obtain Hematopoietic Stem Cells" King, "Why We Should Not Permit Embryos to Be Selected as Tissue Donors"
Spring Break		
Mon Mar 25		Greenfield & Seli, "Assisted Reproduction in Same Sex Couples"
Wed Mar 27		Tooley, "The Moral Status of Cloning Humans"
Mon Apr 1	Eugenics and enhancement	Savulescu, "Procreative Beneficence: Why We Should Select the Best Children"
Wed Apr 3		Garland-Thomson, "The Case for Conserving Disability"
Mon Apr 8		M. Sandel, "The Case Against Perfection"
Wed Apr 10		F. Kamm, "What Is and Is Not Wrong with Enhancement?"
Mon Apr 15	Rationing	Singer, "Why We Must Ration Healthcare" Harris, "The Value of Life"
Wed Apr 17		Rescher, "The Allocation of Exotic Medical Lifesaving Therapy" Beckstead & Ord, "Bubbles Under the Wallpaper"
Mon Apr 22	Organ donation and transplant	Annas, "The Prostitute, the Playboy, and the Poet: Rationing Scheme for Organ Transplantation"; Cohen, et al., "Alcoholics and Liver Transplantation"; Bramstedt, "Is it ethical to prioritize patients for organ allocation according to their values about organ donation?"
Wed Apr 24		Fabre, "Justice and the Coercive Taking of Cadaveric Organs" Johnson & Goldstein, "Do Defaults Save Lives?"
Mon Apr 29		Satz, "Ethical Issues in the Supply and Demand of Human Kidneys"; Radcliffe-Richards, "The Case for Allowing Kidney Sales"

Class	Subject	Readings
Wed May 1	Q&A with an altruistic kidney donor	
