

Philosophy of Medicine

The philosophical area of bioethics is concerned with applied ethical issues that arise out of the practice of medicine and research on the physiology of human beings. This introduction to bioethics will ask ethical questions concerning such issues as abortion (including selective abortion), active and passive euthanasia, research on human subjects, the physician-patient relationship and medical confidentiality (including issues that arise in multicultural societies), decisions concerning the allocation of life sustaining treatment, informed consent, truth-telling, conflicts of interest, the role of the family in medical decision-making, embryonic stem cell research,, genetic screening, genetic enhancement, human cloning, and issues concerning justice in health care distribution, patient rights, and societal obligations in the practice of medicine. In the course of examining each issue, we will also discuss such theoretical issues as the scope and limits of autonomy and individual liberty, the ethics of cost/benefit analyses, and the difference between rule and act utilitarianism. This is a course in ethics not biology, but in the course of our study, we will discuss human physiology to the extent that it is required to understand the ethical issues. We will also examine selected case studies. In the course of our study, we will discuss specifically Canadian legal precedents and the ethical justification for a single-payer government-sponsored health care system.

Required Text:

Biomedical Ethics: A Canadian Focus, Ed. Johnna Fisher, Oxford University Press ISBN 0195427904

Obtaining Course Texts:

The textbook is available at the university bookstore.

Course Requirements: Students will be assessed on the basis of two Analysis papers (5-6 pages each), discussion participation, and a Final Examination.

Distribution:

1st Analysis (5-6 pages): 25%

2nd Analysis (5-6 pages): 25%

Discussion Participation: 20%

Final Examination: 30%

Guidelines for submitting written work: The essays must be submitted on white 8.5 x 11 paper, typed single-sided, and double-spaced. Students must keep a copy of their work for their own files in case the paper should become lost. If the paper becomes lost (by the student, the department secretary, the T.A. or the Instructor), it is the student's responsibility to be able to replace it.

Course Schedule

WEEK :1 January 7-13

Course Introduction, Abortion

Reading: Don Marquis, "Why Abortion is Immoral," pp. 230-240; Warren, "On the Moral and Legal Status of Abortion," pp. 240-246; Thompson, "A Defense of Abortion," pp. 246-255

Activity: Self-Test

Activity: research country where abortion is illegal

WEEK 2: January 14-20

Terminating Treatment in Pregnant Women, Disabled Newborns, Stem Cell Research

Reading: Thompson, "Devolder, "Creating and Sacrificing Embryos for Stem Cells," pp. 312-318; Seymour, "Pregnant Women's Decision to Decline Treatment: How Should the Law Respond?" pp. 264-270; Mahowald, "Decisions Regarding Disabled Newborns," pp. pp. 270-278

Discussion

WEEK 3: January 21-27

Euthanasia

Reading: Rachels, "Active and Passive Euthanasia," pp. 161-164; Brock, "Voluntary Active Euthanasia," pp. 164-176; Velleman, "Against the Right to Die," (download from the author's website—instructions on the BB site)

Activity

Activity

WEEK 4: January 28-February 3

Euthanasia and Decisions Concerning Life Sustaining Treatment

Reading: "When Self-Determination Runs Amok," pp. 177-181; Bernat et. al., "Patient Refusal of Hydration and Nutrition: An Alternative to Physician-Assisted Suicide or Voluntary Active Euthanasia," pp. 143-149; Wicclair, "Medical Futility: A Conceptual and Ethical Analysis," pp. 149-152

Discussion

WEEK 5: February 4-10

Genetics and Human Reproduction

Reading: Kass, "Implications of Prenatal Diagnosis for the Human Right to Life," pp. 337-341; Purdy, "Genetics and Reproductive Risk: Can Having Children Be Immoral?" pp. 341-347

Activity

Activity

WEEK 6: February 11-17

Genetics and Human Reproduction; Cloning

Reading: Glannon, "Genetic Enhancement," pp. 319-323; Brock, "Genetic Engineering," pp. 323-328; Kass, "Cloning of Human Beings," pp. 307-310

Discussion

Reading Week February 18-24

WEEK 7: February 25-March 3

Confidentiality, Informed Consent, and Medical Information

Reading: Canadian AIDS/HIV Network, "Privacy, Human Rights, Public Policy and Law," pp. 80-90; Fleck and Angell, "Please Don't Tell: A Case about HIV and Confidentiality," 130-133; Thomasma, "Telling the Truth to Patients," pp. 107-111; Faden & Beauchamp, "The Concept of Informed Consent," pp. 111-115

Activity

Activity

WEEK 8: March 4-10

Research on Human Beings

Reading: Pence, "The Tusgekee Study," pp. 462-469; Ross, "Dr. Ewen Cameron," 469-473; Capron, "Ethical and Human-Rights Issues in Research on Mental Disorders That May Affect Decision-Making Capacity," pp. 492-496; Schafer, "Biomedical Conflicts of Interest: A Defense of the Sequestration Thesis," pp. 474-479

Discussion

WEEK 9: March 11-17

Allocation of Scarce Resources

Reading: Veatch, "Voluntary Risks to Health: The Ethical Issues," pp. 424-431; "Rationing Services to an Elder Who is Responsible for his Own Health Condition," p. 455 Kishore, "Human Organs, Scarcities, and Sale: Morality Revisited," pp. 443-449

Activity

Activity

WEEK 10: March 18-24

The Family and Health Care in Multicultural Societies

Reading: Kipnis, "Quality Care and the Wounds of Diversity," pp. 44-47; Macklin, "Ethical Relativism in a Multicultural Society," pp. 47-56; Mappes and Zembaty, "Patient Choices, Family Interests, and Physician Obligations," pp. 63-71

Discussion

WEEK 11: March 25-31

Social Justice and Health-Care Policy

Reading: Nielson, "Equality, Autonomy, and a Just Health Care System," pp. 639-644; Armstrong, "Managing Care the Canadian Way," pp. 672-674

Activity

Activity

WEEK 12: April 1-5

Discussion
