

Department of Philosophy
Philosophy 6240 SYLLABUS
Bioethics: *Ultimate Gifts?*

Term: Winter 2011

Mondays 11:30 to 2:20

Location: Philosophy Department Seminar Room 346

Instructor: Dr. Karen Houle Khoule@uoquelpk.ca
Mackinnon 337

Office hours: Wednesdays 9:30 - 11:30 am, or by appointment

Brief Description of Course:

In this course we will begin by critically examining a set of 7 closely-related practices which appear in philosophy as questions of "human bioethics": blood donation, bone marrow donation, fetal tissue/stem cell, embryo donation, sperm and ova donation, organ donation, cadaver donation. Adoption may also be covered. Different and competing normative concepts are fore-grounded in the bioethical literature as *the* axes for evaluating the merit or demerit of these phenomena – dignity, autonomy, utility, generosity, care, justice, oppression, freedom, authenticity. The opening weeks are devoted to exploring how these phenomena are framed within current popular discourse and in the bioethics literature.

In the latter half of this course, we will concentrate on a cluster of themes: donation, gift, generosity. One theme which cuts across all these practices (implicitly and explicitly) and which tends to stand beyond the critical reach of any and all normative theorists is the idea that these are among the most noble, morally responsible, unselfish acts of giving human beings are capable of. This course will place that very presumption under scrutiny. How will we do that? We will evaluate these phenomena and the standard philosophical and popular discourses that surround and support them, via recent post-structuralist, phenomenological and feminist analyses of 'generosity' & 'the gift.' At the head of this critique is the work of Jacques Derrida. Derrida asserts in *Given Time* "for there to be a gift, there must be no reciprocity, no return, exchange, counter gift or debt." If there is giving and receiving, a giver and a receiver, he goes on to say, no gift, no real generosity, no unselfishness will have taken place; rather, some kind of mere exchange will have occurred. In other texts, including *The Gift of Death* he develops a deconstructivist account of gifts: "if they exist" they are *im*-possible. Furthermore, he derives a concept of responsibility *from*, not in spite of, this very *im*possibility. In this course we will pursue the following questions: Are these acts of (as Rosalyn Diprose names them) 'corporeal generosity' immune to Derrida's critique, or further instantiations of the impossibility of the gift? Is the concept of responsibility developed by Derrida adequate to the phenomena under review, or are these better served by the classical concepts named above (dignity, autonomy, generosity, care, justice, oppression and freedom)? Are there deeper resonances between the post-structuralist concept of responsibility and these classical normative concepts? How are these phenomena importantly like, and unlike, one another, phenomenologically or corporeally? What is at stake in preserving or challenging the narrative of generosity which undergirds these practices? Who gains or loses from the assertion of one truth rather than another? Finally, what, if any other unique dimensions of *ethicality* are expressed in these acts and phenomena which take us even beyond the axis of generosity?

Purpose, Goals and Objectives of the Course:

1. We will critically examine 7 closely-related medico-scientific practices. This will be through fieldwork, reading bioethics articles, and populist discourse.
2. We will be able to make fine-grained distinctions among these phenomena using this conceptual and experiential terrain.
3. Working as individuals and as a mutually-engaged emerging collective, we will become familiar with, and able to appropriately use *some* of the following concepts developed and in play in current deconstructive, post-structuralist, phenomenological and feminist literature: the event, alterity, difference, the gift, givenness, the *im*possible, the face, chiasm, habituality, inorganic life, assemblage.
4. We will come to recognize the relevance of these concepts for philosophically approaching a range of medical "donation" practices under discussion, and use these concepts to philosophically assess these practices.

5. We will not simply learn and *apply* these ideas but also come to experience and understand the *limits* of these post-structuralist concepts, and hence undertake the fundamental philosophical task of creating new concepts in response to the new questions these phenomena pose to thought.

Texts or Resources Required

Required readings (page numbers or articles) will be assigned at least one week prior to the date of the relevant lecture. Check into D2L and/or email on the Sunday night.

1. Jacques Derrida. 2007. *The Gift of Death*, 2nd edition. Translated by David Wills. (University of Chicago Press)
2. Articles provided by email attachments and/or distributed hard copy and/or accessible via Scholars Portal (Library).
3. Articles circulated by students in conjunction with their seminar presentations

Organization of the Course

The course involves a combination of formal lectures by the instructor, seminar discussions, fieldtrips, material presented by students in the course.

Evaluation

The grade for the course will be based on the following items weighted as indicated:

<u>Evaluation Point</u>	<u>% Value</u>	<u>Dates</u>
Class participation (attendance + contribution)	10%	Each class
Short reflective writing	30%	10 classes
Presentations (on one of the topic areas)	30%	Starting Jan. 31st
Final Essay (conference length, 12-15 pages)	30%	April 11th

1. Seminar participation [10%]

Students are expected to attend every class, actively participate in discussion by contributing questions and expanding upon their peers' comments, and demonstrate via this participation that they have read the required course readings in full. The table below presents a general guide to the evaluation of class participation used in this course.

Evaluation criteria for participation	Grades
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Degrees of absenteeism and associated lack of contribution 	0-4
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Present, not disruptive. Tries to respond when called on but does not offer much. Demonstrates very infrequent involvement in discussion. 	5
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Demonstrates adequate preparation: knows basic case or reading facts, but does not show evidence of trying to interpret or analyze them. Offers straightforward exegesis (e.g., straight from the reading), without elaboration or very infrequently (perhaps once a class). Does not offer to contribute to discussion, but contributes to a moderate degree when called on. Demonstrates sporadic involvement. Speaks too frequently to demonstrate erudition, rather than build upon insights in play. 	6-7
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Demonstrates good preparation: knows case or reading facts well, has thought through implications of them. Offers interpretations and analysis of material (more than just facts) to class. Contributes well to discussion in an ongoing way: responds to other students' points, thinks through own points, questions others in a constructive way, offers and supports suggestions that may be counter to the majority opinion. Demonstrates consistent ongoing involvement (active listening and speaking) 	8

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Demonstrates excellent preparation: has analyzed case, issue, etc. exceptionally well, relating it to readings and other material (e.g., readings, course material, discussions, experiences, etc.). • Offers analysis, synthesis, and evaluation of case material, e.g., puts together pieces of the discussion to develop new approaches that take the class further. • Contributes in a very significant way to ongoing discussion: keeps analysis focused, carefully and respectfully responds to other students' comments, contributes to the cooperative argument building, suggests alternative ways of approaching material and helps class analyze which approaches are appropriate, etc. • Demonstrates ongoing very active involvement. 	9-10
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[criteria adapted from Maznevski, Martha L. (2007) *Grading Class Participation*, Teaching Resources Center, University of Virginia: Charlottesville]

2. Reflective Prompts [30%]

Each week students will be given a short question by noon on Sunday. During the first 20 minutes of class, students will write a brief, open-book reflection (maximum one hand-written page) to the question. The question will be generated by the instructor or the students from the readings assigned for the week. If a student wishes to submit a question for a reflective prompt it must be sent by email to the instructor no later than 10am the day prior to meeting. (Sunday, noon). The idea is that this writing orients you to the seminar and the readings, and can form a very good base for in-class discussion. If a student arrives late, or misses class altogether, they must provide documentation in order to be granted permission to write their weekly reflection. Students will produce 10 reflections, each worth 3%, graded on a four-point scale (0 to 3):

- 0: Not completed
- 1: Descriptive reporting of the material, comprehension not demonstrated
- 2: Demonstration of a close reading of the material, evidence of comprehension and interpretation
- 3: Excellent comprehension, e.g., synthesis or analysis, relates and compares to other work, etc..

3. Seminar Presentations [30%]

In the first 3 weeks of term, we will be working together on ethical issues surrounding the donation of human remains. By the end of the second week of term, students will choose one of the remaining subject areas: blood, bone marrow, fetal tissue, embryo, sperm & egg, organ donation. Adoption can also be taken up, though only as the last topic. These presentations start the week of Feb. 7th (Monday's class has to be rescheduled). Two philosophical articles on each of these subjects will be assigned by the instructor to the entire class and read by the entire class, in preparation for the seminar. The student in charge of the seminar will be expected to research and include at least 3 more relevant philosophical and scientific sources. Students are responsible for running the entire session on that subject. In this presentation they will include an initial introduction to the mechanics of the donation in question, supported by secondary sources from the life sciences. If they wish to organize some kind of a concrete activity, or field trip, this can be done with the help of the instructor if there is enough advanced notice. In seminar, students will generate a sequence of discussion questions, and lead the conversation on a particular philosophical aspect of the phenomenon under consideration. A copy of the presentation slides (if you use them) and presentation notes including a glossary (if needed) will be submitted to the course director and seminar colleagues at the time of the presentation. Contents of this presentation can make its way into the final paper.

4. Final Paper [30%]

A final position paper must engage directly with the problematic of donation, gifts, generosity and responsibility, and advance a critical perspective on one of these phenomena. The essay should demonstrate comprehension (e.g., through synthesis, interpretation or analysis) and a progression in thinking from work submitted or presented previously, contain appropriate and accurate content, and must be well organized and tightly written and adhere to Chicago citation and referencing guidelines. Students are strongly encouraged to consult one or more style and writing guides (such as: Zinsser, William (2006) *On Writing Well: The Classic Guide to Writing Nonfiction*. 30th Anniversary Edition, New York: HarperCollins Publishers). The essay should be between 12 and 15 pages in length (12 point font, 1 inch margins, exclusive of tables, figures, list of references, appendices, table of contents, etc.).

Schedule of Topics and Readings

The following list of lecture topics and readings is subject to change. Topics covered in each week of the course are presented below.

Date	Topic	Readings
10 Jan	Course Organization	In-class reading of "Secrets of European Responsibility" from <u>The Gift of Death</u>
17 Jan	Visit to University of Guelph Gross Human Anatomy Lab/ + Post-Mortem discussion by Laurence Boma-Fischer	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. "Human Anatomy: A foundation for Education about Death and Dying in Medicine," Marks, Bertman & Penney. <u>Clinical Anatomy</u>, 1997; (10:2), 118-122. 2. "Cadaver Dissection and the Limits of Simulation," Bryan R. Warnick, <u>The Journal of Clinical Ethics</u>, Winter 2004, pp. 350-362. 3. "Human Gross Anatomy: A Crucial Time to Encourage Respect and Compassion in Students," Weeks, Harris and Kinzey. <u>Clinical Anatomy</u>, 1995; (8:1) 89-79.
24 Jan	Human Remains	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. "Body Worlds and the Ethics of Using Human Remains: A Preliminary Discussion", Y. Michael Barilan. <u>Bioethics</u> 2006; 20:5, pp. 233-247 2. "Moral Considerations In Body Donation for Scientific Research," A. M. Christensen. <u>Bioethics</u>, 2006; 20(3), pp. 136-145 3. "Don't Discuss It: Reconciling Illness, Dying and Death in a Medical School Anatomy Laboratory," William. <u>Family Systems Medicine</u>, 1992; 10(1): 65-78.
31 Jan	Human Remains	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Michel Foucault, "Open up a Few Corpses" from <u>The Birth of the Clinic</u> 2. Maurice Merleau-Ponty, "An Unpublished Text: A Prospectus of His Work," & "Phenomenology and the Sciences of Man" from <u>The Primacy of Perception</u> 3. Hershenov, David. "Do Dead Bodies Pose a Problem for Biological Approaches to Personal Identity?" Ed.: M.G.F. Martin. <u>Mind</u>, Vol. 114.453. January 2005. pp. 31-59. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press.
7 Feb *rescheduled to 10 th Feb (1-4)	Human Remains	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Death and Remembrance: Addressing the Costs of Learning Anatomy through Memorialization of Donors", Kathleen Marie Dixon. <u>The Journal of Clinical Ethics</u> Winter 1999, 300-308 2. "To Reckon with the Dead: Jacques Derrida's Politics of Mourning," <u>Editor's Introduction to The Work of Mourning</u>, Jacques Derrida, 2001
14 Feb	Organ Transplants: Hearts ♥ Doug Halls (Presentation)	<p>Gillian Haddow "The Phenomenology of death, embodiment & organ transplantation," <u>Sociology of Health and Illness</u>, 2005; 27(1) pp. 92-113. http://journals1.scholarsportal.info/tmp/15161603938787097823.pdf</p> <p>Margaret Shildrick "The Critical Turn in Feminist Bioethics: The Case of Heart Transplantation," <u>International Journal of Feminist Approaches to Bioethics</u>, 2008; 1(1) http://muse.jhu.edu/journals/international_journal_of_feminist_approaches_to_bioethics/v001/1.1.shildrick.html</p>
21 Feb	Winter Break	No Classes

E-mail Communication

As per university regulations, all students are required to check their <uoguelph.ca> email account regularly: email is the official route of communication between the university and its students.

When You Cannot Meet a Course Requirement...

When you find yourself unable to meet an in-course requirement because of illness or compassionate reasons, please advise the course instructor (or designated person, such as a teaching assistant) in writing, with your name, id#, and e-mail contact. See the undergraduate calendar for information on regulations and procedures for Academic Consideration:

<http://www.uoguelph.ca/registrar/calendars/undergraduate/current/c08/c08-ac.shtml>

Drop Date

The last date to drop one-semester Winter '11 courses, without academic penalty, is Friday March 11th. For regulations and procedures for Dropping Courses, see the Undergraduate Calendar:

<http://www.uoguelph.ca/registrar/calendars/undergraduate/current/c08/c08-drop.shtml>

Copies of out-of-class assignments

Keep paper and/or other reliable back-up copies of all out-of-class assignments: you may be asked to resubmit work at any time.

Academic Misconduct

The University of Guelph is committed to upholding the highest standards of academic integrity and enjoins all members of the University community – faculty, staff, and students – to be aware of what constitutes academic misconduct and to do as much as possible to prevent academic offences from occurring. The Academic Misconduct Policy is detailed in the Undergraduate Calendar:

<http://www.uoguelph.ca/registrar/calendars/undergraduate/current/c08/c08-amisconduct.shtml>

Recording of Materials

Presentations which are made in relation to course work—including lectures—cannot be recorded in any electronic media without the permission of the presenter, whether the instructor, a classmate or guest lecturer.