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:

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
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
Discussion

WEEK 3: January 21-27
Euthanasia
Activity
Activity

WEEK 4: January 28-February 3
Euthanasia and Decisions Concerning Life Sustaining Treatment
Discussion

WEEK 5: February 4-10
Genetics and Human Reproduction
Activity
Activity

WEEK 6: February 11-17
Genetics and Human Reproduction; Cloning
Discussion
Reading Week February 18-24

WEEK 7: February 25-March 3
Confidentiality, Informed Consent, and Medical Information

Activity

WEEK 8: March 4-10
Research on Human Beings

Discussion

WEEK 9: March 11-17
Allocation of Scarc resources

Activity

WEEK 10: March 18-24
The Family and Health Care in Multicultural Societies

Discussion

WEEK 11: March 25-31
Social Justice and Health-Care Policy

Activity

WEEK 12: April 1-5
Discussion