

Phil 233F: Biomedical Ethics Syllabus

Section 02
Spring 2019
T/Th 8:30am - 10:00am
Psychology 249

Instructor Information

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Office: Wilson 101
Office Hours: M/W 1:00pm - 2:00pm, or by appointment

Course Description

This course aims to familiarize students with some of the central issues, positions, and arguments in biomedical ethics. The course begins with an exploration of general moral theories and principles, and then proceeds to apply these theories and principles to a host of issues such as paternalism and autonomy, truth-telling and confidentiality, informed consent, abortion, and euthanasia. Throughout the course, our primary aim will not be to figure out “The Correct Answer,” but rather to appreciate the diversity of positions on these issues, and to understand the reasons and arguments that can be used to support those positions.

Learning Objectives

At the end of this course, students will be able to:

- Identify when biomedical issues are distinctively philosophical
- Address such issues using a variety of philosophical approaches
- Explain prominent arguments for and against various positions
- Understand, evaluate, and craft philosophical arguments
- Write persuasively in support of their positions

Course Text

Vaughn, Lewis. (2017) *Bioethics: Principles, Issues, and Cases. 3rd Edition*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Course Requirements

Reading Quizzes: 15%
Paper 1: 15%
Paper 2: 20%
Midterm Exam: 25%
Final Exam: 25%

- **Reading Quizzes:** To prepare for our discussions, we need to study the readings carefully. Try to outline what the author's main claim is, what her principal reasons for

that claim are, what alternative position(s) she considers, and the reason(s) why she does not adopt those alternatives. To reward you for doing this work, there will be twelve unannounced reading quizzes during the course of the semester. These will be short quizzes; questions may be multiple choice, true/false, fill-in-the-blank, or (very) short answer. At the end of the course, I will drop your two lowest reading quiz grades. Make-up quizzes will not be offered.

- **Papers:** Students will be required to write two papers of 3-4 pages each. Paper 1 is due on February 15 at 5:00pm, and Paper 2 is due April 6 at 5:00pm. Students will have to choose one of several prompts and write a response that both (a) explicates some view that we have read about, and (b) critically evaluates that view. Late papers will be deducted 1/3 of a letter grade (i.e. a +/- increment) each day past their due date.
- **Midterm and Final Exams:** The midterm exam and final exam will be similar in length and format, and are designed to test understanding of the course material. They are both closed note and closed book. The final exam will *not* be cumulative. The format of these exams will be a combination of true/false, multiple-choice, and essay questions of (short and medium length). The Midterm Exam is on February 28 in class, and the Final Exam is on May 3, 1:00 PM – 3:00 PM.

Course Policies

- **Academic Integrity:** Students are expected to act with academic integrity. For details, visit <https://wustl.edu/about/compliance-policies/academic-policies/undergraduate-student-academic-integrity-policy/>. Plagiarism and other forms of academic misconduct will be reported to the relevant academic integrity officer and will result in an F on the assignment.
- **Respect:** Students are expected to treat each other and the instructor with respect. This includes, among other things, paying attention to what a person is saying, being charitable to others' points of views, and criticizing ideas rather than persons.

Course Schedule and Readings

The following is a tentative schedule for the course. Any changes to the schedule will be announced in class and over email. The readings listed on a given date are to be done before class on that date.

January 15: Introduction

- No reading

Moral Theories and Principles

January 17

- Judith Jarvis Thomson, "The Trolley Problem" (reading provided on Canvas)

January 22

- John Stuart Mill, "Utilitarianism" (Vaughn pp. 53-56)
- Immanuel Kant, "The Moral Law" (Vaughn pp. 56-61)

January 24

- Bernard Mayo, "Virtue and the Moral Life" (Vaughn, pp. 62-64)
- Susan Wolf, "Moral Saints" (Vaughn, pp. 70-78)

Paternalism and Patient Autonomy

January 29

- Gerald Dworkin, "Paternalism" (Vaughn pp. 94-103)

January 31

- Alan Goldman, "The Refutation of Medical Paternalism" (Vaughn pp. 104-109)

February 5

- Terrance Ackerman, "Why Doctors Should Intervene" (Vaughn pp. 110-115)
- *Bouvia v. Superior Court* (Vaughn pp. 123-127)

Truth-Telling and Confidentiality

February 7

- David Thomasma, "Telling the Truth to Patients: A Clinical Ethics Exploration" (Vaughn, pp. 155-161)

Paper 1 Due by February 8 at 5pm (Submit on Canvas)

February 12

- Susan Cullen and Margaret Klein, "Respect for Patients, Physicians, and the Truth" (Vaughn, pp. 164-171)

February 14

- Mark Siegler, "Confidentiality in Medicine – A Decrepit Concept" (Vaughn, pp. 177-180)
- *Tarasoff v. Regents of the University of California* (Vaughn, pp. 191-195)

Informed Consent

February 19

- *Canterbury v. Spence* (Vaughn, pp. 235-238)
- Ruth Faden and Tom Beauchamp, "The Concept of Informed Consent" (Vaughn, pp. 208-213)

February 21

- Jay Katz, "Physicians and Patients: A History of Silence" (reading provided on Canvas)

Abortion

February 26

- Judith Jarvis Thomson, "A Defense of Abortion" (Vaughn, pp. 326-335)

February 28: Midterm Exam (in class)

March 5

- Don Marquis, "Why Abortion is Immoral" (Vaughn, pp. 336-347)

March 7

- John Noonan, "An Almost Absolute Value in History" (Vaughn, pp. 348-352)
- Mary Anne Warren, "On the Moral and Legal Status of Abortion" (Vaughn, pp. 352-363)

March 19

- Jane English, “Abortion and the Concept of a Person” (Vaughn, pp. 377-383)
- *Roe v. Wade* (Vaughn, pp. 397-402)

Reproductive Technology and Genetic Choices

March 21

- Peter Singer, “IVF: The Simple Case” (Vaughn, pp. 429-432)
- John Robertson, “The Presumptive Primacy of Procreative Liberty” (Vaughn, pp. 466-473)

March 26

- Cynthia Cohen, “Give me Children or I Shall Die!” (Vaughn, pp. 445-456)

March 28

- Leon Kass, “The Wisdom of Repugnance” (Vaughn, pp. 504-519)

April 2

- Dan Brock, “Cloning Human Beings: An Assessment of the Ethical Issues Pro and Con” (Vaughn, pp. 520-530)

April 4

- Laura Purdy, “Genetics and Reproductive Risk: Can Having Children Be Immoral?” (Vaughn, pp. 564-570)

Paper 2 Due by April 5 at 5pm (Submit on Canvas)

April 9

- Dena Davids, “Genetic Dilemmas and the Child’s Right to an Open Future” (Vaughn, pp. 575-585)
- Dan Brock, “The Non-Identity Problem and Genetic Harms – The Case of Wrongful Handicaps” (Vaughn, pp. 589-593)

Euthanasia and Physician-Assisted Suicide

April 11

- Thomas Nagel, “Death” (reading provided on Canvas)

April 16

- James Rachels, “Active and Passive Euthanasia” (Vaughn, pp. 678-681)

April 18

- John Arras, “Physician-Assisted Suicide: A Tragic View” (Vaughn, pp. 663-678)

April 23

- Velleman, “Against the Right to Die” (reading provided on Canvas)

April 25: Review and Final Thoughts

- No reading

Final Exam

May 3, 1:00pm - 3:00pm