

U22 233: Biomedical Ethics

Spring 2020

Location:

Class time: Tuesdays, 6-8:30pm

Instructor Information

Instructor

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Email

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Office Location & Hours

Wilson 116, Tuesdays 4-5:45pm

General Information

Description

In a world of diverse values and new medical advancements, ethical challenges loom when considering the intersection of medical teams, researchers and patients. Even seemingly easy questions, like determining who is dead, turn out to be ethically complex. In this course, we will explore some of these issues. We begin by looking at who ought to decide who should receive treatment when resources are scarce, what constitutes 'death', and what the purpose of medicine ought to be about. Exploring these issues raises more general questions about the relationships and obligations between doctors and patients and the tension between beneficence towards the patient, just allocation of resources to society, and patient autonomy, which we turn to in the second half of the course. We wrap up the course by looking at the ethics non-therapeutic forms of modification and enhancement.

The readings, lectures, and assignments in this course will not only introduce you to a variety of important moral issues in medicine and medical research, they will also help you develop the critical thinking skills that you will need to be able understand and assess the bioethical debates we will be examining. As is often the case, the more we will learn about the issues at hand, the less certain we may be about the answers. This class asks us all to cultivate intellectual humility in assessing these complicated dilemmas. In doing so, we will focus on looking at the structure of the arguments being made, the underlying assumptions, whether the evidence given is sufficient or not, and what objections might be advanced.

Course Materials

Required Materials

All reading materials can be found on Canvas, under "Files." Readings are to be done in advance, for that week - e.g. readings in the Week 2 folder should be read before you come to class on Week 2.

Assignments and Grading

This course will have four graded components. All grading will be blinded, so please do not put your name on your assignments--use only your Student ID number. You can use the weightings below to calculate your performance throughout the semester.

Quizzes & Participation (20%; 10% each)

You are expected to come to class having read--and thought about--the assigned readings. You are also expected to participate in the group and class discussions. Bringing a card copy of the reading to class will help you better able to engage in class discussion--please print out articles before class.

There will be a handful (~5-8) of in-class ‘pop’ quizzes. The content of these quizzes will consist of 5-10 questions (multiple choice, T/F, fill in the blank, etc.), covering the main points from the reading for today’s class. The quizzes are ‘open note’ - any notes you take (on notebook paper, not on the article itself) while reading are allowed to be used while taking the quiz. Preparing for these quizzes is one way to help encourage discussion and participation in class.

If you are absent on a day we have a class, you receive a 0% for that day’s quiz. However, I will drop one (the lowest) quiz score at the end of the semester - so you essentially have one ‘free skip’ if you need to miss class.

Short Writing Assignments (45%; 15% each)

You will be asked to complete three short writing assignments (two double-spaced pages each) throughout the semester. The first assignment will simply involve fleshing out the author’s main argument of an article we will read for class (more to come), while the second and third assignments will involve you constructing an argument for or against the specific issue we will be discussing and debating during class time.

All three short writing assignments will involve you bringing a draft of your paper to class, getting feedback in class, and then writing a final draft, due one week later.

- You need to turn in your short paper (by Canvas, details below) before the start of class on the day that it is due. You will also need to submit a draft of your paper to Canvas, as well as bring a hard copy of the draft with you to class the week before the final due date.
- Please submit your draft/final version of the assignment to Canvas prior to class. Please put your Student ID number and the assignment number (example: 654321-SW1) on the top of the document, but **omit your name**.

Final Project - (35%)

The final project for the course will culminate in writing a blog post on a current bioethical issue. This will involve independent research, writing simple summaries of news articles, and ultimately applying particular viewpoints or principles we have previously learned in class to the issue at hand. The project will have multiple deadlines before the final paper is due. Those who do well on this final assignment will be encouraged to submit their article to a prominent bioethics blog. More to come!

Policies

In order to help ensure a successful class, please heed the following rules and policies:

Due Dates

Barring unusual circumstances, the due dates on the syllabus are non-negotiable. If you think you have reason to request an extension, it is best to inform me well in advance. Any late assignments will be subject to a grade penalty.

Classroom Environment

Please arrive to class on time. All cell phones must be turned off during class. Texting, surfing the web, and the like are not permitted. Abuse of these courtesies may lead to penalties.

Please have readings for the day completed, and a copy available for referencing during classroom discussion. I find that students do better when discussing the class readings if they can look back at specific passages or paragraphs during class. I encourage you to print out the readings ahead of time and bring a card copy to class.

I strongly discourage the use of tablets and/or laptops in the classroom, even for note-taking purposes. (Research indicates that computer use in class is strongly correlated with poorer performance on

assignments and learning.) However, I am aware that some students have difficulty taking notes with a paper and pen, and so if you feel as though you need to use a tablet or laptop for note-taking, use of a laptop or tablet is allowed for these purposes only.

Statement of Academic Integrity

In this class, you will be expected to honor WUSTL's Policy on Academic Integrity (This document can be found under "Week 1" folder on Canvas). This means that all work presented as original must, in fact, be original; the ideas and contributions of others (be they quotes, summaries, or paraphrases) must be appropriately acknowledged.

Course Schedule

Week	Topic	Readings/Assignments
Week 1	Class Intro; Case Study - Memorial Hospital	1) "How to do Philosophy" (Recommended) 2) "Integrity Policy" (Go over together in class) 3) "Syllabus" (Go over together in class) 4) "Five Days at Memorial" (pp. 3-10; 193-224)
Week 2	Scarce Resource Allocation	1) [Cont.] "Five Days at Memorial" (pp. 3-10; 193-224) 2) "They Decide Who Lives and Who Dies" 3) "Should Alcoholics Compete Equally for a Liver?" Receive Writing Assignment 1 Prompt
Week 3	Who Counts as Dead? Does Being Dead Matter?	1) "Harvard Med. School Defn of Death" 2) "President Commission Report - Defining Death" (pp. 3-12; 31-38) 3) "Is the Sanctity of Life Ethic Terminally Ill?" Writing Assignment 1 Draft Due - Submit via Canvas; Bring to Class
Week 4	Religious Exemptions & Reasons	1) "Imposing Death - Religious Witness on Brain Death" 2) "Little Sisters of the Poor" 3) "Measles Outbreak in NY" 4) "Justice and Respect for Autonomy: JWs and Kidney Transplant" Writing Assignment 1 Final Version Due

Week	Topic	Readings/Assignments
Week 5	End of Life Decisions and Values	1) "Desecularizing Death" 2) "Pluralism and The 'Good' Death" 3) "Physician Assisted Suicide is Ethical" 4) "Euthanasia and Assisted Suicide: The illusion of safeguards and controls"
Week 6	Organ Procurement	1) "Organ Sales for Transplantation are Morally Acceptable" 2) "Gift or Salvage: Two Models of Organ Procurement" 3) "Designated Organ Donation"
Week 7	Models of Healthcare	1) "Why We Must Ration" 2) "QUALifying the Value of Life" 3) "To Fix Health, Help the Poor" 4) "US Should Not Adopt Univ HealthCare"
Receive Writing Assignment 2 Prompt		
Week 8	<i>Debate:</i> Gun Violence as a Public Health Issue	1) "Massachusetts Bill Treating Gun Ownership as Health Problem is Off Target" 2) "Too Many Dead" 3) "Why Gun Violence is so Contagious" 4) "No, Gun Violence is Not a 'Public Health' Issue" 5) "The Phony 'Public-Health Crisis' of Gun Violence" 6) "Research on gun violence shouldn't be about politics. It's about public health."
Writing Assignment 2 Draft Due - Bring to Class		
Receive Final Project Assignment		
Week 9	Patient-Doctor Relationship	1) "Four Models of the Physician-Patient Relationship" 2) "Amputees by Choice" 3) "Letting the Deaf be Deaf"
Writing Assignment 2 Final Version Due		

Week	Topic	Readings/Assignments
Week 10	Bias and Minority Treatment	1) "Racial and Ethnic Disparities in the Use of Health Services" 2) "Medical Decision Making & People With Disabilities" 3) "Comfort Care as a Denial of Personhood" Stage 1 of Final Project Due: Pick Topic Receive Writing Assignment 3 Prompt
Week 11	<i>Debate:</i> Circumcision & Genital Mutilation	1) Ritual Male Infant Circumcision and Human Rights 2) Circumcision of Male Infants as a Human Rights Violation 3) Female Genital Mutilation and Male Circumcision Writing Assignment 3 Draft Due - Bring to Class
Week 12	Patient-Doctor Relationship; Patient Autonomy	1) "What Makes Clinical Research Ethical?" 2) "Uterus Transplants by Soon Help Some Infertile Women" 3) "On the Ethics of Face Transplantation Research" 4) "Justifying Surgery's Last Taboo: The Ethics of Face Transplants" 5) Interview with Charla Nash, face transplant recipient Writing Assignment 3 Final Version Due
Week 13	Genetic & Child Enhancement	1) "Genetic Interventions and the Ethics of Human Enhancement" 2) "The Case Against Perfection" 3) "Enhancement, Disability, and the Riddle of Circumstance" Stage 2 of Final Project Due: Newspaper Article Summaries

Week	Topic	Readings/Assignments
Week 14	Enhancement & Social Justice Concerns	1) “Not Just Study Drugs” 2) “The Case for Using Drugs to Enhance Our Relationships (and Breakups)” 3) “Caster Semenya: Sport, Categories and the Creative Role of Ethics” Stage 3 of Final Project Due: Rough Draft - Bring to Class
Finals Week (No Class) -		April 28: Final Project Due

Assignment Due Dates

Date	Assignment
Jan 28 - 6pm	Short Writing Assignment 1 Draft Due (Via Canvas; Bring hard copy to class)
Feb 4 - 6pm	Short Writing Assignment 1 Final Version Due (Via Canvas)
March 3 - 6pm	Short Writing Assignment 2 Draft Due (Via Canvas; Bring hard copy to class)
March 17 - 6pm	Short Writing Assignment 2 Final Version Due (Via Canvas)
March 24 - 6pm	Final Project Stage 1: Topic Due (Via Canvas)
March 31 - 6pm	Short Writing Assignment 3 Draft Due (Via Canvas; Bring hard copy to class)
April 14 - 6pm	Final Project Stage 2: Newspaper Article Summaries Due (Via Canvas)
April 21 - 6pm	Final Project Stage 3: Blog Post Draft Due (Via Canvas; Bring hard copy to class)
April 28 - 6pm	Final Project Due (Via Canvas)

Additional Information and Resources

Reading and Doing Philosophy

Many of the reading assignments for this course are short. But don't let that fool you—philosophy is hard. How do you deal with this? Well, here are some suggestions: (i) Read the material more than once. (ii) After reading an essay, try and summarize the main claims and arguments in your own words—this will help you come up with questions and objections. (iii) Start the written assignments early (doing this will help you review your answers with a clear head). (iv) Most importantly, if you're puzzled about something, ask questions!

Accommodations based upon sexual assault:

The University is committed to offering reasonable academic accommodations to students who are victims of sexual assault. Students are eligible for accommodation regardless of whether they seek criminal or disciplinary action. If you need to request such accommodations, please direct your request to Kim Webb (kim_webb@wustl.edu), Director of the Office of Sexual Assault and Community Health

Services. Ms. Webb is a confidential resource; however, requests for accommodations will be shared with the appropriate University administration and faculty. The University will maintain as confidential any accommodations or protective measures provided to an individual student so long as it does not impair the ability to provide such measures.

Bias Reporting:

The University has a process through which students, faculty, staff, and community members who have experienced or witnessed incidents of bias, prejudice or discrimination against a student can report their experiences to the University's Bias Report and Support System (BRSS) team. See: <http://brss.wustl.edu/> brss.wustl.edu