

Bioethics (BIOE)

CTY Course Syllabus

Required Items: *Contemporary Issues in Bioethics*. 7th edition. Edited by Beauchamp, Kahn, Mastroianni, and Walters. 2008. Thomson Wadsworth, Belmont CA.

A notebook for completing writing assignments; writing utensils¹

Course Description: Some of the most important issues confronting us in the 21st century involve complex combinations of medical, biological, legal, and moral issues. Bioethics is the branch of applied ethics that philosophers have developed to theorize about issues such as: euthanasia, cloning, eugenics and genetic modification, whether or not humans have a right to health care, and many others. This course will examine some of these issues with the goal of making clear the ethical implications and complexities involved when deciding whether a particular course of action is right or wrong. The course consists of two components: First, we will learn, through lectures and readings, about general ethical theory. Moral philosophers such as Aristotle, Bentham, Mill, Kant, and more contemporary philosophers such as John Rawls will be examined. Second, we will take the various theoretical frameworks developed by these philosophers to deal with ethical issues and apply them to concrete cases and problems in the bioethical field.

Learning Objectives:

1. To provide a general overview of the field of Bioethics: what makes Bioethics distinct from normative ethics and metaethics; the kinds of problems bioethicists deal with; concrete cases in the fields of law and medicine and how bioethical theory can be applied
2. To provide the students with the conceptual and methodological tools to evaluate tough, often emotional, ethical dilemmas with the appropriate academic attitude.
3. To work on the students writing and reading skills with an eye towards developing the requisite skills necessary for college and graduate school.

Expectations: You will be expected to read and analyze material from the course text and handouts. You will also be expected to attend and participate in class. Philosophy can be very challenging, and the only way this course will succeed is if everyone participates by doing the readings and participating in class discussions. For my part, I will attempt to provide interesting and challenging readings, give instructive lectures that provide the structure for the readings and discussions we will have, provide assignments and activities that challenge and stimulate interest, be available to answer any questions you have, and provide fair and timely feedback on assignments and your progress in the class.

¹ All essays and assignments will be handwritten. Course space has been set aside for writing papers, and there should be no worries about having enough time to complete the assignment.

There will be occasional reading quizzes. There will also be written assignments (reflections) on the readings.

In lieu of a traditional final, students are expected to write a 4-5 page paper (though it can be longer) on a specific article of their choosing. Potential articles will be provided for the students by the instructor and TA. The articles will be representative of various topics we cover in class (e.g. animal rights). The paper must engage the topic of the article with philosophical rigor, and show competence in applying the ethical theories we have learned to the specific issue in bioethics their article is about. The goal is to have a rigorous, well-organized paper that constructs cogent arguments and responses to potential objections.

These final papers will be presented to the class, and there will be a class discussion about the presentations. It might be helpful to think of these presentations as “mock” academic conferences. Learning to present one’s arguments and potential problems with one’s arguments are vital to philosophical learning, and, I think, vital to success in every kind of potential career. Also, the ability to handle pointed questions about one’s work is an important aspect of academic (and personal) growth.

Honor Code:

Engaging in philosophy means engaging others in rational argumentation; naturally, this means that there will be frequent disagreements in class about fundamental questions we are confronting. I expect everyone to treat others with respect—regardless of whether or not you agree with the opposing argument. In short, an attitude of “academic distance”—the ability to rationally debate questions without emotional involvement—is vital to the success of the course. This means that no one will make fun of, mock, or disrespect others in the class. Positions and arguments can, of course, be questioned; but they must be questioned in a way that sheds more light on the debate—not by *ad hominem* attacks on classmates. Also, it is vital that students, unless an official exception has been made, leave all electronic devices, such as cell phones, Ipods, and Laptops, in their dorm rooms before the class begins. Students should avoid disrupting the class by chatting or doing something unrelated to the class. Finally, I expect that students will discuss the course and the readings together, but all work for the class (reflections, the final paper and presentation) must be the product of the student’s work alone. Furthermore, no outside sources are allowed for use in the final paper—the student must stick to the material we have covered in class and the article they have chosen.

Class Schedule:²

Day 1-Introduction	Subject	Activities
<p><i>Morning</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Break the ice/introductions -Class rules and expectations -Pretest -Introduce subject matter -Notes about arguments -Lecture on ethical theories 	<p>Introduction</p> <p>Objectives and Expectations</p> <p>Different kinds of arguments; good arguments vs. bad arguments</p> <p>What is ethical theory?</p> <p>Different kinds of ethical theories; bioethics as a branch of normative ethics; why bioethics is important</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Evaluation: Pretest -Lecture: introduction and arguments -Class discussion—introductions -Lecture: Ethical theory; descriptive vs. normative ethics; kinds of ethical theories; what is bioethics? Why is bioethics important? -Discussion of lecture/questions
<p><i>Afternoon</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Continued discussion/questions from morning session -Lecture: kinds of reasons and ethical theories -Begin reading selections from moral philosophers 	<p>Moral versus non-moral reasons; moral versus non-moral actions; introduction to various ethical theories (e.g. Mill, Kant, etc.)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Lecture: kinds of reasons and ethical theories -Class discussion/questions -Reading: Aristotle and Mill
<p><i>Evening</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Selections from moral philosophers continued -Discussion of class readings -Quiz: Utilitarianism and Virtue Ethics 	<p>Some classic moral theories will be read and discussed; consequentialism, egoism, deontology, relativism, contractualism, etc.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Class reading -Discussion

² Note that this syllabus might be subject to some variation contingent upon the speed of class readings and discussions. Please also note that there will be activities, usually small group discussion and debate activities at least a few times a week. They are not listed on the syllabus because they will be created contingent upon class interest and the speed at which we are getting through the readings and discussions.

Day 2	Subject	Activities
<p><i>Morning</i></p> <p>-Discussion of readings/finishing readings (Kant and Rawls)</p> <p>Quiz: Kant and Rawls</p> <p>-Lecture on rights and informed consent</p> <p>-Discussion</p>	<p>Continued discussion and explication of ethical theories; negative and positive rights; implications of rights and ethical foundations for rights; the importance of consent for ethics and informed consent for bioethics; discussion</p>	<p>-Lecture on rights and consent</p> <p>-discussion and questions about ethical theories and lecture content</p> <p>-Quiz on Kant and Rawls</p>
<p><i>Afternoon</i></p> <p>-Reflection papers on ethical theories</p> <p>-Continue discussion on rights and consent</p> <p>-Activity: Trolley Problems and variations on trolley problems</p>	<p>Continued discussion of rights and consent; 1-2 page reflection papers; analyze Singer argument</p>	<p>-Class discussion</p> <p>-Individual writing activity: reflection paper</p> <p>-Small group activity: in a group, apply the various ethical theories we have learned to hard moral dilemmas. Argue for what the group thinks the solution is to these problems</p>
<p><i>Evening</i></p> <p>-Introduce topic: eugenics and human genetics</p>	<p>Shifting to bioethics, the class will begin to read selections from chapter 4 of the text. We start with Glover's "Eugenics: Some Lessons from the Nazi Experience"</p>	<p>-Glover reading</p> <p>-Class discussion of reading</p>

Day 3	Subject	Activities
<p><i>Morning</i></p> <p>-Continued discussion of Glover</p> <p>-Reading: "From Chance to Choice: Genetics and Justice"</p>	<p>Continuing on eugenics and human genetics, we discuss issues of justice as they relate to gene therapy and modification.</p>	<p>-Reading: "From Chance to Choice: Genetics and Justice"</p> <p>-Class discussion</p>

Day 3	Subject	Activities
<p><i>Afternoon</i></p> <p>-Introduce the final paper/presentation project</p> <p>-Class reading: "Human Genetic Engineering"</p>	<p>Expectations and instructions for the final paper and presentation; Read Resnik's "Human Genetic Engineering"</p>	<p>-Introduce final paper</p> <p>-Questions and discussion about paper and morning session</p> <p>-Class reading</p>
<p><i>Evening</i></p> <p>-Select topic for final paper/presentation</p> <p>-Begin reading for final paper/presentation</p>	<p>Work on paper ideas</p>	<p>-Individual reading time/individual meetings to help students with selecting a paper; help students with questions or concerns they have about the material so far</p>

Day 4	Subject	Activities
<p><i>Morning</i></p> <p>-<i>Buck v. Bell</i>; break into "for" and "against" groups to argue about the case</p> <p>-Debate</p> <p>-Reading: "Carrie Buck's Daughter"</p> <p>-Introduction: reproductive rights</p>	<p>Class debate over <i>Buck v. Bell</i>; read Gould's article on that case; begin section on reproduction: Do people have an absolute right to procreation? Is abortion immoral? If it is not, why not? If it is, is it <i>always wrong</i>, or justifiable in certain cases? What does it mean to be a person? Can a fetus have rights?</p>	<p>-Debate</p> <p>-Class reading</p> <p>-Lecture on reproduction</p>
<p><i>Afternoon</i></p> <p>Reading: "The Presumptive Primacy of Procreative Liberty"</p> <p>Reading: "Why Abortion is Immoral"</p>	<p>Continued from the morning</p>	<p>Class readings</p>
<p><i>Evening</i></p> <p>Watch "Gattaca"</p>	<p>"Gattaca" deals directly with issues of genetic screening, reproduction, and eugenics</p>	<p>-Watch "Gattaca"</p>

Day 5	Subject	Activities
<p><i>Morning</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Discussion of Gattaca -Read: “A Defense of Abortion” -Lecture: conclusions about genetics, reproduction, and eugenics -Introduction to euthanasia and the killing/letting die distinction -Class Discussion 	<p>What ethical worries and positions are displayed in Gattaca? What conclusions can we draw about genetics, eugenics, and reproduction? What is euthanasia? Is there a moral difference between killing a person and letting a person die? Can an omission count as a positive action?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Class discussion -Lecture: conclusions -Introduction: euthanasia
<p><i>Afternoon</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Continued discussion from the morning -Work on papers 	<p>What does it mean to say that there is a “sanctity of life?” What basis can there be for this claim, and what view of what it means to be a person is deployed in these arguments?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Class Discussion -Work on papers
<p><i>Evening</i>—PLEASE NOTE THAT THE EVENING SESSIONS FOR THE 5TH, AND 10TH DAY TAKE PLACE ON <u>SUNDAY EVENING</u></p> <p>Continue work on papers</p>		

Day 6	Subject	Activities
<p><i>Morning</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Questions from day 5 -Lecture: killing and letting die -Class Reading: “The Morality of Killing: A Traditional View” by Grisez and Boyle Jr. -Class discussion 	<p>Look at the morality of killing—the importance of intention; negative rights against being killed; perfect versus imperfect duties and killing; the action/omission distinction</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Lecture -Class reading of Grisez and Boyle Jr. -Class discussion

Day 6	Subject	Activities
<p><i>Afternoon</i></p> <p>-Activity: Singer argument</p> <p>-Class Reading: “Active and Passive Euthanasia” by Rachels</p> <p>-Class discussion</p>	<p>Continued from morning; activity: analyze an argument about our duties to others by Singer; read Rachels on the killing/letting die distinction</p>	<p>Activity: Analyze Singer argument</p> <p>-Class reading of Rachels</p> <p>-Class discussion</p>
<p><i>Evening</i></p> <p>-Continue work on papers</p>		<p>-Meet with students about papers; meet with students about concerns and questions</p>

Day 7	Subject	Activities
<p><i>Morning</i></p> <p>-Reading: <i>Gonzales v. Oregon</i></p> <p>-Debate</p>	<p>Continue our section on euthanasia and the killing/letting die distinction; class debate: physician-assisted suicide</p>	<p>-Class reading</p> <p>-Debate</p>
<p><i>Afternoon</i></p> <p>-Reflection papers on euthanasia and physician-assisted suicide</p> <p>Introduce topic: organ donation and transplants</p> <p>Reading: “The Definition of Death: Problems for Public Policy”</p>	<p>Reflection papers; do we have a moral duty to be an organ donor? Under what conditions is it justifiable to harvest organs from those who have not consented? Is it morally permissible to produce a child simply for the purpose of harvesting organs? Two central issues here: when is one dead? What is the role of consent in organ donation?</p>	<p>-Reflection papers</p> <p>-Topic: organ donation and transplants</p> <p>-Reading</p>
<p><i>Evening</i></p> <p>-Continue to work on papers</p>		

Day 8	Subject	Activities
<p><i>Morning</i></p> <p>-Reading: “Moral Agency and the Family: The Case of Living Related Organ Transplantation”</p>	Continued material on organ donation	-Class reading and discussion
<p><i>Afternoon</i></p> <p>-Reading: “The Survival Lottery”</p> <p>-Work on papers</p> <p>Evening</p> <p>-Watch “My Sister’s Keeper”</p>	Continued from the morning; work on papers	-Class reading -Work on papers

Day 9	Subject	Activities
<p><i>Morning</i></p> <p>-Discussion of “My Sister’s Keeper”</p> <p>-Reflection papers on organ transplantation and donation</p> <p>-Introduce topic: Experimentation on humans</p>	When, if ever, is it morally permissible to experiment on humans? We will examine some historical cases to establish some of the problems, and then proceed to examine the issue philosophically	-Class reading -Class Discussion
<p><i>Afternoon</i></p> <p>-Class reading: “The Nuremburg Medical Trial, ‘War Crimes and Crimes Against Humanity’”</p> <p>-Class reading: “The Tuskegee Study”</p>	Continued from the morning	-Lecture -Class reading -Class discussion
<p><i>Evening</i></p> <p>-Continue work on papers</p>		-Individual meetings with students about their papers and drafts; individual meetings with students about concerns or questions they have about recent material covered

Day 10	Subject	Activities
<p><i>Morning</i></p> <p>-Reading: “Swinging on the Pendulum: Shifting Views of Justice in Human Subjects Research”</p>	Continued from day 9	-Class reading
<p><i>Afternoon</i></p> <p>-Class reading: “Justice and Medical Research: A Global Perspective”</p> <p>-Conclude section on human experimentation</p> <p>-Reflection papers on human experimentation</p>	Continued from the morning	-Class reading -Reflection papers
<p><i>Evening</i></p> <p>-Continue work on papers</p>		

Day 11	Subject	Activities
<p><i>Morning</i></p> <p>-Lecture: Is health care a universal human right?</p> <p>-Read background article from NYT</p> <p>-Class reading: “The Right to a Decent Minimum of Health Care”</p>	<p>The United States is universally regarded as one of the leaders in medical science and technology, yet many of its citizens do not have access to even minimal health care. Is there a moral claim to be made for universal access to health care?</p>	-Class reading -Class discussion
<p><i>Afternoon</i></p> <p>-Class Reading: “Responsibilities for Poverty-Related Ill Health”</p>	-Continued from the morning	-Class reading
<p><i>Evening</i></p> <p>-Continue work on papers</p>		

Day 12	Subject	Activities
<p><i>Morning</i></p> <p>-Watch <i>Frontline</i> episodes: “Sick Around America” and “Sick Around the World”</p>		
<p><i>Afternoon</i></p> <p>-Discussion of <i>Frontline Episodes</i></p> <p>-Reflection papers on health care</p>	Continued from the morning	<p>-Class reading</p> <p>-Class discussion</p> <p>-Reflection papers on health care</p>
<p><i>Evening</i></p> <p>-Continue work on papers</p>		

Day 13	Subject	Activities
<p><i>Morning</i></p> <p>-Paper presentations and discussion</p>		
<p><i>Afternoon</i></p> <p>-Paper presentations and discussion</p>		
<p><i>Evening</i></p> <p>-Post-test assessment</p> <p>-Introduce topic: animal rights</p> <p>-Reading: “Duties Towards Animals” by Kant and “A Utilitarian View” by Bentham</p> <p>-Class discussion</p>	Do animals have rights? If they have rights, then this means that they have some kind of moral standing. What implications are there for human actions if indeed animals have equal moral status to humans?	<p>-Lecture</p> <p>-Reading</p> <p>-Discussion</p> <p>-Post-test</p>

Day 14	Subject	Activities
<p><i>Morning</i></p> <p>-Finish presentations</p>		
<p><i>Afternoon</i></p> <p>-Read: "All Animals are Equal" by Singer</p> <p>-Discussion</p>	Continued from previous evening	<p>-Class reading</p> <p>-Class discussion</p>
<p><i>Evening</i></p> <p>-Post-test assessment</p> <p>Note that this day is a "compressed" day, i.e. the "evening session" will be held in the afternoon. This is to allow students time for packing, dinner, and the final dance.</p>		-Post-test assessment

Day 15	Subject	Activities
<p>-Conclusions, final discussions</p> <p>-Meetings with individual students about their progress and future plans</p> <p>Note that we only have a morning session on this day (9-11 AM)</p>		