

305 Syllabus, Spring 2016

PHI 305 HealthCare Ethics

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Course Description:

Health care decisions are some of the hardest we will ever make. Professional physicians, dietitians, nurses, etc. will make such decisions every day. But us laymen will face hard choices about the health of parents, children, relatives, friends, and our own health. This course attempts to help us to think deeply about the issues of life, death, health, and health care. The aim is that we can act well when those hard decisions come.

Philosophy in general asks questions about foundations of the world and our knowledge of it: what is real, how do we know what we know, what is the meaning of life? In health care, we ask about foundations: what is life? Death? What is the proper allocation of limited resources? Are there moral constraints on research? Is it ever more loving to lie to a patient about the hard truth? Is it ever more compassionate to euthanize an elderly person? Is it worth the emotional and psychological cost to avoid pregnancy by abortion? Is government-provided healthcare a right?

These questions and more we will attempt to answer by clarifying terms, establishing secure ethical principles, being sensitive to contextual details, identifying reasonable answers, evaluating arguments for and against each reasonable answer, and coming to our own conclusions. Though we will consider arguments from Kantian, consequentialist, and religious standpoints, our official approach to these questions will be from the standpoint of traditional virtue ethics.

Each of us belongs to a tradition and a community. Our goal is to understand our own tradition and understand rival traditions, and why they disagree. We will disagree, but do so peaceably and with understanding.

The bottom line is always to think hard about hard questions, to discard wrong answers and discover and prove right answers to these questions. The hard questions will revolve around life, death, health, and sickness, but may branch out to related tangents including logic, public policy, anthropology, religion, law, and more.

Course Goals:

In short, our goals are:

- to understand health care as part of life;
- to understand health care as part of applied medicine, public policy, and as a part of life, a sub-discipline of ethical philosophy.
- to become familiar with major bioethical theories, especially: virtue ethics, utilitarianism, deontology, principlism.
- to grow intellectually by critically analyzing articles, books, studies, and news articles about health and sickness,
- to understand our own ethical tradition better and make clear plans for how to make hard decisions
- Also to understand the tradition of others (religious ethics, deontology, utilitarianism, virtue ethics) in approaching ethical issues;
- and thereby to become more virtuous people capable of handling difficult life circumstances.

To accomplish these goals, our study will unfold in 8 units of 1-2 weeks each. Each Unit consists of (a) readings and quizzes, (b) lectures, (c) discussions, and (d) a unit paper. The readings and lectures offer analysis, the discussions and papers synthesis.

Course Outline

The online version is always up to date. Any paper version is subject to minor changes due to weather, illness, etc. Each date tells you the reading due and the topic. Each date also includes detailed lecture notes because students asked for them to help prepare.

I. Grading

Your grade for the class will depend on your performance in each component, plus tests and applicable extra credit. Your best bet for getting an 'A' is to (a) read carefully every week, (b) attend and

participate in class through talking and/or writing, (c) study hard for the tests, and (d) write the Unit Papers according to the given instructions.

Assessment category	Percent of semester grade
Readings (quizzes)	20%
Participation (talk, write, present)	20%
Tests (midterm, final)	30%
Unit Papers (pass/fail)	30%

Readings

Required Textbook: Pierce and Randels, *Contemporary Bioethics*. Oxford, 2010. First Edition. (Should be less than \$100 new, \$60 used, \$20 rent).

Handouts: (All posted online)

1. Plato, Apology.
2. Peter Kreeft, Truth.
3. Peter Kreeft, Goodness.
4. Midwifery in the US.

Reading Tips

- Read ahead.
- Read carefully. You will get faster, but start slow and careful.
- Try to read *and understand* the book. What is the main thesis? Is it true?
- Read actively: Take notes. Talk with each other before class.
- More tips available online.

Quizzes

Short reading quizzes will assess whether your eyeballs hit the page and whether you comprehended what you read. Primarily, your goal is not just to read but to *understand*. Reflect on what you've read. Bring to class a question from the reading –focus on what confuses you.

Attendance

We need you here! Attendance is mandatory. Roll will be taken each class. (Being repeatedly or egregiously late will count as an absence.) 1 to 5 unexcused absences are freebies — no credit lost. 6 or more unexcused absences cause bigger and bigger deductions from your participation grade. (8 is a letter grade) You are paying for this education including this class, so why wouldn't you make the most of it?

Participation through dialogue/writing:

This is a dialogue-oriented class. Every person is responsible to participate. You are expected to participate once per week at minimum, either by writing or speaking or both.

Writing Emphasis: “Internal processors” emphasize writing. To earn participation points, you will post class reflections online every week. You may elect to speak in class as well, and may be called upon.

Speaking Emphasis: “External processors” emphasize talking. You will be on my “go to” team to talk in class (instead of posting reflections after class).

Everyone starts at an 80% for the discussion grade; you can move up from there or down, depending on whether you speak or write once per week, pay attention, and offer helpful contributions.

Come *prepared*. Read, take notes, reflect, and come ready to share your viewpoint, defend it, listen to others' viewpoints, and critique theirs.

Critical Reading and Group Presentation

Every student will present do two “critical readings.” These are days when your group summarizes the assigned article and presents your analysis. You then present your reading as a group to the class. Instructions are posted online.

Tests:

There is a midterm and final. The Study Guide with all the questions is posted online. The tests will assess (a) your knowledge definitions of key philosophical terms, (b) knowledge of historical facts relevant to health care ethics, (c) your familiarity with major health care theories and (d) your mastery of the arguments for and against these theories.

Unit Papers:

Every student will write 5-6 Unit Papers. These Unit Papers help you synthesize your own views after doing the readings and listening to lectures and participating in the discussions. This assignment is pass/fail, so follow the instructions closely. Be careful to cite your sources correctly. I will not tolerate plagiarism — unintentional or intentional. If I detect plagiarism, I will contact you. The assignment will receive a zero, and disciplinary action may follow. The instructions are posted online.

Extra Credit:

Those who opt for extra credit may do so. Instructions are posted online.

Miscellany:

1. **Bring your** textbook every day.
2. **Participate.** Challenge yourself to talk.
3. **No smartphones.** If you need to take a text message or phone call, step out, respond, and come back.
4. **Laptop/tablet users must sit in the front row.**
5. **Be respectful of others:** no teasing, and pay attention when a neighbor is talking. Don't pack up early. Don't come late. Don't talk while your neighbor is talking.
6. **Contact me.** Best method is to chat after class. I read every email but may not respond to every email. If I don't respond within three (3) business days, email again with the subject "nudge".
7. For short, quick questions, use Twitter (keith_buhler)
8. Disabilities can be accommodated if you are registered with the Disability Resource Center. See <http://www.uky.edu/StudentAffairs/DisabilityResourceCenter/>
9. Plagiarism has been an issue. Even unintentional plagiarism earns a zero for the assignment and, in intentional or egregious cases, failing the course and receiving a permanent mark on your academic record. You'll submit your papers to SafeAssign on Blackboard to help avoid accidental plagiarism. Don't even think about stealing someone else's thought/work.
10. **Enjoy philosophy.** We are not merely solving abstract puzzles here, but digging deeply into human thinking in a way that could change your life forever. The more you and your fellows allow yourselves to acquire a "taste" for the material, the more inclined you will be to give it the real effort required to master it.

Links to Readings of Interest

- How Government Killed Health Care The author describes how “coding” diseases and diagnoses in order to submit reimbursements for medicare lead to a distortion of diagnosis. “One of my colleagues, a noted pulmonologist with over 30 years’ experience, fears that teaching young physicians to follow guidelines and practice protocols discourages creative medical thinking and may lead to a decrease in diagnostic and therapeutic excellence. He laments that “□ ‘evidence-based’ means you are not interested in listening to anyone.”
- Live for ever: scientists aim to extend life “well beyond” 100 Google’s CA Life Company is working actively on transhumanism.
- Midwives in America
- Friends are good for your health