

PHIL 165.002. Bioethics

J. Joseph Porter
Department of Philosophy
jjporter@live.unc.edu

Office Hours: by appointment via Zoom

UNC-Chapel Hill
Summer 2021
M/T/W/R/F 11:30 AM-1:00 PM ET
<https://unc.zoom.us/j/6178630412>

Course Description

Is abortion wrong? What about euthanasia, or animal research, or having children—or not? Bioethicists investigate topics like these in medicine, biology, and other related fields. In this course, we will explore some important topics in bioethics and consider what they can teach us more broadly about ethical life and thought. No prior experience with philosophy is expected or required.

Content Warning: In this course, we will discuss controversial and sensitive topics which may affect you or other students personally. Please let me know if you have questions or concerns about any element of the course.

Course Objectives

- Understand and evaluate important ethical theories
 - Understand and evaluate views on specific topics in bioethics
- Understand and critically engage with contemporary philosophical texts
 - Reconstruct, defend, and offer objections to arguments in such texts
- Construct arguments for views on topics in bioethics and defend them against objections

Course Requirements

Participation	10%	
Pop Reading Check-ins	15%	
First Essay (1200-1800 words ≈ 4-6 pp.)	20%	Due Mon., May 31, 11:59 PM ET
In-class Exam	20%	Fri., June 11
Final Essay (1800-2400 words ≈ 6-8 pp.)*	35%	Due Wed., June 23, 11:59 PM ET

***The final essay replaces a final exam. There will be no final exam.**

Pop Reading Check-ins: Six times throughout the semester, class will begin with a short open-notes pop reading check-in. A pop reading check-in may involve taking a quiz, writing a short reading response, or simply emailing me your notes on the day's readings. The purpose of these check-ins is to make sure that you are carefully and thoroughly completing reading assignments. The lowest check-in grade will be dropped.

Essays: The purpose of the essays is to develop and test your ability to write clear, accurate, original, well-written, well-organized, well-argued, and philosophically rich papers on topics in bioethics.

Essays will be graded anonymously. For this reason, **they should be submitted in a PDF format with your PID as the file name.** (No identifying information should show up either in file names or in the PDF's themselves.) They should also be double-spaced, with 1-inch margins, and written in 12-point Times New Roman. Finally, they should have headers which include both their word count and the submission date. Essay citations do not need to follow any particular citation style (e.g., MLA) so long as they are clear, accurate, and consistent.

Essays which are not formatted and submitted correctly will be docked half a letter grade. Essays which exceed or fail to reach the specified word limits will be docked one letter grade. Essays which are late will be docked one letter grade per day late submitted. I am generally happy to grant extension requests for pretty much any reason. I am also happy to consider word count extension requests.

In-class Exam: The in-class exam will be a cumulative open-notes exam consisting of several short essay questions.

Participation and Respect

Attendance: Attendance is expected at all class sessions. You are permitted one unexcused absence. Unexcused absences beyond the first will result in a lower participation grade. **I reserve the right to count tardy students as absent.**

Reading: Before each class session, you should actively, carefully, and critically read the required materials for that session so that you can come to class ready to discuss those materials.

Discussion: Most of our class sessions should be much more like conversations than lectures. You are expected to participate in that conversation by offering comments, asking questions, and so on. (The more you participate, the more fun and rewarding class will be.) Class sessions will be held via synchronous remote instruction on Zoom. **You are required to keep your webcam on during class sessions.** Discussing course materials outside of class with me (or anyone else) is not required but is strongly encouraged, especially if you are uncomfortable contributing to in-class discussion. I am always happy to meet via Zoom to talk about the course, philosophy in general, or anything else.

Respect: You are always expected to treat other students with respect regardless of the opinions they express or their religion, sex, ethnicity, and so on. One important skill which we will train in this course is understanding other people's views and taking them seriously even when we think they are incorrect—or immoral. (I myself will often play devil's advocate in class and temporarily defend views which I think are incorrect.) This skill cannot be developed properly unless we foster an environment of curiosity and respect in which all of us can freely express our views.

Extra Credit: There may be possible opportunities for extra credit for students who volunteer for in-class presentations. I am also willing to discuss other possible opportunities for extra credit. I reserve the right to cap extra credit at a certain point.

Course Materials

No textbook is required for this course. Course materials may all be found on Sakai.

Grading Scale

A	A-	B+	B	B-	C+	C	C-	D+	D	F
94+	90-93	87-89	84-86	80-83	77-79	74-76	70-73	67-69	60-66	59-

Honor Code

You are expected to abide by [the Honor Code](#) and to refrain from academic dishonesty, including plagiarism. Among other things, plagiarism includes the *intentional or unintentional* representation of someone else's work or ideas as your own, improper citation of sources, close paraphrase of someone else's work or ideas without proper citation, and copying of your own previously submitted work. Please ask me if you are unsure whether something counts as plagiarism. (Consider also reviewing [UNC's plagiarism tutorial](#).) Remember that it is your responsibility to make sure that you understand and abide by the Honor Code.

Accessibility Resources and Services

UNC strives to provide reasonable accommodations (including resources and services) for students with temporary or permanent disabilities, chronic medical conditions, or pregnancy complications which result in difficulties with accessing learning opportunities. Accommodations are coordinated through [the Accessibility Resources and Service Office](#) (ARS). Please contact ARS as early in the semester as possible if you need accommodations, either by email at accessibility@unc.edu or by phone at (919) 962-8300.

Counseling and Psychological Services

Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS) is committed to addressing the mental health needs of a diverse student body through timely access to consultation and to clinically appropriate services for both short- and long-term needs. To learn more, please visit [their website](#) or their facilities on the third floor of the Campus Health Services Building for a walk-in evaluation.

Title IX Resources

Any student who is affected by discrimination, harassment, interpersonal (relationship) violence, sexual violence, sexual exploitation, or stalking is encouraged to seek on-campus or community resources for help. If you have specific needs or questions related to any of these issues, please contact Adrienne Allison, the director of Title IX compliance, at adrienne.allison@unc.edu; the Report and Response coordinators in the Equal Opportunity and Compliance Office at reportandresponse@unc.edu; the Gender Violence Services coordinators at gvsc@unc.edu (confidential); and/or CAPS (confidential). Additional resources can be found [here](#).

Course Schedule

NOTE: The course schedule is subject to change.

Unit 1: Introduction to Ethics

Wednesday, May 19: Introduction

Syllabus

Thursday, May 20: Consequentialism and Deontological Ethics

Russ Shafer-Landau, “Consequentialism: Its Nature and Attractions”

Russ Shafer-Landau, “The Kantian Perspective: Autonomy and Respect”

Optional: Russ Shafer-Landau, “Consequentialism: Its Difficulties”

Optional: Russ Shafer-Landau, “The Kantian Perspective: Fairness and Justice”

Friday, May 21: Other Ethical Theories

Russ Shafer-Landau, “Natural Law”

Russ Shafer-Landau, “Ethical Pluralism and Absolute Moral Rules”

Optional: Russ Shafer-Landau, “Virtue Ethics”

Optional: Russ Shafer-Landau, “Ethical Pluralism: Prima Facie Duties and Ethical Particularism”

Unit 2: Three Core Topics in Bioethics

Monday, May 24: Patient Autonomy

Atul Gawande, “Whose Body Is It, Anyway?”

Ezekiel Emanuel and Linda Emanuel, “Four Models of the Physician-Patient Relationship”

Optional: Marcela del Carmen and Steven Joffe, “Informed Consent for Medical Treatment and Research: A Review”

Tuesday, May 25: Patient Autonomy

Terrence Ackerman, “Why Doctors Should Intervene”

Alan Goldman, “The Refutation of Medical Paternalism”

Optional: Joan Liaschenko and Terri Traudt, “What Should Physicians Do When They Disagree, Clinically and Ethically, with a Surrogate’s Wishes?”

Wednesday, May 26: Euthanasia

James Rachels, “Active and Passive Euthanasia”

J. David Velleman, “A Right of Self-Termination?” (pp. 606-620)

Alexander Craig and Elizabeth Dzeng, “How Should Physicians Care for Dying Patients With Amyotrophic Lateral Sclerosis?”

Optional: Velleman’s Reply to F.M. Kamm (pp. 620-628)

Thursday, May 27: Abortion

Judith Thomson, “A Defense of Abortion”

Don Marquis, “Why Abortion Is Immoral”

Friday, May 28: Abortion

Alberto Giubilini and Francesca Minerva, “After-birth Abortion: Why Should the Baby Live?”

Alexander Pruss, “I Was Once a Fetus: That is Why Abortion is Wrong”

Optional: Michael Tooley, “Abortion and Infanticide”

[Monday, May 31: NO CLASS (MEMORIAL DAY)]

FIRST ESSAY DUE MONDAY, MAY 31 AT 11:59 PM

Unit 3: Other Topics in Bioethics and Related Fields

Tuesday, June 1: Organ Markets

Gerald Dworkin, “Markets and Morals: The Case for Organ Sales”

Gabriel Danovitch and Francis Delmonico, “The Prohibition of Kidney Sales and Organ Markets Should Remain”

Optional: Barnett, Beard, and Kaserman, “The Medical Community’s Opposition to Organ Markets: Ethics or Economics?”

Optional: Phil Cox and Donald Joralemon, “Body Values: The Case Against Compensating for Transplant Organs”

Optional: Francis Delmonico, “Ethical Incentives—Not Payment—for Organ Donation”

Wednesday, June 2: Animal Ethics

Peter Singer, “All Animals Are Equal”

Carl Cohen, “The Case for the Use of Animals in Biomedical Research”

Optional: Bonnie Steinbock, “Speciesism and the Idea of Equality”

Thursday, June 3: Animal Ethics [Guest Lecturer: Cheryl Abbate]

Alastair Norcross, “Puppies, Pigs, and People: Eating Meat and Marginal Cases”

Friday, June 4: Animal Ethics

Chuck Cunningham, “Health and the Ethics of Eating Meat”

Monday, June 7: Performance-enhancing Drugs

Clayton, Foddy, and Savulescu, “Why We Should Allow Performance Enhancing Drugs in Sport”

Thomas Murray, “The Coercive Power of Drugs in Sports”

Tuesday, June 8: Genetic Enhancement

Julian Savulescu, “Procreative Beneficence: Why We Should Select the Best Children”

Rebecca Bennett, “The Fallacy of the Principle of Procreative Beneficence”

Optional: Julian Savulescu, “Genetic Interventions and The Ethics of Enhancement of Human Beings”

Optional: King, Mapes, and O’Brien, “How Should Clinicians Counsel a Woman with a Strong Family History of Early-Onset Alzheimer’s Disease about Her Pregnancy?”

Optional: Michael Sandel, “The Case Against Perfection: Ethics in the Age of Genetic Engineering”

Optional: Ingmar Persson and Julian Savulescu, “The Perils of Cognitive Enhancement and the Urgent Imperative to Enhance the Moral Character of Humanity”

Wednesday, June 9: The Ethics of Having Children

Jonny Anomaly and Brian Boutwell, “If You’re Reading This Essay, You Should Probably Have (More) Children”

David Benatar, “Kids? Just Say No”

Optional: David Wasserman, “Against Anti-Natalism”

Thursday, June 10: Cloning and Review

Gregory Pence, “Cloning”

Julian Savulescu, “Equality, Cloning and Clonism: Why We Must Clone”

Michael Sandel, “The Ethical Implications of Human Cloning”

Optional: “Reproductive Cloning Arguments Pro and Con”

*Friday, June 11: **IN-CLASS EXAM***

Unit 4: Student-selected Topics in Bioethics and Related Fields

Monday, June 14: Transhumanism

Nick Bostrom, “Transhumanist Values”

Nick Bostrom and Toby Ord, “The Reversal Test: Eliminating Status Quo Bias in Applied Ethics,” pp. 662-665

Thomas Murray, “Enhancement,” pp. 506-514

Tuesday, June 15: Drug Markets

Nutt, King, and Phillips, “Drug Harms in the UK: A Multicriteria Decision Analysis” (skim)

Michael Huemer, “America’s Unjust Drug War”

Peter de Marneffe, “Against the Legalization of Drugs” [available online in *Contemporary Debates in Applied Ethics* (pp. 346-357) at UNC Libraries]

Wednesday, June 16: Health Care and Justice

Sam Fleischacker and Sherry Glied, “In Defense of a Right to Health Care”

Christopher Freiman, “Distribute Money, not Medicine”

Optional: Pablo Stafforini, “How Can Doctors Do the Most Good? An Interview with Dr Gregory Lewis”

Thursday, June 17: Pandemic Ethics

DeLuca, Papageorge, and Kalish, “The Unequal Cost of Social Distancing”

Daniel Halliday, “Should a COVID-19 Vaccine Be Mandatory?”

Ben Bramble, “Triage”

Friday, June 18: Guest Speaker: Ari Isaacson

Monday, June 21: Review and Conclusion

[Tuesday, June 22: NO CLASS (READING DAY)]

TAKE-HOME FINAL EXAM DUE WEDNESDAY, JUNE 23 AT 11:59 PM ET