

PHIL OX 382R-03J: Introduction to Bioethics
Spring 2018
TuTh 3:30-5:10
Language Hall 202

Professor Rebekah Spera

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Office: Emory 602

Note: Emory 602 is the unmarked gray house across the street from Human Resources. Please ring the bell.

Office Hours:

Tuesday & Thursday 2:00-3:00
(Or by appointment)

Required Texts:

Lewis Vaughn. *Bioethics: Principles, Issues, Cases*. 3rd Edition. (ISBN: 9780190250102)

Course Description:

While questions concerning life and death have been of interest to philosophers for millennia, the field of biomedical ethics first emerged in the 20th century as a response to a number of well-publicized atrocities, such as the brutal human experimentation conducted by the Nazis and the Tuskegee program undertaken by the U.S. Public Health Service. In the face of these and other ethical violations, philosophers, scientists, and doctors began to come together to form research institutes and regulatory bodies for the purpose of exploring complex issues that arise in biomedical contexts. Today, biomedical ethics is a vast field that continues to expand institutionally—bioethics is arguably the branch of philosophy that has the most impact on real-world practices and policies.

This class is a survey of a wide array of bioethical issues, ranging from distributive justice in health care and end-of-life issues to doctor-patient confidentiality to informed consent. Students will be introduced to key terms and concepts of moral theory and will learn how to bring this theoretical framework to bear on real-world controversies in the biomedical field. Readings will be comprised of a combination of theoretical texts, topic-specific articles, and case-studies.

Course Objectives:

This course is designed to provide students with an overview of some central issues in biomedical ethics as well as to help them develop their ability to question both their own presuppositions and those of others.

Course Outcomes

By the end of the course, the student will have learned to:

- Understand the basic technical terminology of both moral theory and bioethics
- Recognize and analyze ethical issues that arise in real-life biomedical contexts
- Parse and evaluate arguments, both their own and those of others
- Reflect on their own presuppositions and viewpoints critically
- Articulate their own philosophical positions rigorously and respectfully
- Write clearly and effectively about ethical issues

Course Policy

Participation & Classroom Etiquette:

Philosophical inquiry requires that the student both spend time alone reading, writing and thinking and that they engage in conversation with others. This class will require not only that the student read carefully and write thoughtfully, but also that they be both physically and mentally present for every class. The class will be partially conducted as a lecture and partially as a conversation, and every student will be expected to contribute cogently and respectfully to class discussion. While active participation comes more naturally to some individuals than others, one of the skills the student will cultivate throughout the semester is the capacity to express their own thoughts verbally, an ability that will be helpful both in and out of the classroom. The student will have the opportunity to participate both in class-wide discussion and in small groups with their peers.

Tardiness is disrespectful both to the instructor and other students, and if a student is consistently tardy it will affect their participation grade. The student should come prepared to every class with a notebook and the required text(s).

The use of electronic devices is not permitted in the classroom, and this includes using electronic devices for notetaking. The reason for this is that regardless of good intentions, the ever-present temptation to check social media or surf the web during class can overcome even the most virtuous among us. Additionally, studies have shown that students retain more in classes when they take notes by hand. I may, however, grant exceptions on an individual basis if a student arranges to meet with me to discuss why they need to use their laptop/tablet in class to succeed in the course. Cell phones must be turned off in class and stowed out of sight.

Failure to comply with these policies will affect a student's participation grade.

Attendance:

For the reasons sated above, attendance is **required**.

That being said, life can be unpredictable and things happen. Because of this the student is allowed a maximum of two absences for any reason with no questions asked. Once this maximum has been reached, additional absences will detract from the student's grade on the following scale (note: the numbers listed here are absences beyond the two allowed absences, so two absences below means four total absences - two freebies and two additional absences):

2-4 absences: -1.5% from the final grade for each absence

5-6 absences: 3.0% from the final grade for each absence

7-8 absences: 4.5% from the final grade for each absence

9+ absences: a final grade of F for the course

Absences will only be excused in cases of religious holidays and university-sanctioned activities (e.g., out-of-town debate club tournaments, presentations at academic conferences, &c. warrant excused absences; leaving town early to get an extra few days during fall break or scheduling time to do work for other classes do **not** warrant excused absences). However, **the student must notify me of the dates they will be absent for these reasons *in advance***. If the student fails to notify me in advance, the absences will not be excused.

Note: disability-related attendance accommodations can only be provided with documentation from the Office of Accessibility Services. See "Disability and Access" for more details about how to get accommodations.

Midterm & Final Exam

There will be a midterm and a final exam, both of which are in-class and closed-book. The final exam date is **Wednesday May 9th 2:00-5:00 PM.**

Readings:

The student must have completed the reading for every class. The ability to read philosophical texts is a skill that must be carefully developed, and the texts ought to be read slowly and carefully. Part of being adequately prepared for class entails having spent time and care to digest the readings.

Papers:

There will be three short papers and one longer final paper for this class. Papers are to be submitted printed out and stapled, with the student's name on every page and a word count on the last page. All sources must be properly cited – if there are questions or concerns about how to cite texts, the student should feel free to ask the instructor or contact the Writing Center. Requests for extensions must be submitted least a week prior to the due date of the paper, and will be given at the instructor's discretion. No extensions will be granted for short papers.

Discussion Board Posts:

The student must participate in an online discussion board on the course's Canvas page. Each Monday, students will be required to write a 1-2 paragraph response to the reading due the upcoming week and post it to Canvas **no later than 11:59 PM on Monday. Students will not receive any credit for late responses.**

These reflections should be a thoughtful engagement with some aspect of the reading the student found particularly interesting, troubling, or confusing. The short responses are meant to encourage students to engage with the readings and to come to class prepared to make good contributions to class discussion. As such, the student is free to use these reflections any way they like, with the following provisions:

The response must engage with some specific aspect of the text

The response is a response to a particular text or texts; it is not simply a space for the student to talk about anything they like. In other words, the response must be on the topic of one of the issues raised in the reading.

The response must not be merely (or primarily) a summary of the reading

The response is not a place for you to merely rehearse what you have already read; you must primarily be presenting your own thoughts and your own ideas.

The response must explain and not merely assert

*While these responses are open to a variety of approaches, whatever you choose to say in these spaces must be explicated and, in some cases, substantiated by argument or supporting evidence. For example, if you wish to disagree with an author's point, you must not merely say, "X is wrong about Y"; you must give at least a preliminary explanation of **why** you think this author is wrong. Similarly, if you wish to say that you had difficulty following the reading this week, you cannot merely state "This article was confusing and I didn't understand it at all"; instead, you need to say what, particularly, confused you and why. Similarly, just saying you liked or disliked the readings isn't enough—you also need to say a bit about why you liked or disliked the reading and what particularly stood out to you.*

Additionally, the student will be asked to write comments on at least two peer responses every week **no later than Friday at 11:59PM.**

The responses are meant to provide material for class discussion and will be graded as either acceptable or unacceptable. The instructor will not provide feedback on the blog entries except in instances where a response is marked “unacceptable.”

E-mail Policy:

Students should feel free to contact the instructor via e-mail with questions they have about the course material, and the instructor will respond within a 48 hour period. I can only guarantee a prompt response if the e-mail address provided on the syllabus is used (Canvas messaging tends to be delayed).

Grade Distribution:

Discussion Board Posts & Comments:	15%
Midterm:	20%
Final Exam:	20%
Short Papers:	15% (5% Each)
Final Paper:	20%
Participation:	10%

Academic Misconduct

Academic misconduct will not be tolerated; students must adhere to the Honor Code of Oxford College. All violations will be reported to the Honor Council, in accordance with the Code. Infractions of the Honor Code include plagiarism, cheating, seeking or giving unauthorized assistance, and lying related to academic matters. Further information on Honor Code infractions and procedures are available in the Oxford College Student Handbook and online: http://oxford.emory.edu/audiences/current_students/Academic/academic-success-student-honor-code/index.dot Should a student have a question about permissible behavior or academic integrity, they may contact me.

Inclusivity & Civil Discourse in the Classroom

Oxford College of Emory University’s ideals of inclusivity require that we foster an environment where people of diverse backgrounds, identities, abilities, and ideologies are affirmed, respected, and seen as a source of strength; where we strive to learn together, and ultimately thrive communally. If we at all fail to support these ideals, then we encourage discussion towards improvement, and we hope that this statement affirms your right to seek those discussions via dialogue with faculty, staff, your peers, and the use of the “Speak Up!” system when needed.

We believe the manner in which we interact with each other is critical to cultivating and maintaining a meaningful and effective intellectual environment. We encourage a climate of respect and inclusiveness that welcomes and embraces community members with diverse backgrounds and life experiences. We deliberately seek multiple perspectives and support the free and open exchange of ideas and civil discourse. We affirm the inherent dignity in all of us and we strive to maintain a climate of justice marked by respect for each other. Our community can only continue to thrive when we approach each conversation with an open mind and when each member can contribute fully.

Disability and Access:

The Office of Accessibility Services (OAS) works with students who have disabilities to provide reasonable accommodations. **In order to receive consideration for reasonable accommodations, students must contact OAS and complete the registration process.** Faculty may not provide disability accommodations until an accommodation letter has been processed; accommodations are not retroactive. Students registered with OAS who receive a letter outlining specific academic accommodations are strongly encouraged to coordinate a meeting time with their professor to discuss a protocol to implement the accommodations as needed throughout the semester. This meeting should occur as early in the semester as possible. Contact OAS for more information at (770) 784-4690 or oas_oxford@emory.edu. Additional information is available at the OAS website at <http://equityandinclusion.emory.edu/access/students/index.html>.

Religious Holidays:

I am happy to accommodate students' academic needs related to religious holidays. However, please make every effort to notify me about your religious holiday needs within the first two weeks of the semester. [If you need guidance negotiating your needs related to a religious holiday, the College Chaplain, Rev. Lyn Pace, \[ppace@emory.edu\]\(mailto:ppace@emory.edu\), Candler Hall 202, is willing and available to help. ****Please be aware that Rev. Pace is not tasked with excusing students from classes or writing excuses for students to take to their professors.**](#)

Class Schedule:

*Note: Schedule is subject to change at the instructor's discretion.
The student will be notified of any alterations in advance.*

Week 1: Introduction to Bioethics and Moral Reasoning

Th 1/18	Introduction
Tu 1/22	"Moral Reasoning in Bioethics" (BPIC 3-18)
	Note: Add/Drop Ends Wednesday, January 24th
Th 1/25	"Bioethics and Moral Theories" (BPIC 34-53)

Week 2: Primary Readings in Moral Theory

	Note: First Discussion Board Post Due Monday by 11:59PM
Tu 1/30	"Utilitarianism" J.S. Mill
	"The Moral Law" Immanuel Kant
Th 2/1	"Virtue and the Moral Life" Bernard Mayo
	"The Ethics of Care" Virginia Held

Week 3: Paternalism and Autonomy

Tu 2/6	"Paternalism"
	"The Refutation of Medical Paternalism"
Th 2/8	"Why Doctors Should Intervene"
	"Autonomy, Futility, and the Limits of Medicine"

Week 4: Truth-Telling and Confidentiality

Tu 2/13	"Telling the Truth to Patients: A Clinical Ethics Exploration"
	"On Telling Patients the Truth"
	"Is it Ever OK to Lie to Patients?"
	"Respect for Patients, Physicians, and the Truth"
	Short Paper #1 Due
Th 2/15	"Why Privacy is Important"
	"Confidentiality in Medicine—a Decrepit Concept"

Week 5: Informed Consent

Tu 2/20	"The Concept of Informed Consent"
	"Informed Consent—Must It Remain a Fairy Tale?"
	"Transparency: Informed Consent in Primary Care"

Th 2/22 "Informed Consent: Some Challenges to the Universal Validity of the Western Model"

Week 6: Human Research, Past and Present

Tu 2/26 "The Nuremberg Code"
"Declaration of Helsinki"
"Of Mice but Not Men: Problems of the Randomized Clinical Trial"
"A Response to a Purported Ethical Difficulty"
Th 3/1 "How to Resolve an Ethical Dilemma Concerning Randomized Clinical Trials"
"Racism and Research: The Case of the Tuskegee Syphilis Survey"
"Ethics of Clinical Research in the Third World"
"Ethical Issues in Clinical Trials in Developing Countries"
Additional Readings on Blackboard

Week 7: Testing on Non-Human Animals

Tu 3/6 "All Animals Are Equal" Peter Singer
"The Moral Community" Michael A. Fox
Th 3/8 **Short Paper #2 Due**
"Animals and Their Medicinal Use" R.G. Frey
"Empty Cages: Animal Rights and Vivisection" Tom Regan
Tu 3/13 **No Class—Spring Break**
Th 3/15 **No Class—Spring Break**

Week 8: Reproductive Technology, IVF and Surrogacy

Tu 3/20 MIDTERM EXAM
Th 3/22 "Surrogate Mothering: Exploitation or Empowerment?"
"Is Women's Labor a Commodity?"

Week 9: Abortion

Tu 3/27 "A Defense of Abortion"
"Why Abortion is Immoral"
Th 3/29 "On the Moral and Legal Status of Abortion"
"Abortion and the Concept of a Person"
"Abortion Through a Feminist Lens"

Week 10: Genetic Choices, Disability and Human Enhancement

Tu 4/3 "Implications of Prenatal Diagnosis for the Human Right to Life:
"The Morality of Screening for Disability"
Th 4/5 "Genetic Dilemmas and the Child's Right to an Open Future"
Note: One-Time First Year Student Withdrawal Deadline Friday April 6th

Week 11: Genetic Choices, Disability and Human Enhancement (Cont)

Tu 4/10 "Genetic Enhancement"
"Genetic Interventions and the Ethics of Enhancement of Human Beings"
Th 4/12 In-Class Debate
Short Paper #3 Due

Week 12: Euthanasia and Physician-Assisted Suicide

Tu 4/17 "Voluntary Active Euthenasia"
"When Self-Determination Runs Amok"
"Death and Dignity: A Case of Individualized Decision Making"
Th 4/19 "Active and Passive Euthenasia"
"Dying at the Right Time: Reflections on (Un)Assisted Suicide"

Week 13: Justice & Health Care

Tu 4/24 "Is There a Right to Health Care and, if So, What Does It Encompass?"
"A Right to a Decent Minimum of Health Care"
"Right to Health Care, Social Justice, and Fairness in Health Care Allocations"
"Health Care Reform: Lessons from Canada"
Th 4/26 "The Allocation of Exotic Medical Lifesaving Therapy"
"QALYfying the Value of Life"
"Public Health Ethics: Mapping the Terrain"
"Human Rights Approach to Public Health"

Final Paper Due Date TBA

FINAL EXAM: Wednesday May 9th 2:00-5:00 PM