

BIOMEDICINE, ETHICS, AND CULTURE

RS 373M, ANT 324L, ANS 361

Instructor:

Department of Religious Studies

Office and contact info:

Office hours

Health-care professionals, bio-medical researchers, patients, and families in all societies have come to increasingly be faced with ethical issues that arise with the development of new medical technologies as well as awareness of alternative approaches to thinking about health and illness. This course focuses on ethical questions related to topics such as allocation of medical resources, stem cell research and cloning, organ transplantation, abortion, human experimentation, prolonging life and the right to die, suicide, euthanasia, and diagnosis and treatment of illnesses such as Alzheimer disease, AIDS, and mental disorders. We will explore these topics from a global perspective, emphasizing how cultural values inform ethical decision-making and how different ethical systems address and define moral issues that arise in relation to medical care. We will consider ethical theories that have been used in the West to consider medical practice and compare these with approaches in non-Western cultures such as Japan and India. The course will emphasize use of case studies to explore issues in medical ethics and to develop the ability to apply ethical theories in ways sensitive to variations in cultural values.

Throughout the course we will discuss and debate difficult moral issues and it is likely that members of the class will have different, and sometimes profoundly conflicting, ideas about what is right and wrong. You should feel free to express and support your position; this is an important component of the class. However, it is equally important that all members of the class respect the opinions of others and listen to their arguments.

Required Books

<i>Title</i>	<i>Author</i>	<i>Publisher</i>	<i>Status</i>	<i>ISBN</i>	<i>Price (new)</i>
<i>Rethinking Autonomy</i>	Traphagan, John W.	SUNY Press	Required	9781438445526	\$26.95
<i>Brave New World</i>	Aldous Huxley	HCTRD	Required	9780060850524	\$15.99
<i>Artificial Ear</i>	Stuart Blum	Rutgers	Required	9780813546605	\$30.95

COURSE ASSIGNMENTS

Assignment	Total Possible Points	Percentage of Grade	Due Date
First exam	250	25	10/14
Second exam	250	25	11/18
Final exam	400	40	TBA
Huxley Summary/Questions	100	10	12/3
Total	1000	100	

Exams: There will be two in-class exams in this course, and a final exam. Exams are a combination of objective questions, short answers, and essays.

STANDARDS AND EXPECTATIONS

Grades are assigned as follows: 93-100 = A; 90 – 92 = A-, 88 – 89 = B+, 83 – 87 = B, 80 – 82 = B-; 78 – 79 = C+, 73 – 77 = C, 70 – 72 = C-; 68 – 70 = D+, 63 – 67 = D, 60 – 62 = D-; below 60 = F. This course is not normally graded on a curve.

GRADING RUBRIC

Grade	Expectations/Standards
A, A-	The grade of A will be only given for exemplary work, while an A- is work that is close to exemplary. The paper, presentation, or exam demonstrates a detailed understanding of the topic and provides a creative and scholarly analysis of the issues. There is a clear thesis and the thesis is well-supported. It is clearly written, without typographical errors, spelling mistakes, or grammatical errors.
B+, B, B-	This grade will be given to an exam, presentation, or paper that presents material clearly, shows a basic understanding of the topic and provides a clear analysis of the issues. It is well written, but may have some typographical errors, spelling mistakes, or grammatical problems (there are few, however). There is room for improvement in both presentation and content/structure of the argument.
C+, C, C-	This grade will be given to a product that shows some problems in terms of understanding and analyzing the materials. There are problems with writing, some typographical errors, spelling mistakes, or grammatical problems. These are sufficient to hinder understanding of the writing and argument. There are problems in the argument and its supporting data.
D+, D, D-	This is given when there are significant problems related to understanding and analysis of materials. The argument is poorly presented or is very weak. There are major problems with writing, presentation style, spelling, grammar, etc.
F	This grade is given when there are extremely serious deficiencies related to understanding and analysis of the topic at hand and there are major problems with writing, presentation style, spelling, grammar, etc. The grade F indicates a very serious deficiency in the paper, presentation, or exam.
A-/B+, B-/C+, B/B+, etc.	Grades such as A/B indicate a paper, presentation, or exam that is borderline. This means that the paper is between the two grades. An A-/B+ indicates the paper, presentation, exam, etc. is closer to an A-; a B+/A- indicates it is closer to a B+.

Appealing Grades

It is important to understand that you earn your grades on assignments and that you earn your final grade for the course—I do not assign grades to your work, rather, based upon the quality of the work you turn in, I arrive at an opinion about the grade which you have earned. The grade you earn is based upon the quality of the work you turn in—there are no other criteria that are used to arrive at a grade.

Should you find that you disagree with me on a grade you receive for an assignment, you have the option of appealing your grade. If you want to appeal your grade, you must follow the steps below within two days of my returning the graded assignments. If you are not in class to receive the returned assignment, you still have only two days from the date that I return them—you do not have two days from the date that you receive your graded assignment (once I have returned the assignment to the class, the clock is ticking). Follow these directions—if you do not follow the directions, I may not be willing to consider your appeal:

- Provide the original assignment with any comments I have written on it, including the grade given. Keep a copy for yourself.
- Include a written explanation of why you believe that you have earned a grade different from the one I believe you have earned. I will assume that you will be appealing for a higher grade, but should you want to lower your grade, you are welcome to appeal for that as well. The written explanation should be no more than two paragraphs in length—it must be typed (single space is fine). Part of the success of your appeal will be based upon the quality of your argument as to why the grade I believe you earned is not appropriate. In your argument, you must indicate the exact grade that you believe you earned and explain why you believe this to be the case.
 - Keep in mind that the amount of time or effort you put into an assignment is not an adequate reason for changing a grade. If you spend four years working on something and turn in a product of poor quality, you will still receive a low grade. While there is no question that there is a correlation between the amount of work and time you put into an assignment and the grade you earn, as an instructor I cannot take into account how much time/effort you put into the assignment beyond the evident quality of the work you turn in. If you appeal your grade on the basis of the fact that you put a lot of work into the assignment, do not expect to receive a positive response. I may sympathize with you and will be more than happy to discuss how you can improve the quality of your work; but I am unlikely to change your grade.
 - Also keep in mind that asking me to “round up” a grade that is close to a higher grade is not considered an acceptable appeal. You may appeal a grade only when you believe that I have made an error in grading or have been unfair in my conclusion about the grade you have earned.

- NOTE: *In the case of a simple error in calculating your grade, you do not need to go through the above process. Simply see me after class and point out the error.*
- You may be asked to come to my office hours to discuss your appeal. If this happens, come prepared to discuss/debate your appeal and to support your argument.
- Should you wish to discuss an appeal prior to actually submitting it, you are welcome to do so during my next office hours following return of the assignment. To do this you need to make an appointment with me within two days of receiving the assignment; you will then have two days following our meeting to write your appeal.
- If you want to appeal your final grade, you must provide all original graded materials for the semester to the instructor within five days of grades being posted to the online grading system. All of the above apply to appeals of final grades; however, I may not be able to meet with you ahead of your appeal.
- Appealing a grade means that you are requesting that I re-evaluate your assignment(s) and the grade I believe you have earned. It is possible, although unlikely, that I will lower your grade if I feel that you have earned a grade which is lower than the one I originally believed to be appropriate.

Ground Rules for the Course

1. **NO LOBBYING FOR INCREASES IN YOUR GRADES.** I will not under any conditions entertain emails or other contacts that involve attempts to lobby for a grade. For example, if you calculate your final grade for the semester and it is a 79.4, do not send me an email (or any other communication) trying to explain why you think you deserve a B-. If you disagree with your grade, you should go through the process of appeal outlined above.
2. **NO OFFERING PRESENTS TO THE PROFESSOR OR TA.** Although I appreciate it when a student has enjoyed the class and wishes to thank me or my TA with a gift, the rules of the university forbid this, and I also do not wish to receive such presents as they represent a conflict of interest. Please do not offer any sort of present—including candy, baked goods, etc.—at any time prior to, during, or after the course has ended. Gifts brought to my office will be refused and gifts left in my mail box will be discarded.
3. **YOU MUST UNDERSTAND WHAT CONSTITUTES ACADEMIC INTEGRITY.** You should read and understand the academic dishonesty site provided by Student Judicial Services. This is your responsibility. The URL is <http://deanofstudents.utexas.edu/sjs/acadint.php>.

Policy on Examination and Assignment Schedule: Examinations are to be taken on the assigned date and time and assignments are to be turned in on the assigned date.

- There will be no make-up exams in this class; if you miss an exam due date, you will receive a zero. If you turn in a paper late, it will receive the grade of zero.

- ❑ If an examination or other due date conflicts with a religious holiday, you must contact the instructor prior to that date to arrange an alternative date to take the exam. If you have some type of important event, and can prove it, I will be happy to discuss an alternate date and time for you to take your exam—discussing it does not necessarily mean that I will approve the change in exam dates. You must give at least five business days prior notice in order to receive an exception to an exam date.
- ❑ Emergencies will be handled on a case-by-case basis, but will require evidence that proves that you actually encountered a situation that prevented you from taking the exam or turning in the paper. Excuses such as being confused about the date of the exam or failing to wake-up early enough to make it to class on an exam day will most likely be met with laughter, will not be considered acceptable, and will receive a grade of zero.
- ❑ *Have someone proofread all written materials that you submit to class both for typographical errors and also to help you with writing and developing your ideas.*

POLICY ON ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

You are expected to adhere to university requirements on academic honesty and integrity. Behaviors such as plagiarism, unauthorized collaboration, copying of another student's work, or cheating on examinations in any form will be viewed as an offense against the academic community and will be dealt with accordingly. If you are uncertain about what constitutes academic integrity (for example, if you are uncertain about what constitutes plagiarism), you can either meet with the instructor or visit the web site of Student Judicial Services (<http://deanofstudents.utexas.edu/sjs/>). Note that use of more than one iClicker by a student is considered cheating/academic dishonesty. If a student is caught using another student's iClicker, both students will be considered in violation of university policy on academic honesty. In the event that a student is found engaging in behavior that violates university policies on academic integrity, as stipulated by the office of Student Judicial Services and in this syllabus, the student will receive the grade of F for the course and will be reported to the office of Student Judicial Services, where further disciplinary action may be taken. *There will be no exceptions.*

UNIVERSITY ELECTRONIC NOTIFICATION POLICY

All students should become familiar with the University's official e-mail student notification policy. It is the student's responsibility to keep the University informed as to changes in his or her e-mail address. Students are expected to check e-mail on a frequent and regular basis in order to stay current with University-related communications, recognizing that certain communications may be time-critical. It is recommended that e-mail be checked daily, but at a minimum, twice per week. The complete text of this policy and instructions for updating your e-mail address are available at <http://www.utexas.edu/its/policies/emailnotify.html>.

In this course e-mail will be used as a means of communication with students. You will be responsible for checking your e-mail regularly for class work and announcements.

POLICY ON LAPTOPS AND OTHER TECHNOLOGY USAGE IN CLASS

You are encouraged to bring your laptop to class to use for taking notes. You also will have opportunities in class to work in groups and having your laptop may facilitate the ease of working together. However, I do not want you to surf the web or otherwise use your computer for things not related to class while I am lecturing or when you are working in groups. Aside from the fact that it is rude, it is distracting to other students (particularly those behind you during lectures) and also distracts YOU from the lecture or discussion. My lectures may be boring, but I still expect you to pay attention. Don't think that because I cannot see your screen, I don't have any idea that you are surfing the web. It is actually quite easy to tell when people are surfing the web simply by looking at their faces. If I find that a student is not adhering to this policy, I will ask the student to meet me during office hours to discuss an appropriate penalty. *Expect a minimum of a 5% reduction in your final grade if you are caught using your laptop during class for purposes unrelated to the course.*

Please turn off your cell phone before coming to class, unless you don't mind my stopping class and asking you to answer a call while we all wait and listen (yes, I've done it before).

Some students, particularly those for whom English is not their first language, may wish to record lectures. You are welcome to do so.

DOCUMENTED DISABILITY POLICY

Students with disabilities who require special accommodations need to get a letter that documents the disability from the Services for Students with Disabilities area of the Office of the Dean of Students (471-6259 voice or 471-4641 TTY for users who are deaf or hard of hearing). This letter should be presented to the instructor at the beginning of the semester and accommodations needed should be discussed at that time. If you need any sort of special accommodation for assignments, you need to give me at least five business days notice so that we can work out what you need. See following website for more information: <http://deanofstudents.utexas.edu/ssd/providing.php>.

Office Hours

My office hours for this semester are listed at the beginning of this syllabus. I will normally be in my office during those hours; however, I am often also in my office at other times. You are free to visit my office at any time—you are not limited to visiting during office hours. If the door is shut, just knock. If I am busy (with meetings, writing, other work, etc.) outside of office hours, I will let you know or I won't answer the door.

Tentative Schedule

This is a *tentative* schedule. The course is intended as an exploration of ideas and as a means of developing critical thinking skills. It is unlikely that we will adhere precisely to this schedule, as I want the class to head into areas of interest that may slow things down. Keep up with the readings and lectures and you will be all set at exam times. If we get far off of schedule, I will revamp it and post it to Canvas. Readings that are marked with the symbol ✍ are available on Canvas. Readings should be completed by Tuesday of each week, with the exception of week 1.

Week 1 8/29 - 31: Introduction

✍ A waste of time: the problem of common morality in "Principles of Biomedical Ethics"
 Author(s): Jan Reinert Karlsen and Jan Helge Solbakk Source: Journal of Medical Ethics,
 Vol. 37, No. 10 (October 2011), pp. 588-591 Published by: BMJ Stable URL:
<http://www.jstor.org/stable/23034756>

✍ Beauchamp and Childress, Chapter 1.

Week 2 9/3 - 7: Week 2 9/2-6: Moral Character

✍ Social Psychology, Moral Character, and Moral Fallibility
 Author(s): Lorraine Besser-Jones
 Source: Philosophy and Phenomenological Research, Vol. 76, No. 2 (Mar., 2008), pp.
 310-332 Published by: International Phenomenological Society
 Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/40041173>

✍ Case Study 2 Discussed on Friday—Milgram case

Week 3 9/10 - 14: Moral Status

✍ Moral Status in Virtue Ethics
 Author(s): John Hacker-Wright
 Source: Philosophy, Vol. 82, No. 321 (Jul., 2007), pp. 449-473
 Published by: Cambridge University Press on behalf of Royal Institute of Philosophy
 Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/4619741>

✍ Case Study 3 Discussed on Friday

<http://www.onlineethics.org/CMS/edu/precol/scienceclass/sectone/cs3.aspx#case>

Week 4 9/17 – 21: Rise of Biomedical Ethics

Discussion of Tuskegee Study and Milgram Study

Week 5 9/24 - 28: Animal Rights

Read at least three articles from the Huffington Post Animal Rights page and come prepare to discuss in class. Think about the assumptions and biases that you find in the articles you read: <http://www.huffingtonpost.com/topic/animal-rights>

Week 6 10/1 - 5: Euthanasia

✍ Buddhism and Euthanasia

Week 7 10/8 - 12:

Exam this week—review or catch up.

Week 8 10/15-19: Changing culture: Cyborgs

✍ Cyborgs and Moral Identity

Author(s): G. Gillett

Source: Journal of Medical Ethics, Vol. 32, No. 2 (Feb., 2006), pp. 79-83 Published by: BMJ

Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/27719567>

Week 9 10/22-26: Genetic Engineering

✍ Ethical Issues in Genetic Engineering

Author(s): THOMAS H. MURRAY

Source: Social Research, Vol. 52, No. 3, Bioethics (AUTUMN 1985), pp. 471-489

Published by: New School

Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/40970384>

Week 10 10/29-11/2: Second Exam

Video: Sound and Fury

Week 11 11/5-9:

Blum must be completed by 11/6.

Week 12 11/12-16:

Exam this week: Review or catch-up

Week 13 11/19-23: Culture and Ethics

Traphagan, Chapters 1 and 2

Week 14 11/26-11/30: Culture and Autonomy

Traphagan, chapters 3 - end

Week 15 12/3-7 + 12/10: Wrapping-up

You must have Brave New World read in its entirety by 12/3. We will be discussing the book in class.