**GEORGIA INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY**

BIOLOGY 4651: FOUNDATIONS OF BIOETHICS

Learning outcomes: After completing this class, students will be able to: (1) Describe basic ethical theories and principles. (2) Apply ethical thinking to issues in biology and medicine. (3) Describe and evaluate the ethical current and historical challenges and complexity of issues involved in medicine, biological research, and public policy. (4) Synthesize reading, discussion, and writing skills in order to assess bioethical issues. (5) Students recognize that an ethical issue is present and can distinguish ethical choices from mere self-interest. (6) Students are aware of the ways that culture shapes ethical views and can critically evaluate those views. (7) Students should learn to analyze a bioethical issue and engage in solving ethical problems in research or health professions.

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Office Hours: Wednesday and Friday from 10-12

Class organization: This is a three credit course intended for advanced undergraduates. BIOL 1510 or 1511 is a prerequisite. Class will be held\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_. This course includes reading assignments, exams, group presentations and assignments, quizzes, class discussion, and written reports. Reading, attending, and participating in class is fundamental to this course. Be courteous to your fellow students and do not disrupt class by entering and leaving the room, reading, talking, allowing cell phones to ring, etc.

Required textbook: Lewis Vaughn, “Bioethics: Principles, Issues and Cases” 2nd Edition, Oxford University Press, New York, 2012, ISBN 9780199796236.

Optional reading: Medical Apartheid, by Harriet Washington, Anchor books

Assessments:

Attendance & participation: Attendance and class participation is required for success in this course. *Arriving late will affect your participation score*. Communicate with the course instructor as soon as possible if you have to miss a class for any reason; written confirmation of a legitimate excuse, such as a severe illness, will be required for excused absences. If you miss any part of a class without legitimate excuse, then you will receive no credit for that day’s assignments. There are no make-up assignments. If your absence is excused, your grade will be calculated from the remaining graded assignments.

Class participation in the form of discussing issues, asking questions, and respectful listening will make up a substantial portion of your grade. *You will not be graded, nor will you be judged, on your specific beliefs*. Bioethical discussions often involve questions of values; such discussions can become personal, subjective, and emotional. However, it is essential to understand and develop skills in making rational decisions and arguments, and to remain respectful of others when they speak. Bioethical discussions in this course are not meant to lead to decisions regarding particular issues. Rather, they should result in understanding and evaluating the perspectives, ideas, and arguments both for and against different viewpoints. In addition, students will co-facilitate peer discussion with another student at least once during the semester. Discussion facilitators are responsible for organizing 20-30 minutes of class time around the assigned reading for that day. Facilitators should seek instructor approval for their class plan before they lead class.

You will receive participation credit if it is clear that you have thought carefully about the subject matter, applied moral reasoning to the topic at hand, and contributed to the class in a respectful manner. You will be assessed on the quality of your contributions to class and small group activities. A quality comment possesses one or more of the following properties:

* Offers a different, but relevant, perspective
* Contributes to moving the discussion and analysis forward
* Builds on other comments
* Does not rely on “I feel,” statements, but includes *evidence-based arguments*
* Demonstrates reflective thinking

Team activities & evaluations: Students will work in groups to use moral theories, principles, and arguments to assess and evaluate case studies on bioethical topics. Students will also give a 15- 20 minute oral presentation based on the assigned reading. Students will evaluate themselves and their team members on engagement and effectiveness within the team.

Writing assignments: Students will engage in various written activities including reading responses, in-class short papers, or out-of class short reports: Reading responses will be due via T-square by 11:59pm the day before each class. The reading response should be a brief (1-3 paragraphs) discussion of topics in the reading that you found interesting, confusing, or otherwise noteworthy. The reading response should *not* be simply a summary of the reading, but rather evidence of your critical thinking about the ideas discussed in the reading.

Reading quizzes: Reading quizzes will be unannounced in the first 10 minutes of class, and will generally be based directly on the readings for the week.

Exams: There will be two midterms and one final exam. The exams will be based on the assigned readings and application of ethics principles and theories to bioethical case study analyses, and are meant to test if you have thoroughly understood and followed the subject matter. The exams will also ask you to synthesize materials and test your ability to make coherent bioethical arguments. Exams will typically consist of short answer questions and free response.

Academic Integrity: Academic dishonesty will not be tolerated in any form. This includes cheating, lying about course matters, plagiarism, stealing classroom materials, or helping others commit a violation of the Honor Code. Students are reminded of the obligations and expectations associated with the Georgia Tech Academic Honor Code and Student Code of Conduct, available online at www.honor.gatech.edu. Plagiarizing is defined by Webster’s as “to steal and pass off (the ideas or words of another) as one's own; use (another's production) without crediting the source.” Plagiarism and other academic integrity violations will be dealt with according to the GT Academic Honor Code. Unless specifically identified as group work, all assignments are to be completed alone. Please ask for help if any part of this policy is unclear.

Learning Accommodations: If needed, we will make classroom accommodations for students with disabilities. These accommodations must be arranged in advance and in accordance with the Office of Disability Services (http://www.disabilityservices.gatech.edu).

Late Assignments: In-class group activities are due at the end of class and will not be accepted late. Out of class writing assignments (reading responses and short reports) are due at 11:59pm on their respective due dates (typically the day before class). Late assignments will be accepted with a 10% penalty per day late. Assignments more than 3 days late will not be accepted. Extensions are typically not permitted but will be considered on a case-by-case basis for exceptional circumstances. Please discuss such circumstances with the instructor outside of class as soon as possible.

Final Grade Calculation:

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| --- | --- |
| Assessment | Value |
| Class participation & discussion facilitation | 15% |
| Team activities & presentation | 25% |
| Quizzes and writing assignments (in and out of class) | 20% |
| Midterm exams | 20% |
| Final exam | 20% |
| Total | 100% |

The most stringent scale used will be 90-100% an A, 80-89% a B, 70-79% a C, 60-69% a D, and 59% or less an F. This scale is subject to adjustment at the discretion of the instructor.

**Detailed Schedule:**

**Date Topic Reading**

Week 123-AugustIntroduction, syllabus, course review N/A

25- August Philosophy of Science and Ethics T-square

Week 2 30-August Moral reasoning in Bioethics Ch. 1

1-September Understanding morality Ch. 2

Week 3 6-September Bioethics and moral theories Ch. 2

8-September General Principles of Medical law and Ethics *T-square*

Week 4 13-September Paternalism and autonomy (Part I) Ch. 3

15-September Paternalism and autonomy (Part II)

Case study: Bouvia v. Superior Court Ch. 3

Week 5 20-September Planning for the Group Project/Case study *T-square*

22- September Discussion on the assigned reading TBD

Week 6 27-September **Midterm 1**

29-September Physicians and truth telling (Part I) Ch. 4

Week 7 4-October Physicians and truth telling (Part II) Ch. 4

6-October Confidentiality in Medicine (Guest speaker)

Week 8 11-October Informed Consent (Part I) Ch. 5

13-October Informed Consent (Part II) Challenges Ch. 5

Week 9 18-October Human rights in research (Part I) Ch. 6

20-October "The Nuremberg Code"

Discussion on the assigned reading TBD

Week 10 25-October Human rights in research (Part II) Ch. 6

"The Belmont Report"

27-October Student Presentations

Week 11 1-November Personhood and abortion Ch. 7

3-November Case study Ch. 7

Week 12 8-November **Midterm 2**

10-November Reproductive Technology Ch. 8

Week 13 15-November Reproductive Technology/ Guest speaker N/A

17-November Genetic information and testing (part I) Ch. 9

Week 14 22-November Genetic information and testing (part II) T-square

24- November No class: *Thanksgiving Holiday*

Week 15 29-November Student Presentations

1-December Euthanasia and Physician Assisted Suicide Ch. 10

Week 16 6-December Course review and class survey N/A

Week 178-15 December **Final Exam**

**This syllabus is subject to change!**