

MEDICAL ETHICS

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1 Preliminaries

Sending me a message online (by email or through Canvas) is the best way to reach me, and I will usually respond within 24 hours. If you would like a more immediate response, you can try calling or sending a text message to 267-416-0292. But don't leave a voicemail. I won't get it.

Meetings are [by appointment](#). (Webex, George Hall, or College Park)

2 Mississippi State University Syllabus

The Mississippi State University Syllabus contains all policies and procedures that are applicable to every course on campus and online. The policies in the University Syllabus describe the official policies of the University and will take precedence over those found elsewhere. It is the student's responsibility to read and be familiar with every policy. The University Syllabus may be accessed at any time on the Provost website under Faculty and Student Resources: provost.msstate.edu/faculty-student-resources/university-syllabus.

3 Textbook and articles

Required textbook: L. Vaughn, *Bioethics: Principles, Issues, and Cases* (5th Edition).

Additional required readings will be posted in Canvas.

4 Course Description

This course examines several medical- and healthcare-related moral issues. Almost all people will, at some point in their lives, face some (or even many) of the [issues that we will study in this course](#). Thinking about these topics is important for students planning to go into healthcare administration, medicine, public health, and other related fields, but it is also important for everyone who strives to be a good citizen, member of a community, and member of a family.

Responsibilities If you are having trouble with any part of this course, please contact me right away. (Don't wait. Just contact me – even if it's only to touch base.) The course is designed to make working through the material and learning it a straightforward process, but you are still responsible for the following.

1. Making time each week to do the course work.
2. Using the readings (and some videos) to complete the assignments.
3. Determining if and when you need to contact me with questions.

Again, don't hesitate to contact me. It's what I'm here for, and I don't mind answering questions.

5 Learning Objectives

Naturally, one objective is to become acquainted with the assigned material. Other, no less important, goals are improving reading comprehension, critical thinking, and writing skills.

6 Student Honor Code & Academic Misconduct

Mississippi State has an approved Honor Code that applies to all students. The code is as follows:

As a Mississippi State University student, I will conduct myself with honor and integrity at all times. I will not lie, cheat, or steal, nor will I accept the actions of those who do.

Upon accepting admission to Mississippi State University, a student immediately assumes a commitment to uphold the Honor Code, to accept responsibility for learning, and to follow the philosophy and rules of the Honor Code. Students will be required to state their commitment on examinations, research papers, and other academic work. Ignorance of the rules does not exclude any member of the MSU community from the requirements or the processes of the Honor Code. For additional information, please visit: <http://honorcode.msstate.edu/policy> and <http://students.msstate.edu/studentconduct/>.

To be clear, students who cheat in any way will be penalized. Cheating includes giving as well as receiving help when such help is not explicitly allowed.

Plagiarism and using AI (i.e., a generative AI tool) are both types of cheating. The best way to avoid anything that might be academic misconduct is to put yourself in a position where you don't need to cheat or plagiarize. Don't get behind, and if there are things that you don't understand, give yourself time to figure them out or schedule a meeting with me.

Please ask me if you have any further questions about what constitutes academic misconduct. I am happy to answer any questions about what is and is not allowed. But ask me before you do something questionable.

7 Coursework & Grading

Letter grades will be assigned using this scale: an A is 90.0 – 100 percent, a B is 80.0 – 89.9 percent, a C is 70.0 – 79.9 percent, a D is 60.0 – 69.9 percent, and an F is 59.9 percent and below. The grades will be set based on this coursework and these percentages:

quizzes: 20 percent

homework assignments: 50 percent

two tests: 30 percent

Most weeks, there will be two to three hours of reading, and the assignments will be on this schedule:

11:30 pm Friday: Quiz 1 due

11:30 pm Friday: Other assignment due

11:30 pm Sunday: Quiz 2 due

11:30 pm Sunday: Other assignment due

11:30 pm Sunday: Written homework assignment due

The *other assignments* will be discussion assignments or video assignments.

The quizzes and tests in this course are open book and notes—your own notes, not someone else's. Quizzes and other weekly assignments cannot be made up or submitted late, but each student's two lowest quiz and two lowest homework grades will be dropped.

Honorlock You will use the proctoring software Honorlock for both tests, and there is information about using this software on Canvas.

8 Schedule

See the [Google calendar](#) posted in Canvas for the exact schedule.

Weeks 1 & 2	Ethics and bioethics Vaughn, Chapters 1 & 2
Weeks 3 & 4	Paternalism and autonomy Vaughn, Chapter 3: "Paternalism and patient autonomy" Goldman, "The refutation of medical paternalism" Burton, "Dax's case as it happened" Coward & Burt, "Confronting death: Who chooses, who controls?" "Injured hunter chooses death over paralysis"
Week 5	Truth-telling Vaughn, Chapter 4: "Truth-telling and confidentiality" Lipkin, "On telling patients the truth" Schwartz, "Is it ever ok to lie to patients?"
Week 6	Informed consent Vaughn, Chapter 5: "Informed consent" Rosenbaum, "How should doctors share impossible decisions with their patients?"
Week 7	Test 1
Week 8	Dying Gawande, "Letting go" Gould, "The median isn't the message"
Weeks 9 & 10	Euthanasia Vaughn, Chapter 10: "Euthanasia and physician assisted suicide" Quill, "Death and dignity" Callahan, "When self-determination runs amok" Brock, "Voluntary active euthanasia" "Termination of life support for a never competent patient"
Weeks 11 - 13	Access to healthcare Vaughn, Chapter 11: "Dividing up healthcare resources" Daniels, "Is there a right to health care and, if so, what does it encompass?" Gawande, "Overkill"
Week 14	Racial bias in healthcare Vaughn, Chapter 13: "Race, racial bias, and health care" Roberts interview, "What's race got to do with medicine?"
Week 15	tba
Exam week	Test 2
