

Biomedical Ethics

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Course Summary

This course surveys a range of topics in biomedical ethics, here defined as the philosophical examination of the moral issues that arise in biomedical research, medicine, and health care. The course is structured around a number of these issues, including patient autonomy, the nature and significance of informed consent, physician-assisted suicide, abortion, genetic screening, advance directives, end-of-life decision-making, and the just distribution of medical resources.

The Aims of This Course

This course has four aims. First, to give you a working knowledge of the state of the art of contemporary biomedical ethics. Second, to develop your capacity to think clearly and critically about urgent moral problems. Third, and by way of the preceding ambitions, to leave you with well-informed opinions about some issues of profound ethical importance. Lastly—and this is relevant to only some of you—to inform and develop your ability for ethical decision-making in clinical medicine.

Course Schedule

INTRODUCTION

- Degrazia, et al., “General Introduction” in *Biomedical Ethics*.

PATERNALISM AND PATIENT AUTONOMY (1)

- Hippocrates, “The Hippocratic Oath”
- AMA Council on Ethical and Judicial Affairs, “Fundamental Elements of the Patient-Physician Relationship”

PATERNALISM AND PATIENT AUTONOMY (2)

- Childress and Siegler, “Metaphors and Models of Doctor-Patient Relationships: Their Implications for Autonomy”
- Ackerman, “Why Doctors Should Intervene”

INFORMED CONSENT

- President's Commission for the Study of Ethical Problems in Medicine and Biomedical and Behavioral Research, "The Values Underlying Informed Consent"
- Faden and Beauchamp, "The Concept of Informed Consent"
- Jonsen et al. "Preferences of Patients" (excerpt)

CONFIDENTIALITY

- Siegler "Confidentiality in Medicine—A Decrepit Concept"
- Fleck and Angell, "Please Don't Tell: A Case About HIV and Confidentiality"

TELLING PATIENTS THE TRUTH

- Higgs, "On Telling Patients the Truth"
- Thomasma, "Telling the Truth to Patients: A Clinical Ethics Exploration"
- Jonsen et al., "Preferences of Patients" (another excerpt)
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EUTHANASIA AND PHYSICIAN-ASSISTED SUICIDE (1)

- Quill, Cassel, and Meier, "Care of the Hopelessly Ill: Proposed Clinical Criteria for Physician-Assisted Suicide"
- Rachels, "Active and Passive Euthanasia"
- Excerpt from Kamm, *Morality, Mortality Vol 2*.

EUTHANASIA AND PHYSICIAN-ASSISTED SUICIDE (2)

- Velleman, "Against the Right to Die"
- Excerpt from McMahan, *The Ethics of Killing: Problems at the Margins of Life*

EUTHANASIA AND PHYSICIAN-ASSISTED SUICIDE (3)

- Verhagen and Sauer, "The Groningen Protocol—Euthanasia in Severely Ill Newborns"
- Kon, "We Cannot Accurately Predict the Extent of an Infant's Future Suffer: The Groningen Protocol is too Dangerous to Support"

ABORTION 1

- Thomson, "A Defense of Abortion"
- Marquis, "Why Abortion is Immoral"

ABORTION 2

- The introduction and sections 1, 2, and 5 of Jaworska and Tannenbaum, “The Grounds of Moral Status”, available online at <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/grounds-moral-status/>
- Excerpt from McMahan, *The Ethics of Killing: Problems at the Margins of Life*

HEALTH AND DISABILITY

- Boorse, “Health as a Theoretical Concept”
- Shakespeare, “The Social Model of Disability”
- Kahane and Savulescu, “The Welfarist Account of Disability”

GENETIC SCREENING

- McMahan, “The Morality of Screening for Disability”
- Harris, “Is Gene Therapy a Form of Eugenics?”

THE JUST DISTRIBUTION OF MEDICAL RESOURCES (1)

- Degrazia, et al., Chapter 9 of *Biomedical Ethics*.
- Excerpt from Rawls, *Justice as Fairness: A Restatement*

THE JUST DISTRIBUTION OF MEDICAL RESOURCES (2)

- Taurek, “Should the Numbers Count”
- Parfit, “Innumerate Ethics” (excerpt)
- Voorhoeve, “Why Sore Throats Don't Aggregate, but Arms Do”

ACCESS TO HEALTHCARE

- Degrazia, et al. “Biomedical Ethics. Himmelstein and Woolhandler, “National Health Insurance or Incremental Reform: Aim High, or at Our Feet?”
- Emanuel, “The Problem with Single-Payer Plans”
- Emanuel and Fuchs, “Vouchsafe”
- Degrazia, “Single Payer Meets Managed Competition: The Case for Public Funding and Private Delivery”

ADVANCE DIRECTIVES AND MEDICAL FUTILITY

- Council on Ethical and Judicial Affairs, American Medical Association, “Withholding and Withdrawing Life-Sustaining Treatment”
- Dworkin, Chapter 7 of *Life's Dominion*

- Wicclair, “Medical Futility: A Conceptual Analysis”

DISCONTINUING LIFE-SUPPORT

- Degrazia, “The Definition of Death”, available online at <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/death-definition/>
- Truog and Miller, “The Dead Donor Rule and Organ Transplantation”