

PHIL 3220 Biomedical Ethics

1:25–2:15pm MWF Journalism Room 501

Instructor: Dr. Melissa Seymour

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Office Hours: 2:30–3:30pm MWF & by appointment

Course Description:

Biomedical ethics is a broad term given to the collection of ethical issues and problems that have emerged from professional practice in the fields of medicine, biomedical research, and public health. In this course, we will consider how fairly recent advances in medicine and biotechnology invite new reflection on some very old human practices: reproduction, personal enhancement, and dying.

We will begin the course by considering a range of procreative decisions that confront potential parents: *when* to reproduce, *how* to reproduce, *whether or not* to reproduce, and even, *what kind of child to create*. The options presented to us by biotechnology provoke a number of moral questions. What is the moral status of the fetus prior to birth? Are we morally obligated to reproduce the best children possible? Should we use genetic screening to eliminate certain diseases or abnormalities? What kind of values should inform the intimate relationship between a parent and (future) child?

In the remainder of the course we will consider the ethics of using performance enhancing drugs in competitive sports, as well as in academic settings. Are there any moral relevant differences between using a trainer or tutor and using a particular pharmaceutical product? Does the use of pharmaceuticals in these settings cause harm to individuals or institutions? We'll end the course with an examination of *end of life* issues. Is death bad? Is there a duty to die? Is there a right to die? Does physician-assisted suicide constitute a perversion of the goals of the medical profession?

Course Objectives:

1. To introduce students to several complex issues in biomedical ethics and to foster understanding of the different positions authors have taken in response to these issues.
2. To develop students' ability to critically evaluate such positions.
3. To develop students' ability to come to a reasoned position with respect to the various issues we will discuss and to defend this position both orally and in writing.

Required Texts:

Contemporary Issues in Bioethics 7th eds. Tom L. Beachamp, Le Roy Walters, Jeffrey P. Kahn, & Anna C. Mastroianni (Wadsworth, 2008).

Additional reading material is available on the library's course reserve system. You can access the course reserve system from the University of Georgia Libraries' home page: <http://www.libs.uga.edu/>. You must enter a password to access electronic copies of the articles. The password for this course is "health". Note that articles are listed alphabetically by *title*, not author.

Course Requirements:

1. Reading Assignments

It is vital to keep pace with the reading assignments. Meaningful participation in classroom discussions depends upon a careful and thoughtful reading. Students should aim to read *carefully*, *charitably*, and *critically*. **Students are required to bring reading assignments to class everyday** and are highly encouraged to take notes while reading.

2. Attendance

Attendance is mandatory. You may accumulate 4 unexcused absences without penalty. For every unexcused absence in excess of 4, your final grade will be lowered by 2 percentage points.

An absence is considered excused if and only if a.) the absence results from illness, family emergency, or participation in a university sponsored event and b.) the nature of the absence is confirmed by written documentation from a health care professional or appropriate university employee. It is the responsibility of the student to provide appropriate documentation.

3. Homework & Classroom Participation

This is not a traditional lecture course. Each class meeting will combine lecture and discussion. **All students are expected to participate in classroom discussion.** To this end, students should come to class prepared to discuss the reading assignment. Homework assignments may be given to facilitate student preparation for classroom discussion. To earn full credit for the participation component of the course students should aim to make weekly contributions to classroom discussion.

Students will also be required to complete in-class assignments. These assignments will involve engaging peers in conversation, as well as written work. In-class assignments can be made up only in cases of a legitimate and documented absence. It is the student's

responsibility to provide appropriate documentation and complete the missed assignment in a timely manner.

4. Quizzes

Quizzes will be given periodically to ensure that students are keeping up with the reading assignments. Quizzes may or may not be announced in advance. Make up quizzes will be given only in cases of a legitimate and documented absence. It is the student's responsibility to provide appropriate documentation and schedule a make up quiz within one week of the excused absence.

5. Papers

Students will be required to write three papers (3-5 pages, double-spaced). In each paper, students will be expected to critically engage with the readings on a particular subject. These papers will not require any research beyond the assigned reading for the course. Paper topics will be distributed in advance, however students may also write on a topic of their choice – provided that the topic has been approved by the instructor. More detailed instructions will be distributed with the first paper topics.

Please note the following dates:

Paper #1: Assigned Monday, January 28th; Due Wednesday, February 13th

Paper #2: Assigned Friday, February 29th; Due Monday, March 24th

Paper #3: Assigned Friday, April 4th; Due Monday, April 21st

Late papers will be penalized 5 percentage points for every day late.

Evaluation:

Your final grade will be calculated according to the following distribution:

| | |
|-------------------------------------|----------------|
| Class Participation & Homework..... | 15% |
| Quizzes..... | 10% |
| Papers..... | 75% (25% each) |

And the following grade scale:

| | |
|----------------|----------------|
| 100% - 94% = A | 76% - 74% = C |
| 93% - 90% = A- | 73% - 70% = C- |
| 89% - 87% = B+ | 69% - 67% = D+ |
| 86% - 84% = B | 66% - 64% = D |
| 83% - 80% = B- | 63% - 60% = D- |
| 79% - 77% = C+ | 59% - 0% = F |

Academic Dishonesty:

All work you submit for this course should be exclusively yours. While you are encouraged to discuss course material with fellow classmates, collaborative work on papers, quizzes, and the final exam is unacceptable. Your work should convey your own ideas, expressed in your own words. Reference to the words and/or ideas of others must be clearly cited. Students should familiarize themselves with the University of Georgia's Academic Honesty Policy located at <http://www.uga.edu/ovpi/honesty/acadhon.htm>. Failure to comply with these standards will result in a failing grade for the course and will be reported to the University.

Classroom Etiquette:

Cell Phones: Ringing cell phones are disruptive. Please turn off your cell phone before class.

Laptops: The only legitimate use of a laptop computer in class is note-taking. The instructor reserves the right to **prohibit all laptop use in the classroom** if laptops are being used for any other purpose.

Late Arrivals: Class begins at 1:25. If you arrive after 1:25, please try to minimize your disruption by choosing the nearest and most accessible seat. This may be different than your regular spot. **Note: 5 Late Arrivals = 1 Unexcused Absence**

Reading Schedule (Subject to Change)

CR = Course Reserve

01/07: First Day of Class

I. Ethical Theory and Bioethics

- Wed. 01/09: Chapter One pp. 1-21
- Fri. 01/11: Chapter One pp. 21-33

II. Reproductive Decisions

Week 2: The Ethics of Abortion

- Mon. 01/14: Don Marquis, "Why Abortion is Immoral" pp. 345-352
- Wed. 01/16: Don Marquis, "Why Abortion is Immoral" pp. 345-352
- Fri. 01/18: Judith Jarvis Thomson, "A Defense of Abortion" pp. 353-357

Week 3: The Ethics of Abortion Continued

- Mon. 01/21: MLK Jr. HOLIDAY NO CLASS
- Wed. 01/23: Thomson, "A Defense of Abortion" pp. 353-362
- Fri. 01/25: Mary Anne Warren, "On the Moral and Legal Status of Abortion" pp. 368-376

Week 4: Procreative Liberty & Assisted Reproduction

- Mon. 01/28: Margaret Olivia Little, “Abortion, Intimacy, and the Duty of Gestate” pp. 295-304 (CR)
- Wed. 01/30: Margaret Olivia Little, “Abortion, Intimacy, and the Duty of Gestate” pp. 305-312 (CR)
- Fri. 02/01: John A. Robertson, “The Presumptive Primacy of Procreative Liberty” pp. 309-315

Week 5: Assisted Reproduction & Embryos

- Mon. 02/04: Gregory Pence, “Assisted Reproduction: Louise Brown and Beyond” pp. 117-137 (CR)
- Wed. 02/06: Bonnie Steinbock, “A Philosopher Looks at Assisted Reproduction” pp. 316-323 & “Respect for Human Embryos” (CR)
- Fri. 02/08: Maura A. Ryan, “Creating Embryos for Research: On Weighing Symbolic Costs” (CR)

Week 6: Genetic Diseases and Abnormalities

- Mon. 02/11: “Reprogenetics” pp. 303-304; & Laura M. Purdy, “Genetics and Reproductive Risk: Can Having Children Be Immoral?” (CR)
- Wed. 02/13: “Genetic Intervention: Screening, Counseling, and Diagnosis” (CR)
- Fri 02/15: Discussion / Debate / Case Study

Week 7: Deafness: Disability or Culture?

- Mon. 02/18: Jonathan Glover, “Disability and Genetic Choice” pp. 4-26 (CR)
- Wed. 02/20: Edward Dolnick, “Deafness as Culture” (CR)
- Fri 02/22: Joel Feinberg, “A Child’s Right to an Open Future” pp. 124-134 (CR)

Week 8: A Right to an Open Future

- Mon 02/25: Dena S. Davis, “Genetic Dilemmas and the Child’s Right to an Open Future” (CR)
- Wed 02/27: Adrienne Asch, “Prenatal Diagnosis and Selective Abortion: A Challenge to Practice and Policy” (CR)
- Fri. 02/29: Discussion / Debate / Case Study

III. Better than Well – Eugenics & Enhancement

Week 9: Eugenics

- Mon. 03/03: Jonathan Glover, “Eugenics: Some Lessons from the Nazi Experience” pp. 215–220
- Wed. 03/05: Julian Savulescu, “Procreative Beneficence: Why We Should Select the Best Children” (CR)
- Fri. 03/07: Discussion / Debate / Case Study

March 10 – March 14: SPRING BREAK

Week 10: Enhancement – Superior Performance

- Mon. 03/17: The President’s Council on Bioethics, “Superior Performance” pp. 101-123 (CR)
- Wed. 03/19: “Superior Performance” pp. 123-139 (CR)
- Fri. 03/21: Will Carroll, “Profile: The Student” (CR)

Week 11: Enhancement – Superior Performance

- Mon. 03/24: Immanuel Kant, “One’s Own Perfection is an End That Is Also a Duty” (CR) & “Superior Performance” pp. 140-151 (CR)
- Wed. 03/26: Vernon Howard, “Fair Play: Ethical Issues of Doping in Sport” (CR)
- Fri. 03/28: “Illicit ‘Study Drugs’ Tempting More Students” (CR)

Week 12: Psychopharmacology & The Pursuit of Happiness

- Mon. 03/31: Martha J. Farah, “Neurocognitive Enhancement: What Can We Do and What Should We Do?” pp. 775-779
- Wed. 04/02: Carl Elliot, “The Tyranny of Happiness: Ethics and Cosmetic Psychopharmacology” (CR)
- Fri. 04/04: Discussion / Debate / Case Study

IV. Death and Dying

Week 13: Death

- Mon. 04/07: David Rakoff, “TBA” & Thomas Nagel, “Death” (CR)
- Wed. 04/09: John Hardwig, “Is There a Duty to Die?” (CR)
- Fri. 04/11: The Oregon Death and Dignity Act pp. 404-6 & Leon R. Kass, “Is There a Right to Die?” (CR)

Week 14: Active & Passive Euthanasia

- Mon. 04/14: Philippa Foot, “Killing and Letting Die” (CR)
- Wed. 04/16: Dan W. Brock, “Voluntary Active Euthanasia” pp. 437-445
- Fri. 04/18: Discussion / Debate / Case Study

Week 15: Physician Assisted Suicide

- Mon. 04/21: Felicia Cohn & Joanne Lynn, “Vulnerable People: Practical Rejoinders to Claims in Favor of Assisted Suicide” pp. 446-453
- Wed. 04/23: Gert, Culver, & Clouser, “An Alternative to Physician-Assisted Suicide” pp. 457-464
- Fri. 04/25: In Class Evaluation

Monday, April 28th: Last Day of Class

Class Contact

Name: _____ Email: _____