

PHI 3XX: BIOETHICS

sample syllabus

OVERVIEW

An introduction to central ethical questions that arise in the area of bioethics, and to the resources various ethical theories offer for resolving those questions. We will analyze five broad topics: a brief overview of contemporary moral theory, the definitions of life and death, the importance of informed consent in the liberal tradition, the social dimensions of healthcare (including law and distribution), and specific applied cases (including mental illness, genetic engineering, euthanasia, abortion, and human experimentation).

TEXTBOOKS

Helga Kuhse & Peter Singer, editors – *A Companion to Bioethics, 2nd Edition, Paperback* – ISBN: 9781405163316

Oliver Sacks – *The Man Who Mistook His Wife for a Hat: And Other Clinical Tales* – ISBN: 9780684853949

Anne Fadiman – *The Spirit Catches You and You Fall Down* – ISBN: 9780374533403

ASSIGNMENTS

40% – Reconstructions. Four argument reconstructions with analytic commentary, one for each unit. 10% each.

30% – Research paper. On a pre-approved topic related to the course. Submit an outline or draft for early feedback.

20% – Participation. Both frequency and quality count, and your regular attendance is factored in as well.

10% – Homework. Ten précis assignments, one per week from 9/5 to 11/9. Hard limit: 500 words or fewer.

FORMAT

The class is conducted seminar-style, so expect very little lecture and a substantial emphasis on discussion. Each class day we read one or two papers, essays, or articles. Each day I call upon a few students to summarize the day's readings. These summaries contribute to your discussion grade. When you are not called upon to summarize, you will be called upon to interpret, analyze, defend, or criticize others' ideas. Reading load is about 20-30 pages per class period. Most papers are technical and take 1-2 hours to read, depending on your prior philosophical reading experience.

POLICIES

Laptops and tablets are permitted; phones are not. Use common sense and do not bother yourself or others.

Arriving over 15 minutes later is considered an unexcused absence. If I am over 15 minutes late, you may leave.

Attendance and participation are graded subjectively. The more you talk, the more quickly I learn your name.

Late assignments incur a 10% penalty (one letter grade) for each day, unless I have granted an extension.

Extensions, grade disputes, and requests for incomplete grades will be judged on a case-by-case basis.

E-mail is my preferred method of communication. I reply within 48 hours. If I do not, e-mail me again.

The First Rule of Good Discussion: “**Keep an open mind, but not so open that your brain falls out.**”

ACCOMMODATION

Please inform me by the end of the first week of class of any health concerns or documented physical, mental, or learning disabilities. We will work together to help you succeed according to your abilities.

HONOR CODE

I take the Honor Code very seriously. Suspected violations will be reported to the Honor Court and pursued.

READING SCHEDULE AND DUE DATES

Readings marked as (COM) are in the *Companion to Bioethics* book. Readings marked as (ONL) are online.

All readings must be completed by class time. You must turn in one précis assignment each week for ten weeks. The first précis is due on 9/5 and the last on 11/9. All précis assignments must be turned in online before class.

(1) NORMATIVE ETHICS

Weeks 1-2 Normative Ethics	Course presentation and introductory lecture	T 8/22
	(ONL) Mill : Excerpt from <i>Utilitarianism</i>	R 9/23
	(ONL) Kant : Excerpt from <i>Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals</i>	T 8/29
	(ONL) Aristotle : Excerpt from <i>Nicomachean Ethics</i>	R 8/31
Assignment	Reconstruction #1 due online	F 9/1

(2) NORMATIVE BIOETHICS

Weeks 3-4 Normative Bioethics	(COM) Rachels : Ethical theory and bioethics	FIRST PRÉCIS DUE	T 9/5
	(COM) van der Burg : Law and bioethics		R 9/7
	(COM) Childress : A principles-based approach		T 9/12
	(COM) Hare : A utilitarian approach		
	(COM) Oakley : A virtue-ethical approach (COM) Manning : A care approach		R 9/14
Assignment	Reconstruction #2 due online		F 9/15

(3) AUTONOMY AND CONSENT: THEORY

Week 5 Autonomy	(ONL) Christman : Autonomy in moral and political philosophy	T 9/19
	(ONL) Dworkin : Excerpts from <i>The Theory and Practice of Autonomy</i>	R 9/21
Week 6 Consent	(ONL) Entwistle et al. : Supporting patient autonomy	T 9/26
	(COM) Young : Informed consent and patient autonomy	R 9/28
	(COM) Elliott : Patients doubtfully capable or incapable of consent	
Assignment	Reconstruction #3 due online	F 9/29

(4) AUTONOMY AND CONSENT: APPLICATION

Weeks 7-8 Autonomy in Practice	(COM) Storch : Ethics in nursing practice	T 10/3
	(COM) Tschudin : Global trends in nursing ethics	
	(ONL) Maclean : Excerpts from <i>Autonomy, Informed Consent, and Medical Law</i>	R 10/5
	(ONL) Manson & O'Neill : Consent: Nuremberg, Helsinki, and beyond	
	(COM) Gillon & Sokol : Confidentiality	T 10/10
FALL HOLIDAY. NO CLASS.	R 10/12	
Assignment	Reconstruction #4 due online	F 10/13

(5) LIFE AND DEATH

Week 9 <i>Euthanasia</i>	(ONL) Nagel: Death (COM) Brock: Medical decisions at the end of life	T 10/17
	(ONL) Rachels: Active and passive euthanasia (COM) Stoffels: Voluntary euthanasia, suicide, and physician-assisted suicide	R 10/19
Week 10 <i>Abortion</i>	(ONL) Thomson: A defense of abortion	T 10/24
	(COM) Warren: Abortion (ONL) Hursthouse: Virtue theory and abortion	R 10/26
Assignment	Paper outline or draft due online	F 10/27

(6) SOCIAL DIMENSIONS

Week 11 <i>Healthcare</i>	(COM) Winkler & Marchand: Society's allocation of resources for health (COM) Daniels: Is there a right to health care, and if so, what does it encompass?	T 10/31
	(ONL) Mooney: Communitarian claims and community capabilities	R 11/2
Week 12 <i>Global Health</i>	(COM) Lowry & Schüklenk: Global health responsibilities	T 11/7
	(COM) Outterson & Light: Global pharmaceutical markets LAST PRÉCIS DUE	R 11/9
Weeks 13-14 <i>Mental Illness</i>	Sacks: <i>The Man Who Mistook His Wife for a Hat</i> (cases 1, 2, 3, 5, 8)	T 11/14
	Sacks: <i>The Man Who Mistook His Wife for a Hat</i> (cases 9, 11, 13, 14, 15)	R 11/16
	Sacks: <i>The Man Who Mistook His Wife for a Hat</i> (cases 16, 18, 20, 21, 24)	T 11/21
Assignment	Research paper due online	T 11/21

Thanksgiving Break (Nov. 22 – Nov. 26)

Weeks 15-16 <i>Healthcare & Imperialism</i>	Fadiman: <i>The Spirit Catches You and You Fall Down</i>	T 11/28
	Fadiman: <i>The Spirit Catches You and You Fall Down</i>	R 11/30
	(ONL) Chiu: Medical, racist, and colonial constructions of power	T 12/5
	Course review and final discussion	R 12/7
Assignment	FINAL EXAM IN CLASS	T 12/5