ETHICAL ISSUES IN HEALTH CARE

1-79-753-01

GOAL

The aim of this course is to explore in some depth three selected topics in health care: the patient-professional relationship, public health and health policy, and health care financing. Special attention will be devoted to the ethical dimensions of these topics.

OUTLINE OF SESSIONS

Introduction (August 31)

I. The Patient-Professional Relationship

Codes of Ethics; Bills of Rights; Rights and Responsibilities (September 7)

Truth-Telling (September 14)

Informed Consent (September 21)

Confidentiality (September 28)

II. Public Health and Health Policy

Lifestyle Intervention (October 5)

Acceptability of Risk and Cost-Benefit Analysis (October 12)

Occupational Safety and Health; Prenatal Screening (October 19)

III. Health Care Financing

Health Care Economics (October 26)

The Allocation of Health Care Resources: Parts 1 and 2 (November 2 and 9)

Securing Access to Health Care: Parts 1 and 2 (November 16 and 30)

IV. Open Session (December 7)
TEXTBOOKS

Tom L. Beauchamp and LeRoy Walters, eds., Contemporary Issues in Bioethics, 2nd ed. (Belmont, Calif.: Wadsworth, 1982). Hereafter cited as B-W.

Joseph P. Newhouse, The Economics of Medical Care (Boston: Addison-Wesley, 1978).


REQUIRED READINGS

Session 1 (August 31): Introduction to the Course

None

Session 2 (September 7): Codes of Ethics; Bills of Rights; Rights and Responsibilities


Session 3 (September 14): Truth-Telling


Session 4 (September 21): Informed Consent

B-W, pp. 184-191.


Session 5 (September 28): Confidentiality

B-W, pp. 198-211.

Session 6 (October 5): Lifestyle Intervention

B-W, pp. 435-463.

Session 7 (October 12): Acceptability of Risk and Cost-Benefit Analysis


Session 8 (October 19): Occupational Safety and Health; Prenatal Screening

B-W, pp. 478-499.

Session 9 (October 26): Health Care Economics

Newhouse, Economics of Medical Care, pp. 1-114.

Session 10 (November 2): The Allocation of Health-Care Resources: Part 1

B-W, pp. 381-417.

Session 11 (November 9): The Allocation of Health-Care Resources: Part 2


Thanksgiving Vacation (November 23)


Session 14 (December 7): Open Session

Readings to be assigned

RESERVE SHELF

A reserve shelf containing all readings not included in the textbooks has been set up in the Bioethics Library at the Kennedy Institute. Library hours are 9–5 on Tuesdays, Thursdays, and Fridays; 9–6 Mondays; 9–8 Wednesdays; and 10–3 Saturdays.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

The requirements for the course are as follows:

1. Completion of all assigned readings and participation in class discussion of the readings.

2. Preparation of a one- to two-page issue paper for a class session.

3. Preparation of a brief report (not to exceed five pages) on the delivery of health care in a setting that you observe.

4. Preparation of a 15-20 page term paper.

The issue paper should be an analytical and critical response to one of the readings assigned for the topic that you choose. The author's thesis or findings should be summarized in at most one paragraph. The remainder of the paper should be devoted to analysis and critique. Please make copies of your paper and place it on the reserve shelf in the Bioethics Library by the Monday morning preceding the Wednesday class in which the reading will be discussed.

The brief report on the delivery of health care should be based on your direct observation in a health-care delivery setting. The instructor will work with you in helping to identify an appropriate setting and in securing the necessary clearances. The report should seek
to relate the ethical principles and issues discussed in the course to the delivery of health care in the setting that you observe. The brief report, not to exceed five double-spaced pages, is due on Wednesday, November 2.

The 15-20 page term paper is due on Wednesday, December 14, one week after the final class period. The paper should reflect your critical skills as you analyze a conceptual, ethical, or public-policy question related to health care. It may treat an issue discussed in the course or another issue, or it may be an elaboration of your brief report. The instructor will be available to discuss proposed term paper topics and relevant literature.

The components of the final grade will be as follows:

- Participation in class discussions: 20%
- Issue paper: 20%
- Brief report: 20%
- Term paper: 40%.