GEORGE MASON UNIVERSITY  
School of Nursing  
Department of Philosophy and Religion  

Syllabus Outline  

1. **Course Title:** Nurs 660/Phil 610 Seminar in the Ethics of Health Care (3 credit elective course)  
2. **Name of Professors:**  
   (a) Mary Silva (or designated others), PhD, RN, School of Nursing  
   (b) Daniel Rothbart (or designated others), PhD, Department of Philosophy and Religion  
3. **Name of Educational Institution:** George Mason University, Fairfax, VA  
4. **Audience Level:** Graduate students throughout George Mason University  
5. **Subjects Covered:** Theoretical background (theories and principles of biomedical ethics; nature of moral reasoning); professional obligations to patient (informed consent, truth-telling, euthanasia); professional obligations to other professionals (codes of ethics, autonomy and power conflicts, conscientious refusal); professional obligations to society (microallocation and macroallocation of health care resources; right to health care).  
6. **Date Course Updated:** November 1985
I. Course Description

An examination of the moral dilemmas within the health care profession, with special emphasis on patients' rights, professional obligations to other professionals, and issues of social justice in health care. Methods of rational moral deliberation based on ethical theories and principles will be applied to ethical dilemmas in health care.

II. Course Objectives

A. Discuss ethical theories, principles, and decision-making frameworks.

B. Analyze methods of moral deliberation by applying the preceding theories, principles, and frameworks to health care issues.

C. Discuss major concerns related to select bioethical issues in health care.

D. Evaluate the effects of bioethical issues on future trends within the health care profession.

III. Course Outline

A. **Unit I: Theoretical Background**
   
   Week 1—The nature of moral reasoning  
   Week 2—Ethical theories  
   Week 3—Principles of biomedical ethics

B. **Unit II: Professional Obligations to Patients**
   
   Week 4—Informed consent  
   Week 5—Truth-telling  
   Week 6—Euthanasia, refusal of treatment for the elderly

C. **Unit III: Professional Obligations to Other Professionals**
   
   Week 7—Codes of professional ethics, accountability  
   Week 8—Autonomy and power conflicts among nurses, physicians, and other health care professionals  
   Week 9—Conscientious refusal by health care professionals
D. Unit IV: Professional Obligations to Society

Week 10—Microallocation of health care resources
Week 11—Macroallocation of health care resources
Week 12—The right to health care

E. Unit V: Common Themes Within Health Care Ethics

Week 13—Summation of common themes within health care ethics
Week 14—Student presentations of papers

IV. Required Textbooks


V. Course Requirements (each counts 1/3 of course grade)

A. Seminar Presentation
B. Seminar Preparation and Participation
C. Seminar paper
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Nurs 660/Phil 610: Seminar in the Ethics of Health Care  

I. Seminar Presentation (One-Third of Grade)  

Students will be required to present a seminar on an ethical dilemma in health care. Topics presented must be approved by the instructor, and students will schedule at least one conference with the instructor to plan the seminar. Students will distribute seminar objectives, an outline of the presentation, teaching-learning activities, and reading assignment, including an annotated bibliography of major sources, one week prior to the presentation. The seminar will include case studies in health care ethics. Students will place required readings (2 sets) on closed reserve in the library. Students also will give the instructors a set of the required readings.  

A. Objectives for Seminar Presentation¹  

1. Identify at least one major moral dilemma in health care.  

2. Discuss the ethical theories and/or principles that underlie the moral dilemma.  

3. Identify what theories and principles are in conflict.  

4. Present current evidence and commentary from the literature that clarify the moral dilemma.  

5. Discuss methods of ethical decision making to resolve the dilemma.  

6. Lead the seminar effectively.  

B. Grading Criteria for Seminar Presentation  

The grade for the seminar will be based on how well the student meets the above six objectives. The grade will be determined by the instructors, in collaboration with the student. If more than one student presents a given seminar, a common grade will be given.  

II. Seminar Preparation and Participation (One-Third of Grade)  

A. Objectives for Seminar Preparation and Participation  

¹Students presenting the seminar on "Common Themes Within Health Care Ethics" will work individually with the instructor to define objectives.
1. Read thoroughly all required readings for each seminar.
2. Participate actively and constructively in each seminar.

B. Grading Criteria for Seminar Preparation and Participation

1. To obtain an A grade, the student will carefully read all required readings for the seminars and will participate thoughtfully and actively in almost all of the group discussions. The student always will be a positive force in the group. In addition, the student will have read several of the suggested readings.

2. To obtain a B grade, the student will read carefully required readings for all but one seminar and will participate thoughtfully and actively in most of the group discussions. The student will consistently be a positive force in the group.

3. To obtain a C grade, the student will skim several of the required readings, will participate inconsistently in the group discussions, and on occasion will be a negative force in the group.

4. To obtain an F grade, the student will read carefully half or fewer of the required readings, will rarely participate in the group discussions, or often will be a negative force in the group.
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NURS 660/PHIL 610: Seminar in the Ethics of Health Care

Paper
(One-Third of Grade)

A. Objectives

1. Describe a specific moral dilemma in health care.

2. Select a position of the above dilemma to defend.

3. Defend your position with reasoned arguments. The defense must include ethical theories and/or principles, factual evidence, and case examples.

4. Examine critically potential objections to the above position based on opposing commentary in the literature.

5. Express oneself in writing in a clear manner.

B. Guidelines

1. The paper is to be typed double spaced on 8 1/2 x 11" paper with 1 1/2" margins.

2. Excluding references and appendices, the paper is to be between 10-12 pages. Five points will be deducted for every one-half page exceeded.

3. The paper must be written using the A.P.A.* style manual. Up to 5 points may be deducted if the style manual is not followed.

4. The paper must reflect correct English, including proper spelling, grammar, and logical organization. Up to 10 points may be deducted for incorrect English.

5. The paper is due by class time, week 12. Five points will be deducted for each day the paper is late.

C. Evaluation

The paper will be graded in accord with how well the guidelines and each of the above objectives are met; however, the objectives are not of equal weight. The greatest weight will be given to objective 3, then to objectives 4 and 5, followed by objective 1, then objective 2.


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NURS 660/PHIL 610: Seminar in the Ethics of Health Care

Paper Evaluation Guide

A. Objectives
   1. Describe a specific moral dilemma in health care.

2. Select a position of the above dilemma to defend.

3. Defend your position with reasoned arguments. The defense must include ethical theories and/or principles, factual evidence, and case examples.

4. Examine critically potential objections to the above position based on opposing commentary in the literature.

5. Express oneself in writing in a clear manner.
B. **Guidelines**

**NOTE:** This paper has been graded in accord with how well each of the above objectives and the guidelines have been met; however, the objectives were not considered of equal weight. The greatest weight was given to objective 3, then to objectives 4 and 5, followed by objective 1, then objective 2.
SELECT BIBLIOGRAPHY OF ETHICS BOOKS AND RESOURCES

GEORGE MASON UNIVERSITY
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Nurs 660-Phil 610:
Seminar in the Ethics of Health Care

ETHICAL THEORY AND PRINCIPLES


A clearly written introductory textbook that discusses classical ethical theories, as well as topics such as moral justification, rights, justice, and liberty and law. The textbook is enhanced by incorporating excerpts of original writings from well-known philosophers (e.g., John Stuart Mill, Immanuel Kant).


Discusses ethical theories and four principles of biomedical ethics: principle of autonomy, principle of nonmaleficence, principle of beneficence, and principle of justice. Theories and principles are then applied to a variety of ethical issues in health care such as informed consent, euthanasia, truth telling, and allocation of scarce resources.


An excellent introductory text on the major ethical theories. Well known for the interpretation and defense of utilitarianism, although the discussion of deontological theories is also valuable.


A detailed analysis of legal and moral rights and of liberty-limiting principles.

An advanced but brief summation of the classic ethical theories of deontology and utilitarianism. A widely used source to discuss conceptual frameworks in ethics.


An overall statement and defense of Kant's ethical theory.


An overall statement and defense of Mill's ethical theory.


An important and widely discussed "moderate" deontological theory that is concerned with placing limits on utilitarian thinking.


A helpful exposition of both ethical egoism (Chapter 3) and Kant's ethical system (Chapter 5).


Explores the basis of medical ethics, including topics such as professional ethics and role-specific duties, the social contract between society and a profession, and the social contract between professionals and patients. Also focuses on the principles of medical ethics, including contract keeping, autonomy, honesty, and justice.

APPLIED ETHICS


A statement of the American Nurses' Association's position on human rights for nurses engaged in research.


Explores the moral foundations of nurse-patient-physician relationships, as well as the foundations of ethical decision
making in nursing. Then discusses nursing ethics throughout the life span, including the procreative family, the problem of abortion, and the ethical issues in nursing care of infants, children, adolescents, adults, aged, and the dying.


Applies ethical theory to business, with emphasis on topics such as corporate social responsibility, self-regulation and government regulation, investment and production, ethical issues in advertising, environmental responsibility, and preferential hiring and reverse discrimination.


Explores topics such as privacy, rights of the free press, racial and sexual discrimination, world hunger and the right to food, abortion, euthanasia, and research with human subject.


A collection of articles focusing on the following topics: ethical theory and bioethics, concepts of personhood, patient-professional relationships, life and death, allocation and health policy, and biomedical research.


An excellent book which tends to focus on managerial issues in nursing, including ethical issues in nurse-physician relationships, ethical dilemmas among nurses, and personal responsibility for institutional and public policy. Also includes many case studies in health care ethics.


Discusses perspectives on institutional ethics committees, as well as descriptive summaries of extant institutional ethics committees. In addition, offers sample guidelines and policies such as no-code guides, do not resuscitate guidelines, and living will guidelines.


Discusses human rights, right to health care, nurse-health team relationships. Includes 15 case studies with analyses of each.

Discusses such topics as health care ethics and ethical dilemmas, values clarification and moral development, professional ethics and institutional constraints, behavior control, rights and health care, and public policy and health care delivery.


 Spells out a guide to individual steps in ethical decision making, including such techniques as identifying and weighing ethical rules, identifying and sorting alternative solutions, costs and benefits of an alternatives balance sheet, and techniques for coping with the least desirable option.


A well-written book that discusses such topics as justice and allocation in health care, genetic manipulation, informed consent, and professional accountability.


Focuses on such topics as the crisis in health care, nursing's struggle for autonomy, competence, technology and humanism, and social and political responsibilities of nurses.


Reviews ethical theories and then focuses on problems such as the medical worker-patient relationship, treatment without consent, experimentation and use of human subjects, euthanasia, abortion, allocation of scarce resources, and social justice and medicine.


Focuses on various models of the nurse-patient relationship, as well as accountability and role conflicts, patients' and nurses' rights, ethics of placebo administration, and allocation of scarce resources.


Focuses on patients' rights in general, the mentally ill as patients, the minor patient, reproduction issues, death with
dignity, and the expanded role, functions, and responsibility of the nurse.


An introductory discussion to such topics as health professionals and peers, health professionals and institutional structures, and health professionals and societal structures.


A collection of eight articles focusing on bioethical issues such as moral development and clinical decision making, information control and autonomy, ethics rounds with intensive care nurses, and human values in determining the fate of persons with mental retardation.


Uses developmental approach to ethics in nursing and focuses on the following topics: ethics and genetics, ethics and birth control, abortion as an ethical issue, neonatology and ethics, childhood and ethics, bioethics and adults, and ethics and the later years.


Theoretical bases for bioethics are discussed and then examined within a bioethical decision-making model consisting of ten steps.

BIBLIOGRAPHIES, ENCYCLOPEDIAS, AND CASE STUDIES RELATED TO ETHICS


A listing of 323 references on ethics related to general references, ethical decision-making models, ethics and the nursing role, ethics and nursing education, informed consent and research, death and dying, reproduction and genetics, behavioral control, and allocation of resources.


An updating of the above 1979 ANA publication to include 585 references. Headings remain the same as the 1979 edition.

A guide to general sources of information on bioethics (i.e., periodicals, bibliographies, computerized data base, dictionaries, encyclopedias, and handbooks), as well as specific sources (e.g., ethics, bioethics, ethics of health care and allocation, genetic intervention, behavior control, death and dying). Approximately 1000 documents on bioethics are included and annotated.


Contains 50 ethical case dilemmas representing nurses from 25 countries. Cases focus on heroic efforts, values and customs, maintaining standards of practice, safeguarding the patient, and social and economic working conditions, among others.


A presentation of 48 cases on bioethics with at least two commentaries on each case. Cases focus on issues in reproduction, patient-physician relationships, mental health and medical interventions, death and dying, human subjects research, allocation of scarce resources, and public policy.


An annotation of 793 references related to ethics in nursing, focusing on such topics as advocacy, caring and compassion, conscientious refusal, history of nursing ethics, humanities and nursing, sexism, and whistle-blowing. References are arranged by topic, alphabetically by annotated citations, and also by secondary author index.


An award-winning, four-volume reference work containing 315 essays related to bioethics. Essays arranged essentially alphabetically on topics such as abortion, alcohol and drug use, eugenics, health insurance, life (quality of), nursing, organ donation, privacy, psychosurgery, sex therapy, truth-telling, and warfare. Bibliographies follow each essay. There also is an appendix of 33 codes and statements related to medical ethics.

A compilation of 112 case studies, primarily involving physicians, that focus on topics such as confidentiality, truth-telling, abortion and sterilization, genetics, allocation of scarce resources, control of human behavior, human experimentation, the right to refuse treatment, death and dying.


An interdisciplinary bibliography on bioethics published annually since 1975. Contains the English-language literature on bioethics since 1973, with approximately 2000 new bioethical citations included each year. Divided into six parts: (1) introduction, (2) list of journals cited, (3) subject entry section, (4) bioethics thesaurus, (5) title index, and (6) author index.

SPECIAL ORGANIZATIONS RELATED TO ETHICS AND HUMAN VALUES

1. Institute of Society, Ethics, and the Life Sciences (The Hastings Center)
   360 Broadway
   Hastings-on-Hudson, NY 10706

2. The Kennedy Institute of Ethics
   1437 37th Street
   Washington, DC 20007

3. Society for Health and Human Values
   Suite 3A
   1311A Dolley Madison Blvd.
   McLean, VA 22101