II: Ethical Theories and Ethical Reasoning

DIPLOMA. OF APPLIED SCIENCE (NURSING)

STUDIES IN ETHICS, LIFE SCIENCES AND SOCIALITY

Dr. Alan Bowen James
School of Nursing
Kuring-gai College of Advanced Education
Eton Road
LINDFIELD N.S.W. 2070
AUSTRALIA
II. STUDIES IN ETHICS, LIFE SCIENCES AND SOCIALITY.

The programme of study is intended to provide both a comprehensive academic formation in the study of applied Ethics in the Life Sciences and the field of Sociality at the undergraduate level and a basic preparation for dealing with ethical dilemmas in nursing practice. Though the course is an essential component of the nursing programme, it is believed to be of interest and of practical relevance to people of any professional or academic affiliation who are concerned with the evaluative aspects of issues that confront the community as a result of advancements in modern technology, the biosciences and medicine.

The course is designed to present units of study that are fundamentally philosophical in conception, and must be addressed as a part of the process of dealing with ethical problems arising in any context. The philosophical conception allows for the systematic analysis of ethical principles, rules and theories coupled with the essential need to examine a wide variety of actual cases. The course addresses situations where doubt and conflict have arisen in the interest of rendering service to humanity with full respect for the dignity of the human person.

The situations range from professional responsibility, public and social policy, clinical issues, experimentation and technological advancement. Without application to cases in these contexts, a systematic analysis of ethical principles and theories would be disembodied and possibly not perceived as relevant to either vocational practice or personal choices. The cases selected for analysis will not only illustrate principles, but also show why and how doubts and conflicts arise in relation to the principles in hard cases. The selected cases will be as representative of current problems as possible, some cases will be drawn from the law and ethics not because they are co-extensive but because legal decisions commonly appeal to moral principles and rules or raise issues that must be handled at least in part by moral deliberation.

Preferred cases for analysis are those that both capture the working reality of health care, the business world, professional practice, community life, social and political administration and the ethical dilemmas, and choices that are forced upon the conscientious person.
AIMS OF THE COURSE

(1) To sensitise students to the ethical concerns arising from the whole area of modern biosciences.

(2) To promote an increased awareness in students of the ethical dimensions of decision making in the practice of medicine and nursing.

(3) To introduce students to the ethical dimensions of decision-making in the health care sector from a legal, economic, political and social perspective. The importance of the conceptual uncertainties and practices in these contexts will be highlighted.

(4) While not attempting to take substantive positions on specific ethical problems, it is intended to develop the students intellectual capacity, initiative and creativity with which they can then recognise, integrate and reconcile the various considerations relevant to the resolution of ethical dilemmas.

(5) To encourage in students responsible, critical and reflective attitudes, habits of personal research, and a commitment to the study of ethics that will continue throughout their lives.

(6) To enable students to participate in raising community awareness of the issues and consequences of the various alternatives in the face of ethical dilemmas in health care, its delivery and practice.
ETHICS, LIFE SCIENCES AND SOCIALITY II
ETHICAL THEORIES AND ETHICAL REASONING

Semester II
Pre-requisite - Autonomy and Paternalism
Co-requisite - Communication II
3 Class Contact hours
6 Week hours

OBJECTIVES:
1. To introduce students to an historic view of the interrelations of medicine and the prevailing concepts of man—this is a required foundation for understanding the rational premises for medical activity in the past, and nursing activity more recently, and for a perception of the present state of medicine, history, and man.

2. To help students examine cultural history as a record of man's effort to understand his own nature and that of the world, and fellow humans, together with the order of relationships that should exist between them.

3. To help students understand human behaviour as necessarily rooted in the conception constructed by people about themselves and their universe.

4. To examine dominant cultural characteristics of any era and how they influence prevailing ethical theories and ethical reasoning.

5. To initiate a detailed study of teleological and deontological theories.

6. To initiate a detailed study or the nature of ethical reasoning.

7. To integrate the study of moral justification and its role in decisions of conscience with an understanding of the philosophical foundations of practice in health care.

8. To provide opportunities for the student to articulate moral point of view on a specific issue and justify the holding of that position in the face of an opposing view.

9. To examine the implications of a world view that places the primacy of the human person as central to all human activities.

10. To explore the question of human sociality and its implications for the entire spectrum of ethics.
Content:

1. Medicine, History and the Idea of Man. Primitive Man, Egyptian and Babylonian; Chinese; the Greek idea; the Roman idea; the idea of Man as person (Judaean-Christian tradition), Descarte's idea; Kant's idea; the contemporary idea of Man.

2. The nature of the responsibilities in providing health care, particularly in the domains of individual and social human values. Examples of issues - overpopulation, genetic engineering, reproductive technologies, ageing, recreation and the right use of leisure time.

3. Ethical thinking - Socrates example. The nature of ethics or moral philosophy; factors in morality - rules, principles, moral quality, obligation, sanctions, moral point of view; kinds of normative judgements - non-moral, moral obligation and moral value; the nature of a moral conflict.

4. Teleological Theories; Deontological Theories; Ethical Egoism; Psychological Egoism; The Divine Command Theory; Kant's Theory.

5. Meaning and Justification - Theories of Justification; The moral point of view. Why be moral?

6. Sociality - a survey of theories of human sociality; are human beings fundamentally social, or individuals for whom society is a matter of convention?


8. Areas of application for this unit:
   Business:
   A conflict of interest
   The individual in conflict with the firm
   Whistle-blowing
   National Standards and Multinational Practices

   Environment:
   Environmental responsibility
   Worker safety

   Health:
   Genetic Intervention and Reproductive Technologies

9. Questions to be addressed (not exhaustive)
   - Should it be assumed the rightness and wrongness of conduct is a legitimate object of study?
   - Is there any sense in which we can say that moral obligation really exists?
   - When one is doing normative ethics, what is one doing exactly?
-Is the lecturer in normative ethics offering some kind of knowledge, or merely prescribing some action that ought to be done or avoided?
-Is it true that people of the twentieth century, while making wonderful scientific and technological advances, have made hardly any ethical advances?
-Is it a function of ethics to make people live better lives?
-Is normative ethics made unnecessary by religion?
-What tests can be used to determine the adequacy of ethical theories?
-If humans are social by nature, is not natural morality manifested to us by the mores of our social milieu, so that whatever the group dictates is natural morality for us?
-Is it possible to make certain acts moral or immoral by law or by social approval?
-Is a person forced into having two kinds of morality, a natural morality for private life and a conventional morality for social and political life?
-What makes a situation a moral dilemma or moral conflict?
-What difference does it make to the definition of disease, the right to health care, the social responsibilities of health care givers if one sees human beings as fundamentally social or as individuals for whom society is a matter of convention?
TEACHING AND LEARNING:

Lectures:
Students are required to attend all lectures in Ethical Theories And Ethical Reasoning. The lectures will be taped and held in Closed Reserve, but this service is regarded as an aid to learning, not a substitute for lectures. Students will be tested on lecture content.

Tutorials:
Required reading is prescribed for each tutorial, the readings will include those from philosophical texts, as well as those from historical texts and literature (can be novels, poetry, drama, opera). Choices between literature must be discussed and mutually agreed to by tutor and student. The nature of the dialogue during tutorials is intended to be dialectic, explanatory, questioning, and clarifying, in a social climate of tolerance and acceptance in the face of conflict and alternative ideas. As well as becoming informed about the ideas under consideration, the student will be engaged in processes to develop-critical thinking and articulation on evaluative issues. Examples for discussion and/or debate can be taken from concrete cases personally experienced, or taken from journals or the news media or those found in literature, drama or opera.

Case Studies:
These will be drawn from personal experience in day to day health care delivery where the question of what is a right action for a particular patient and/or group of patients arises. Case studies may involve a patient or group of patients, if they are able, for the purpose hearing their values or belief system that influences the choice of what is best for them. Theory, rules, principles are brought to bear on the analysis of specific situations; the reasoning processes of students are expressed and evaluated for logic, consistency and ability to seek the truth of a situation.

Assessment
Tutorials 15%
Case Studies 15%
Essay 20%
Examination 50%

The criteria looked for in student performance during tutorial and case studies are the knowledge based on experience that:
(i) they can and do articulate logically, coherently and consistently on evaluative issues
(ii) they can and do identify conflicting values, formulate a principled position and support that position with logical arguments
(iii) literature (and/or drama) has provided them with insights into human values, purpose and meaning.

Students must be successful in each mode of assessment.
RECOMMENDED READINGS:

TEXTS:
Abrams, N. and Buckner, M.D. Ed. by Medical Ethics, London: M.I.T. Press, 1983

Acton, H. B. Kant's Moral Philosophy, Macmillan Press, 1979


Part 3 Worker Safety, pp 189-205
Part 4 Conflict of Interests and Roles

Chapters 1, 2, 12

Beauchamp. T.L. and Childress. Principles Of Biomedical Ethics, Chapters 1, and 2


Frankena, W. Ethics, Prentice-Hall, 1973
Chapters 1,2,3,5, and 6

Gonsalves, M.A. Fagothey's Right And Reason, St. Louis: C.V. Mosby, 1981
Chapters, 1, 2, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 15 and 19, 23,26, 33, 34

Goodpaster, K.E. and Sayre, K.M. Ethics And Problems of the Twenty First Century, London:
University Of Notre Dame Press, 1979

Parsons, T. The Functional Setting of Medical Practice, In Abrams, N. and Buckner, M.D.

Rowe, O. An Introduction to Greek Ethics, Hutchinson, 1976


Hobbes. J. Leviathan

Rousseau, J.J. Social Contract

Marx & Engels. Communist Manifesto

Bioethics Encyclopaedia: Headings:
Ageing and The Aged
Ethics
Eugenics
Environment and Man
History of Medical Ethics
Genetic Diagnosis and Counselling
Genetic Screening
Genetics and the Law
Sociality
Reproductive Technologies
Law and Morality

JOURNALS:
Hastings Centre Report

HISTORY, NOVELS, POETRY, DRAMA, AND OPERA:
Camus, A. The Plague

Lewis, S. Arrowsmith

Renault, M. The King Must Die

Renault, M. The Persian Boy

Rousseau, J. Emile