IV: Truth and Information

DIPLOMA OF APPLIED SCIENCE (NURSING)

STUDIES IN ETHICS, LIFE SCIENCES, AND SOCIALITY

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11. 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 SOCIOLOGY IV

TRUTH AND INFORMATION

Semester II
Pre-Requisites

3 Class Contact hours
8 Week hours

OBJECTIVES:

The student will examine the concepts of truth, truth-telling, lying, deception, non-disclosure and under-disclosure. Arguments in relation to each of the concepts are examined.

The student will systematically examine the problems of truth, lying, deception, non-disclosure and under-disclosure in relationships professional and patient in the health care system. Other contexts are also examined: advertising and information; government and the public.

The student develops an understanding of the rules of fidelity confidentiality and privacy and the principles from which the rules are claimed to be derived.

Content:

1. Veracity, the duty to tell the truth and not to lie or deceive others; Veracity, an independent principle ranking with beneficence, non-maleficence and justice; veracity, a rule derived from other principles - respect for persons fidelity, or utility.

2. Arguments for the duty of veracity:
   - respect for person's argument.
   - an expression of the duty of fidelity or promise-keeping argument.
   - relationships of trust between human beings are necessary for fruitful interaction and co-operation.
3. Truth, unattainable or attainable: defining intentional deception and lying; lying and choice; the perspective of the liar; the perspective of the deceived; rejecting all lies; conflicts of duty; placebos; excuses; justification.

4. Lies protecting peers, clients, patients, colleagues; lies for the public good; paternalistic lies; lies to the sick and dying.

5. Rule of fidelity; conflicts among contractual and role obligations.

6. Rule of confidentiality; rule of privacy; source of right of privacy and right to confidentiality, principle of autonomy or principle of 'do no harm'; legal duties.

7. Advertising and information disclosures; business bluffing in labour negotiations; legal and ethical issues; deceptive and persuasive practices in advertising; reasonable or ignorant consumer.

8. Questions to be addressed (not exhaustive)

If lying is wrong because its purpose is to deceive, yet not all deception is wrong, why is deception by lying wrong?

In what does the specific malice of lying consist?

A lie is said to be wrong because it is harmful to society, but if it is certain a lie will not hurt, but will benefit society, why should it not be told?

If people trusted one another, there would be no need of binding another with a formal contract. Do contracts arise out of people's immorality, and would they have no place if ethics were fully observed?
Can moral obligations be self-imposed?

Can there be a moral obligation without a law giver?

How does moral necessity, which is the same as oughness, obligation, and duty, accomplish its effect?

To what extent is the concept of lying, culturally determined?
LECTURES.

Students are required to attend all lectures in *Truth and Information*. 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 literature (can be novels, poetry, drama, opera). Tutorials at this level will require of students to draw upon the ethical theories, principles and rules presented in the five previous units of the course. Students will be required to demonstrate intellectual maturity, and confidence and take initiative in leading tutorial dialogue. Two debates will be part of the tutorial programme: one to an audience of peers and significant others by invitation and a second, a public debate.

CASE STUDIES.

Case Studies will be drawn from the following contexts:

- personal experience in the health care system.

- media - daily newspapers, magazines, television. Advertising will be a major focus of attention, also the degree to which violence is reported.

ASSESSMENT.

Tutorials 15%

Case Studies 15%

Essay 20%

Examination 50%

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


Beauchamp, T.L. and Childress. Principles of Biomedical Ethics, Chapter 7.


Garret, T.M. Ethics in Business.


Bioethics Encyclopaedia. - Headings: - Communication Confidentiality Truth Telling

Journals
Hastings Centre Report
Harvard Business Review.

Novels:
Orwell, G. 1984
Law, C.B. Spinning Ali