Proposal for Course:  
Advanced Seminar in the Ethical Dimensions of Medical Practice

Synopsis of Course: This course will be an advanced level seminar in specific topics in medical ethics for students who have taken the previous introductory course "Ethical Dimensions of Medical Practice" offered here at Buffalo (or for those who, in the instructor's opinion, have been sufficiently prepared in other ways or places). Given such an earlier introduction to ethical methods and perspectives, and the field of medical ethics as a whole, the intention here is to give the advanced student an opportunity to study and reflect upon certain specific themes and problems in much more depth and with greater philosophical acuity.

I. Outline of Course Objectives

A. Enhance skills in recognizing, approaching and resolving moral problems in a more rigorous, philosophical fashion.
B. Attain a more in-depth appreciation of various moral perspectives by reviewing how they treat certain specific issues in medical practice.
C. Gain a more nuanced grasp of the values at stake and the conflicts ingredient in these specific issues.

II. Manner of Presentation

A. The course will meet every week for two hours from the second week of February to the end of April (14 meetings).
B. Each meeting will take a guided discussion format indispersed with some formal presentations by the instructor, students, or visiting faculty.
C. Students will undertake a directed preparation for each class in terms of the reading of selected articles, study notes and case studies.
D. I will assume responsibility and leadership in the course though I will attempt to have at least one physician present at each meeting. Dr. Ross Markello has volunteered to sit in on many of the classes.

III. Content of the Course

Given their background from the previous course, I have consulted with prospective students to ascertain what areas of study they were particularly interested in. Three specific areas of concern emerged: topics concerning the physician-patient relationship, euthanasia, and rights in and to health care. Though I intend to keep a few meetings open at the end to respond to further issues that arise during the course, I can offer the following tentative outline of the progress of the course:

A. Euthanasia regarding severely handicapped children (4 weeks)

This section will proceed in terms of one text, viz. Leonard Weber's Who Shall Live?, which, along with giving a comprehensive review of the many different moral perspectives taken on this issue, has the added virtue of constantly relating it to other areas where the issue of euthanasia arises, e.g. euthanasia regarding adults and incompetents.
B. **Euthanasia Topics** (2 weeks)

Here I will supplement the Weber material with other reading both from the basic text (Gorovitz) and with a number of handouts from the current literature that have not yet been anthologized.

C. **Topics Concerning the Physician-Patient Relationship** (3 weeks)

This section will pursue a number of basic themes, e.g. the nature of the relation itself, confidentiality, truth-telling, paternalism, using Gorovitz as the basic source again heavily supplemented by handouts from the current literature.

D. **Rights to and in Health Care** (3 weeks)

Gorovitz will again be the basic but heavily supplemented source here. This section will get particularly philosophical as I will be concerned to get the participants to analyze the arguments for and sense of the various rights that are being claimed, review source of the philosophic literature on the nature of rights and social justice, and reflect on how sometimes scarce, often expensive medical resources might relate to such notions.

**NOTE:** I have spelled out 12 of the 14 weeks of the course. I suspect that I will simply embroider each of the four sessions as I proceed, i.e. as further student concerns and problems arise, and end with section D.

IV. **Names of Texts, Other Bibliographic Material**

*Who Shall Live?* by Leonard Weber

B. Other Material from:
1. *Contemporary Issues in Bioethics* (Beauchamp and Walters)
2. *Case Studies in Medical Ethics* (Veatch)
3. *Beneficent Euthanasia* (Kohl)
4. *Death Inside Out* (Steinfels and Veatch)
5. *Biomedical Issues and the Law* (Humber and Almeder)
6. *Ethics and Health Policy* (Branson and Veatch)

V. **Course Evaluation**

Student performance will be gauged in the form of either a paper or final exam (their option). Student evaluations of the course will be solicited after the last class meeting.