PROSEMINAR: BIOETHICS
179-718-01
Wednesdays, 10:15-11:55 a.m.

Department of Philosophy
Georgetown University
Fall Semester, 1989

Instructor: Madison Powers
Office Telephone: 687-6821
Office Hours: Wed. 1-3 p.m.

Goals and Objectives

The general aim of this course is to provide a foundation for advanced bioethics courses in the graduate program. The course is designed to assist the bioethics graduate student in achieving the following objectives:

(a) identification of salient issues in the field;
(b) effective use of available bibliographical resources and research techniques;
(c) a greater understanding of the theoretical underpinnings of contemporary bioethics debates and the relation of applied ethics to moral theory;
(d) an appreciation of the range of perspectives from which bioethical questions are explicitly, or tacitly, approached; and
(e) a familiarity with the institutions and related academic disciplines concerned with bioethical issues.

Weeks 1-3 provide an introduction to the scope and content of bioethics and related fields, bibliographic resources, and online databases. Weeks 4-8 survey a number of ethical principles, their application to bioethical questions, and their relation to moral theory more generally. Weeks 9-10 concentrate on two contexts in which many bioethical issues are presented. Weeks 11-15 focus upon the range of philosophical, institutional, and cultural perspectives from which bioethical issues often are addressed.

SCHEDULE OF CLASSES

1. Introduction (8/30)
2. BIOETHICSLINE Research (9/6)
3. Bibliographic Resources (9/13)
4. Ethical Theory Principles, and Applications (9/20)
5. Autonomy and Treatment Decisions (9/27)
6. Harm to Others; Killing and Letting Die (10/4)
7. Beneficence: The Limits to Doing Good (10/11)
8. Justice: The Distribution of Benefits and Burdens (10/18)
9. Clinical and Research Issues: Duties to Treat and the Limits on Experimental Treatments (10/25)*


11. Religious, Secular, and Cultural Perspectives (11/8)

12. The Role of Government: Law, Morality, and Medicine (11/15)

13. The Role of Government: Public Health Perspectives (11/22)


15. The Concepts of Health and Disease: Assumptions and Normative Implications (12/6)

* seminar meeting time may be rescheduled

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Each student will be required to complete three written assignments.

The first assignment, an online search, is due October 18. It will consist of four parts: (1) the statement of an issue, problem, or question on which a BIOETHICSLINE search will be made; (2) the formulation of the search strategy, including the choice of search terms; (3) the actual search (a computer printout); and (4) an analysis of search results. Taken together, Parts 1, 2, and 4 should not exceed 10 double-spaced typed pages.

The second assignment, the first draft of a scope note, is due November 15. The scope note should provide a brief introduction to a bioethical topic, an annotated bibliography of what you consider to be the most important materials discussing the topic, and a short list of additional readings on the topic. The scope note should not exceed fifteen double-spaced typed pages and should be submitted in duplicate. Comments will be provided by the instructor in individual meetings and each student is expected to read and comment upon the scope note of another student.

The third assignment is a revised version of the scope note and it is due Friday, December 8.

The components of the final grade will be as follows:

25% class participation, including comments on another student's first draft of a scope note
20% written report on online search
25% first draft of scope note
30% final draft of scope note
Differences in academic and professional backgrounds among students may suggest differences in the time and attention needed for various readings. A first reading of Beauchamp and Childress at an early stage is strongly recommended for students who have not completed substantial coursework in bioethics. Additional references for moral theory are provided for most weeks and are especially recommended for students who have not completed substantial coursework in ethics and the history of philosophy.

1. Introduction (8/30)

2. BIOETHICSLINE Research (9/6): Guest Seminar Leader Tamar Joy Kahn

Walters and Kahn, eds., Bibliography of Bioethics: Volume 14: 3-10.


3. Bibliographic Resources (9/13): Guest Seminar Leader: Mary Carrington Coutts

Suggested materials for reference and study to be discussed in class.

4. Ethical Theory, Principles, and Applications (9/20)

PBE, Ch 1: 3-66.

CIB, Ch 1: 1-43.


Additional Reading in Moral Theory:

(Moral Theory as a Guide to Action)

Bales, "Act Utilitarianism: Account of Right-making Characteristics or Decision-Making Procedure?", American Phil.

(Ethical Pluralism and the Many Sources of Moral Obligation)


(The Role of Moral Principles)

Harman, "Relativistic Ethics: Morality as Politics", in *Midwest Studies in Philosophy*, 3, 1978:

Warnock, *The Object of Morality*: chs 4-5.


5. Autonomy and Treatment Decisions (9/27)

PBE, ch 3: 67-119.

President's Commission for the Study of Ethical Problems in Medicine and Biomedical and Behavioral Research, "Informed Consent as Active, Shared Decision-making", CIB: 390-93.

Faden and Beauchamp, "The Concept of Informed consent", CIB: 394-98.

* Buchanan & Brock, "Deciding for Others", *Milbank Quarterly* 64, supp 2: 17-44 (esp 28-38, 48-75, 81-85).


Additional Reading in Moral Theory and Metaphysics:

Dworkin, The Theory and Practice of Autonomy.


Elster, "Sour Grapes", in Sen and Williams, eds, Utilitarianism and Beyond: 219-38.

6. Harm to Others; Killing and Letting Die (10/4)

PBE, ch 4: 120-193.


Harris, The Value of Life, ch 2: 28-47. 


Rachels, "Active and Passive Euthanasia", CIB: 245-48


excerpts from Cruzan v. Harmon (handout).

Additional Reading in Moral Theory:


Mackie, Ethics: Inventing Right and Wrong, chs 5-7: 105-68.

Fried, Right and Wrong: 7- top of 39.


Nagel, The View From Nowhere, ch 9: 165-88. 


7. Beneficence (10/11)

PBE, ch 5: 194-227.


* Parfit, "Innumerate Ethics", Philosophy and Public Affairs 7,
1978: 285-301

Additional Reading in Moral Theory:

Williams, "A Critique of Utilitarianism", in Williams and Smart, Utilitarianism: For and Against, sections 3-5: 92-118.


Ross, The Right and the Good: ch 2, 16-47 [LaC] BJ 145 76

Slote, Consequentialism and Common-Sense Morality, Ch 2: 23-34.

Mackie, Ethics: Inventing Right and Wrong, chs 5-7: 105-68. [B] 37

8. Justice: Distribution of Benefits and Burdens (10/18)

PBE, ch 6: 256-306.


Buchanan, "The Right to A Decent Minimum of Health Care", CIB: 572-77.

*Meyer and Moon, "Health Care Spending on Children and the Elderly", in Palmer et al, eds., The Vulnerable: 171-200.


Additional Reading in Moral Theory:

Rawls, A Theory of Justice.

Barry, The Liberal Theory of Justice.

Barry, Theories of Justice.

Buchanan, Marx and Justice: esp., Chapter 6, Part II, 107-21.

Sandel, Liberalism and the Limits of Justice.

Veatch, Foundations of Justice.

Callahan, Setting Limits.

Daniels, Just Health Care.
9. Clinical and Research Issues: Duties to Treat and the Limits of Experimental Treatments (10/25)*

PBE, 349-57.


Veatch, "Institutional Review Boards: Professional or Representative?", CIB: 473-78.

Schafer, "Ethics of the Randomized Clinical Trial", CIB: 441-47.


Additional Reading:

Fried, Medical Experimentation.

Harris, The Value of Life, ch 2: 48-63.


Pellegrino and Thomasma, For the Patient’s Good.


materials from the Office of Technology Assessment (handout).


United States, President’s Commission for the Study of Ethical Problems in Medicine and Biomedical and Behavioral Research, Summing Up: Final Report on Studies of the Ethical Problems in Medicine and Biomedical and Behavioral Research. (on reserve).
Additional Reading on Philosophy, Science, and Technology:


Blank, Life, Death, and Public Policy.

Veatch, Death, Dying, and the Biological Revolution.

Stanworth, ed., Reproductive Technologies: Gender, Motherhood, and Medicine.

Segal, Technological Utopianism in American Culture.

Harding, The Science Question in Feminism.

11. Religious, Secular, and Cultural Perspectives (11/8)


*Barry, "Ethical Considerations of Human Investigation in Developing Countries", New England Journal of Medicine, vol 319, No 16: 1083-85.

Additional Reading:

Veatch, ed., Cross-Cultural Perspectives in Medical Ethics.


Fuller, Alternative Medicine and American Religious Life.

12. The Role of Government: Law, Morality, and Health (11/15)

*Warnock, A Question of Life: vi-xvii.


Ely, "Discovering Fundamental Values", in his Democracy and Distrust: 43-72.


Additional Reading in Moral and Political Theory:

Devlin, The Enforcement of Morals.


Larmore, Patterns of Moral Complexity, chs 3-4: 40-90.


13. The Role of Government: Public Health Perspectives (11/22)


* Menzel, "Prevention or Treatment?", in Medical Costs, Moral Choices, ch 7: 151-83. RA 410.53 M46 1983


* Christoffel, "The Role of Law in Reducing Injury", Law, Medicine, and Health, 17, no. 1, 1989: 7-16.

PBE: 228-249.


Additional Reading on the Foundations of Formal Methods:


Humber and Almeder, Quantitative Risk Assessment.

McLean, ed., Values at Risk.

Mishan, Elements of Cost-Benefit Analysis.

15. The Concepts of Health and Disease: Assumptions and Normative Implications (12/6)

WHO definition, CIB: 79


Boorse, "On the Distinction Between Disease and Illness", CIB: 90-96.

Additional Reading:

Reznek, The Nature of Disease.


Szasz, The Myth of Mental Illness.

Fingerette, Heavy Drinking: The Myth of Alcoholism as A Disease.

Grunbaum, The Foundations of Psychoanalysis: A Philosophical Critique.