Moral Reasoning and Bioethics

Course Description:

Emphasis in this course will be on developing moral reasoning skills needed to understand and apply ethical theories to case studies in bioethics. We will cover:

> Elements of moral psychology and the role that moral reasoning and moral theories play in moral decision making and moral action.


> Contemporary moral philosophy: Moral Relativism, Pragmatism, Existentialism and Feminist Ethics.

> The characteristics of first- and second-order moral principles, and of subordinate moral rules.

> The relationship of rules to principles, resolving conflicts among rules, the usefulness of counter examples, judging the effectiveness of rules and making them more effective, changing rules, and the moral cost of changing the rules.

> Acting under constraints imposed by social roles and by nature. Judging professional behavior in the light of duties imposed by society. Moral reasoning and bioethics cases.

Philosophy is the mutual exchange of ideas on the nature of things (in this case, the nature of ethics, particularly as it relates to health care) in an orderly, systematic way. Therefore, participation in class discussions is essential. In addition, you will be required to write a 10-page paper on a subject to be mutually agreed upon. You must submit a topic which must be approved by me, then a prospectus outlining your approach/argument and giving a bibliography, and (on the last day of class) the final paper which you will summarize in a 5-minute presentation. We’ll discuss due dates for topics and prospectuses at the second meeting of class.
REQUIRED READINGS:

Aristotle, excerpt from *Nicomachean Ethics*.

Aquinas, excerpt from *Of the Natural Law*.

Bentham, Jeremy. excerpt from *An Introduction to the Principles of Morals and Legislation*.


   Fletcher, "The Patient Self-Determination Act"


Kant, Immanuel. excerpt from *The Foundations of the Metaphysic of Morals*.

Mill, J.S. excerpt from *Utilitarianism*.


* The text is at Barnes and Noble bookstore; the articles are available for photocopying at the reserve desk in the main library at CSU. LIBRARY HOURS ARE: M-TH 7:30-10:30PM, FRI 7:30-5PM, SAT: 9-6PM, SUN 12-6. EXCEPT; MON 10/12 9-12; WED 11/11 8-5; TH 11/26 CLOSED; FRI 11/27 9-5.
9/23
Introduction, course requirements, administrivia, the nature of morality and an overview of moral theories. Elements of moral psychology and the role that moral reasoning and moral theories play in moral decision making and moral action.

9/30
Read: MR Ch. I; Rest article, Gilligan article.

10/7
Read: MR II, III.

10/14
Obstacles to Moral Reasoning and Moral Virtue. Read: MR IV

10/21

All students: During this class we will form subcommittees to analyze specific issues related to the PSDA from Kantian or Utilitarian perspectives.

10/28
HALLOWEEN SPECIAL ON RESPECT FOR THE DEAD: NEJM article "Sounding Board: The Ethics of Using Newly Dead Patients for Teaching and Practicing Intubation Techniques." At reserve desk. The great traditions in moral philosophy: Kantianism and Utilitarianism.
5:30 pm--committees convene to formulate consensus responses to assigned questions.
6:00 pm--Utilitarians present, Kantians write down criticisms/objections.
6:15 pm--Kantians present, Utilitarians write down criticisms/objections.
6:30 pm--Replies are written on the board.
6:45 pm--Discussion
7:15 pm--Revisions are written

11/4

11/11
The Virtue Tradition: Read: Waithe (a) pages 226-39 (on Phintys of Sparta and Perictione I), Waithe (b).

11/18
Social Contract Theory, Contemporary non-feminist moral theories, Feminist views on morality. Read MR VII, VII.
Graduate Students: read Waithet (c) [only the following sections are assigned]

Part II,
2. Catharine Sawbridge Macaulay-Graham
3. Sophia, A Person of Quality
4. Marie Olympe de Gouges
5. Anna Doyle Wheeler

Part III,
3. Harriet Hardy Taylor Mill
4. Jenny Poinsard d'Héricourt

11/25 USING ALL THIS STUFF: MR IX, X,

12/2 USING ALL THIS STUFF: MR XI, XII, XIII.

12/9 FINAL EXAM DAY. Your presentation in class is your final exam. No excuses. No exceptions without penalty.