PROSEMINAR IN BIOETHICS
PHIL-718-01

GOAL AND OBJECTIVES

The aim of this course is to provide a foundation for advanced bioethics courses in the graduate program. Our specific objectives will be to explore the scope and content of bioethics, to study selected issues, and to consider competing methodologies for analyzing bioethical problems. We will also briefly survey the work of bioethics commissions and committees, both in the United States and abroad.

In the early part of the course we will be introduced to bibliographic resources, online databases, reference works, textbooks, and audiovisuals that are useful in bioethics research and teaching. We will also learn how to search two databases, BIOETHICSLINE and ETHX, and be introduced to bioethics-related home pages on the World Wide Web. Later we will each visit, or become directly involved at, a health-related site. At the conclusion of the course, each class member will prepare a syllabus for a one-semester course on bioethics.

SCHEDULE OF CLASSES

Class 1: Introduction to the course (August 28)

Class 2: Recent history, scope, and content of bioethics (September 4)

Class 3: Bibliographic resources, journals, textbooks, and audiovisual resources; introduction to searching ETHX (September 11)

Guest seminar leader: Doris Mueller Goldstein

Class 4: Introduction to searching BIOETHICSLINE (September 18)

Guest seminar leader: Joy Kahn

Class 5: Issues in bioethics 1: euthanasia and the prolongation of life (September 25)

Class 6: Issues in bioethics 2: abortion (October 2)
Class 7: Issues in bioethics 3: health care allocation (October 9)

Class 8: Issues in bioethics 4: class decision (October 16)

Class 9: Methodologies in bioethics 1: a principle-based approach (part 1) (October 23)

Class 10: Methodologies in bioethics 1: a principle-based approach (part 2) (October 30)

Class 11: Methodologies in bioethics 2: a case-based approach (November 6)

Class 12: Methodologies in bioethics 3: virtue-based approaches (November 13)

Class 13: Methodologies in bioethics 4: multicultural approaches (November 20)

Class 14: Bioethics commissions and committees in the United States and abroad (November 27)

Class 15: Syllabus construction; retrospect and prospect (December 4)

TEXTBOOKS


United States, Office of Technology Assessment, Biomedical Ethics in U.S. Public Policy -- Background Paper (Washington, DC: OTA, June 1993). Cited as OTA, BE.
READINGS

Class 2: The history, scope, and content of bioethics (September 4)


Please study the chronology entitled "The (Re)Birth of Bioethics: Important Events and Publications, 1940-1972." In what year or range of years was bioethics (re)born, in your opinion? What issues received the most attention, and in what sequence? Who were some of the most important authors? When did theologians become involved in bioethical discussions? When did philosophers become involved? What evidence do you find about the establishment of bioethics institutes or programs? Were there any bioethics journals?

Class 3: Bibliographic resources, journals, textbooks, and audiovisual resources; introduction to searching ETHX (September 11)

Guest seminar leader: Doris Mueller Goldstein


* Materials distributed in class or available on the reserve shelf in the National Reference Center for Bioethics Literature
Class 4: Introduction to searching BIOETHICSLINE (September 18)

Guest seminar leader: Joy Kahn


Look at the new edition of the *Encyclopedia of Bioethics* and a textbook or anthology in bioethics to see how the field is conceptualized and what topics are covered. Then compile and submit a page on which you describe in one paragraph each three possible topics for your BIOETHICSLINE search. Please be precise about the scope of your topics.

Class 5: Issues in bioethics 1: voluntary euthanasia and assisted suicide (September 25)

Chapter introduction and essays by Rachels, Beauchamp, Quill, Pellegrino, Callahan ("When Self-Determination . . ."), Brock, Fenigsen, and Admiraal in Beauchamp-Walters, *CIB*, pp. 431-449, 479-511.

Class 6: Issues in bioethics 2: abortion (October 2)


Class 7: Issues in bioethics 3: health care allocation (October 9)

Chapter introduction, essays by Veatch, Buchanan ("The Right . . ."), Engelhardt, Hadorn, and Daniels, and excerpts from the President's Commission report in Beauchamp-Walters, *CIB*, pp. 675-706, 734-745.

Class 8: Issues in bioethics 4: class decision (October 16)

Readings to be assigned
Class 9: Methodologies in bioethics 1: a principle-based approach (part 1)  
(October 23)


Class 10: Methodologies in bioethics 1: a principle-based approach (part 2)  
(October 30)

Beauchamp-Childress, *PBE*, pp. 259-394.


Class 11: Methodologies in bioethics 2: a case-based approach (November 6)


Examine two casebooks cited by Mary Carrington Coutts in "Basic Resources in Bioethics" (on reserve).
Class 12: Methodologies in bioethics 3: virtue-based approaches (November 13)


Class 13: Methodologies in bioethics 4: multicultural approaches (November 20)


Class 14: Bioethics commissions and committees in the United States and abroad (November 27)

OTA, *BE*, pp. 1-60.


*The White House, Office of the Press Secretary,"President Clinton Names Members to the National Bioethics Advisory Commission," July 19, 1996

Class 15: Syllabus construction; retrospect and prospect (December 4)


**COURSE REQUIREMENTS**

Each student will be required to complete three written assignments. There will be no final term paper in the course.

The first assignment, an online search, is due Wednesday, October 9. It will consist of four parts: (1) the statement of an issue, problem, or question on which a BIOETHICS-LINE search will be made; (2) the formulation of a search strategy, including the choice of search terms; (3) the actual search (a computer printout); and (4) an analysis of search results. Parts (1), (2), and (4), taken together, should not exceed ten double-spaced typed pages.

The second assignment, a site visit or practicum report, is due Wednesday, November 6. The report should describe the site which you have visited or in which you have decided to work as a volunteer during this semester and should provide an inventory and brief assessment of the major ethical problems encountered at that site. Possible sites for the practicum will be discussed in class. If you volunteer, approximately 15-20 hours should be spent at the site. The site visit or practicum report should be approximately ten to twelve double-spaced pages long. It should both describe the setting you choose and analyze the major ethical questions that arise in that setting.

The third and final assignment is due Friday, December 13 (a lucky day; you will be happy to be finished). It is a course syllabus for a one-semester course in bioethics at the high school, undergraduate, graduate, or professional level. The course may be either a survey of bioethical topics or a more detailed examination of a specific topic.
There will be a final examination in the course. For M.A. candidates in Philosophy who are concentrating in bioethics, this examination replaces the old requirement of a comprehensive examination in bioethics.

The components of the final grade will be as follows:

25% Completion of assigned readings, as evidenced in class participation and written assignments
15% Report on online search
15% Site visit or practicum report
20% Course syllabus
25% Final examination

Please try to submit papers on time, both in the interest of justice (equal time for all students) and in the interest of efficiency. Personal or familial emergencies can, of course, constitute legitimate grounds for extensions beyond deadlines. Please contact the instructor in advance of the deadline if such an emergency arises.