BIOMEDICAL ETHICS
(INST 306)

Dr. Ann Boyd e-mail - boyd@hood.edu
Tuesday and Thursday 2:00-3:15

Office Hours: Professor Boyd's office is located on the second floor of ARC in the Graduate School. The Graduate School posts coffee hours each week and you may make an appointment by calling Kay Fraser x3602.

Required Texts: The texts are Applying Moral Theories (2nd edition), C.E. Harris, Jr., ed., and Ethical Issues in Modern Medicine, J.D. Arras and B. Steinbock 1999.

Course Description: This course is a philosophical and scientific approach to understanding current ethical issues in medicine. The issues to be discussed include, end of life care, abortion, proxy consent, euthanasia, genetic engineering, testing, enhancement, cloning, organ transplantation, human experimentation, and the problem of allocation of scarce medical resources. Students will become acquainted with scientific techniques and principles, and students will apply philosophical concepts and ethical criteria to issues in biomedical ethics.

Course Objectives: The general objective of this course is to present students with the opportunity to understand the complexity of issues in the twenty-first century due in large part to the creation of new medical technologies that present individuals and societies with unprecedented choices. The scientific knowledge necessary to understand ethical decisions in reproductive care, genetics, life and death, viral epidemics, vaccine testing, are integrated with an understanding of basic ethical theories. Students will learn several philosophical ethical theories that provide a standard upon which to base a reasoned analysis of several case studies that represent issues in biomedical ethics.
Requirements for the Course:

1. Students are required to read the required assignment prior to class and to submit assignments in class on the day they are due. (Late submissions of assignments are not accepted without prior approval.)

2. Adequate preparation for class is crucial for robust discussion. Please come to class prepared to discuss, question, and critically examine the issues of the day. Be willing to listen, learn, challenge, contribute.

3. Two in-class essay examinations will be given during the semester; each exam is worth 20% of the final grade.

4. The final examination is self-scheduled and is worth 20% of the final grade. Yes, the final exam is comprehensive.

5. Students will be assigned written reports on the analysis of specific cases which show a clear comprehension of the ethical issues involved. These reports are due at the end of the class period. The case studies constitutes 30% of the final grade. Each case study should be no more than three double-spaced, typewritten pages.

6. Finally, each student is required to keep a journal (for a useful discussion regarding the nature of journals and of journaling, please refer to the separate handout, "Journals", which accompanies the syllabus). The journal will constitute 10% of the final grade.

A note on privacy: in order to assure students privacy and, it is hoped, a sense of comfort in keeping a journal, each student will be assigned a number. Please record this number on the cover of your journal, and do not put your name on your in the journal. Journals will be read only by the instructor and graded using the numerical identifier.
Tentative Lecture Schedule:

Jan. 21: Introduction to the course, review of syllabus, overview of biomedical ethics. Read chapter 1 of Arras and Steinbock (pg 1-40).

Jan. 26-28: Overview of the five types of ethical theories: teleological, deontological, egoistic, utilitarian, and natural law, and several criteria in evaluating moral theories. Read Harris, Chapters 4-6.


Feb. 4: Testing the moral theory against a case study. Applying moral theories required identification of the facts, the parties involved, and the ethical issues. A "good" action must be placed within a context of reasoned analysis: there needs to be some basis to support why one action is good in contrast to any alternative action. Handouts will provide an example of a case examined according to Respect for Persons and Utilitarian standards.

Feb. 9: Continuation of a case analysis based on Egoism and Natural Law.


Feb. 18: Case study one is due today. Class discussion.

Feb. 23: Euthanasia and Advanced directives. Read part 2 of Arras and Steinbock, pg 143-302. For Discussion: What conceptual issues are common and which are distinctive in defining death or life as these terms generally mean the end or beginning of life


March 4: Case study #2

March 16: Exam #1


March 30: Case Study #3


April 8: Health Care Reform: Discuss conflicting position of individual dignity of persons with the distribution of scare resources in a concept of distributive justice.

April 13: Case #4

April 15: Exam #2


April 27: Read part 5 of Arras and Steinbock: Experimentation on Human subjects pg 537-580.

April 29: Case # 5

May 4: Review of Course — Also, your journals are due today

SELF-SCHEDULED FINAL EXAM
What Journals Are Not

Journals are not to be confused with diaries, notebooks, or class notes. Diaries usually do little more than log external events ("My best friend got married last Saturday...") with occasional personal comments regarding those events ("I wish he had been getting married to me..."). Notebooks usually do little more than summarize readings. Class notes do little more than reflect (sometimes inadequately!) activities and discussion which have taken place in class.

What Journals Are

Journals frequently resemble diaries, notebooks, and class notes because the writer of a journal sometimes responds to external events (in politics, science, medicine, religion, law, etc.), or reacts to a book article, or reflects on something which has been said in a classroom setting.

Journals, however, represent a distinctive kind of writing. First, they articulate intellectual pilgrimage and autobiography. Students engaged in writing journals find out quickly that they are putting a very real part of themselves down on paper. To reveal something of one's thoughts and feelings is a personal activity. It is such a personal activity that some students attempt to stay on a fairly objective level by "reporting" what they have read and thought (but still keeping an academic cocoon securely around themselves). Other students find out that writing a journal becomes a more authentic enterprise when the writer does not pretend toward objectivity but lets herself speak in what she writes.

Second, journals provide an occasion for insights and questions. Insights are those perceptions in which an idea or fact integrates other materials or explains personal experience. The "light" suddenly dawns; the pieces of a puzzle fall together for the first time! Insights may integrate intellectual understanding; they may also integrate personal experience and some significant concept discussed in class and provide clues to the meaning of life. The quest for and the articulation of such insights provide much of the excitement of keeping a journal.
Journals also provide an occasion to raise questions. Journals offer an opportunity to record questions, to speculate on how to answer them, and to understand why the question was raised in the first place. Questions may document ignorance or curiosity, but when one knows why a question is important and what precisely one does not know, then there exists a profound kind of awareness.

Third, journals represent a tether that binds the student to the subject matter of the class. By means of the journal, the student has an ongoing opportunity to respond to class activities, react to assigned readings, engage in "dialogue" with the instructor, and explore various perspectives on the subject matter of the class as these appear in newspapers, magazines, and film.

In contrast to a research paper which may be done in a short period of time (the last weekend of the semester!), a journal provides a semester-long format for interacting with the subject matter of the course.

The Contents of a Journal

The contents of a Journal are limited only by the subject matter of the course and the writer’s creativity, imagination, and breadth of experience. As a result, a journal often includes a variety of materials: personal reflections; comments on lectures or class discussions; reactions to films, tapes, newspaper items, journal and magazine articles; insights gained from readings and conversations; personal art work, cartoons, and poetry; extended statements on issues of personal concern.

Guidelines for Journals

1. Keep your journal in a regular spiral notebook (8 ½ x 11) unless you prefer to type your journal. In the latter case, please be certain that the printer provides a copy which is dark enough to read easily.

2. Write legibly. As you write, remember to be compassionate toward your reader by writing clearly, in some semblance of order and in ink (not red ink, please).

3. Make frequent entries. Productive journals contain entries made throughout the semester with, at the very least, a weekly update.
4. Date your journal entries. This practice is helpful if at a later date you want to return to a topic you have previously discussed, or if the reader wishes to make a comment about one of your entries.

5. Do not be reluctant to put your thoughts on paper. Your reader is interested in your insights, questions, comments, criticisms and discoveries. To protect your privacy, you will not be identified and no element of your journal will be discussed with anyone.

6. Use the journal as an opportunity for developing your own ideas about the subject matter taken up in class. For example, you may want to have several entries on the same subject to see if your thoughts change at various points during the semester.

7. Periodically during the semester (especially before turning in the journal) read your journal entries and write a "summary" entry: see if particular themes have appeared in earlier entries; see if you are able to answer questions you raised earlier in the semester; see if you can arrive at any conclusions based on your previous entries.

Criteria for Grading Journals

Journals are subjective and difficult to assess in terms of a grade. Nevertheless, I will use the following criteria in grading the journals:

(1) the number of entries (keep in mind, however, that bulk is not the most important part of an intellectual endeavor. More important considerations include):

(2) the degree to which you follow the guidelines listed above;

(3) the depth or extensiveness of your reasoning;

(4) the logical coherence or internal consistency of your remarks;

(5) the degree to which you interact with class activities and the assigned readings, and

(6) the willingness you exhibit to take the risks involved in reaching deep within yourself to reason and wrestle with the issues covered in the course.

After grades are submitted, you may retrieve your journal and final exam from the Graduate School office during business hours (8:30 a.m. -6 p.m.). Any journals that are not claimed by the end of the summer, first day of class in the fall semester will be destroyed. YOU MUST COME FOR YOUR OWN JOURNAL: IT WILL NOT BE GIVEN TO A CLASSMATE, EVEN WITH YOUR PRIOR KNOWLEDGE AND CONSENT.