Course description

We will be looking at bioethical dilemmas in five broad subject areas—organ transplantation, environmental contamination and remediation use and abuse of humans in research and in the clinic, the treatment of animals, and new genetic and reproductive technologies. We will study cases—that is, individual situations—and the dilemmas they pose. The cases appear in the medical and ethics literature, in nonfiction books, in short stories, in news items, and in films, documentaries, and television shows. We will examine what happened, who was involved, what the issues were, how decisions were made, who was affected by the outcomes, and what everything means. Each case is unique, but similar issues and principles arise again and again. We will consider how justice, beneficence, nonmaleficence, autonomy, caring, truth-telling, resource allocation, and other concerns of bioethics figure into each case. We will discuss strategies that are effective in promoting ethical decision making. Several guest speakers will visit our class.

Requirements

1. Three short papers, each 2-3 pages, analyzing assigned readings and/or reflecting on bioethical issues and cases. The first assignment is described on page 4. I will distribute instructions for the others later in the semester.
2. One 10 minute oral presentation of a case. I will assign cases for these presentations during the first two weeks of class.
3. A 12 to 15-page research paper. You choose a topic of interest to you that relates to one of the five subject areas that we will cover in the course. You should begin your research early and meet with me during the second half of the semester—and no later than Apr 2—to discuss your topic ideas. I will distribute detailed guidelines for this paper after spring break.
4. Prepared attendance at and participation in all classes. You are responsible for all reading, writing, video, and website assignments.
5. Two conferences with me: one by February 12; one by April 2.

Course Materials

All readings and videos listed on the syllabus are available on reserve at Magill Library or on Blackboard. The four books are available at the bookstore.

Books

**Articles**

15. United States Supreme Court decision: *Buck v. Bell* (1927)

**Ethics codes**

1. Nuremberg code: [http://ohrp.osophs.dhhs.gov/references/nurcode.htm](http://ohrp.osophs.dhhs.gov/references/nurcode.htm)
2. World Medical Association version of the Declaration of Helsinki: [http://www.wma.net/e/policy/17-c_e.html](http://www.wma.net/e/policy/17-c_e.html)
**Additional Readings**
I will distribute some additional articles in class throughout the semester. If you miss a class, please arrange for someone to give you the article or pick up a copy outside my office during the week.

**Videos**
1. Allie McBeal episode
2. Genie, The Wild Child
3. Henry: One Man's Way
4. Radio Bikini

**Websites**
Listed under specific dates.

**Writing Assignments**
Type all papers double-spaced, 12-point font, on white paper on one side. Include your name and e-mail address at the top of the first page and your initials on all subsequent pages. Number the pages. Each paper should have a title.

**Oral Presentations**
For this ten-minute talk give us background on the story and explain what key ethical, social, legal, medical, scientific, political or other issues were involved. How do bioethical principles—autonomy, justice, beneficence, etc. figure into the case? Prepare two substantive questions for the end of your talk that can serve as springboards for a ten-minute class discussion. Prepare a one-page handout that will be useful for others who want to follow up on your talk.

**Websites**
We will look at a few websites and discuss their contents. When the assignment includes a website, spend at least 45 minutes exploring the site. Note what the major topics are, what information and services the website provides for visitors, what stories you find there, and so on. Be ready to discuss the site and what you learned from it.

**Attendance**
You should prepare for and attend all classes. If you will be unable to come to a class, **e-mail me by noon** the day of the class explaining why you will not be there. Assignments are still due at the beginning of that class.

**Deadlines**
Meet them!

Each student can take one extension, if necessary, on one of the 2-3 page papers during the semester. (I prefer no extensions, but I realize that “things happen.”) The paper will then be due the following week at the beginning of class. E-mail me by noon the day the paper is due if you plan to take an extension. Other extensions are only possible with a note from your dean.

Meeting with me

I look forward to meeting with you. I will hold regular office hours on Wednesday mornings from 9:45-11:45. I can also meet with you by appointment. But please note that I live in Maryland and will be commuting during the semester, so I will only be on campus on Tuesdays and Wednesdays. You can reach me at all times through e-mail.

Grades

Your grade will reflect the quality of your papers and your oral presentation and the quality of your contributions to our class discussions each week. Your grade on the final paper will carry more weight than your grades on the short papers and oral presentation.
Course Schedule and Assignments

All assignments and readings are due on the day on which they are listed.

January 21: Introductions

January 28: Organ transplantation

- Readings: Dwyer and Vig—Rethinking Transplantation Between Siblings; Selzer—Wither Thou Goest; Pence—The Case of Baby Theresa
- Writing assignment #1: 2-3 pages: Could you imagine donating a kidney to someone? If not, why not? If so, who are the people to whom you would be willing to donate—your parent, your sibling, another relative, a friend, a stranger? What sorts of information—medical and other—would you be looking for in order to make an informed decision? What people other than the recipient and yourself would you consider as you make your decision? Explain your reasoning for each of your decisions.

February 4: Organ transplantation

- Readings: Grady—Death of Donor Halts Some Transplants; Grady—New Yorker Dies After Surgery To Give Liver Part to Brother; Munson—The Donor's Right to Take a Risk; Caplan—Right Hand and Autonomy
- Discussion of information at the UNOS website: www.unos.org
- Discussion of video of Ally McBeal episode

February 11: Environmental contamination and remediation

- Discussion of video: Radio Bikini
- Readings: Selzer—Luis, Guyer—Radioactivity and Rights: Clashes at Bikini Atoll
- Guest speaker: Jon Weisgall, attorney for the Bikini Islanders and author of Operation Crossroads

February 18: Environmental contamination and remediation

- Continued Bikini discussion
- Student presentations on environmental cases

February 25: Use and abuse of humans in the clinic and in research

- Reading: Buck v. Bell (U.S. Supreme Court), Gould—Carrie Buck's Daughter
- Discussion of video: The Decalogue II
- Reading: Fadiman—The Spirit Catches You and You Fall Down, pages 1-154

March 4: Use and abuse of humans in the clinic and in research

- Reading: Fadiman—The Spirit Catches You and You Fall Down, pages 155-288
- Writing assignment #2: 2-3 pages
- Guest speaker—Eric Lamberth, physician
March 11: Spring Break

March 18: Use and abuse of humans in the clinic and in research

- Readings: Beecher—Ethics and Clinical Research; Belmont Report; Nuremberg Code; WMA Declaration of Helsinki
- Student presentations on human subjects cases

March 25: Use and abuse of humans in the clinic and in research

- Readings: Rymer—Genie, The Wild Child, Greene—The End of the Party
- Student presentations on human subjects cases

April 1: Use and abuse of humans in the clinic and in research

- Benjamin—Contract and Covenant in Curacao
- Guest speaker: Alan Benjamin
- Writing assignment #3: 2-3 pages

April 8: The welfare of animals

- Reading: Singer—Animal Liberation
- Discussion of video: Henry: One Man's Way
- Student presentations on animal cases

April 15: The welfare of animals

- Continued discussion of animal welfare issues
- Discussion of xenotransplantation
- Guest speaker—Barbara Orlans, bioethicist and author of The Human Use of Animals

April 22: New genetic and reproductive technologies

- Reading: Rothman—The Book of Life, pages 13-41, 111-137, 161-250
- Discussion of information at the ERO website: www.eugenicsarchive.org
- Discussion of 19th century eugenics and 21st century genome project

April 29: New genetic and reproductive technologies (Last class)

- Readings: Kotzko—Medical Miracle or Medical Mischief, Cloning and genome handouts
- Discussion of genetic testing and cloning

Due dates for final papers

- Seniors: May 8 at noon
- Juniors: May 14 at noon