University of Virginia School of Nursing  
Fall, 2005

GNUR 540  Ethics, Nursing and the Larger Health Care Arena

Course Credit: 3

Course Professor: Ann B. Hamric, PhD, RN, FAAN, Associate Professor  
Phone: 924-0112; Office: Room 5007, McLeod Hall  
Email: abh4f@virginia.edu

Pre-requisites: None

Technology: Students should have access to word processing and email. We will communicate via Toolkit’s email feature, so you should either use your Virginia.edu account for email, or have your email forwarded from your Virginia address to your preferred personal email address.

Location and Time: McLeod Hall Room 1003  
Fridays, 9 – 11:50 am

Course Description:  
This seminar course is designed to enhance the student’s ability to: describe and analyze ethical concepts foundational to nursing practice; utilize a variety of ethical decision-making frameworks to analyze ethical dilemmas in practice; and, play a leadership role in promoting ethical health care delivery. This course emphasizes the unique ethical perspective of nursing in the complex health care arena. Students will be challenged to examine individual and professional values, as well as critically analyze diverse perspectives on various ethical issues.

Course Objectives:

1. Compare the historical development of nursing ethics with the current state of nursing ethics.
2. Evaluate theories of bioethics using an identified set of criteria.
3. Apply selected ethical decision-making frameworks in patient care situations that require moral judgment and/or action.
4. Compare personal and professional values and examine their effect on the nurse’s ethical decisions.
5. Define leadership opportunities for the CNL to contribute to and maintain an ethical health care environment.
## Course Outline:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week</th>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Assignments</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Unit I: Introduction to Nursing Ethics</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>#1</td>
<td>Overview; Bioethics, Nursing Ethics, Legal Issues; Critical Thinking &amp; Analysis; Why does ethics matter? What does it mean to be an Ethical Nurse?</td>
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<tr>
<td>1/20</td>
<td>#2</td>
<td>Historical Foundations vs Contemporary Perspectives of Nursing Ethics; Clarifying our Values in Nursing; Codes of Ethics; Loyalty, Advocacy, Accountability</td>
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<td><strong>Unit II: Ethical Theories and Concepts</strong></td>
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<td>#3</td>
<td>Overview of Bioethics Theory: Virtue, Deontology, Utilitarianism, Natural Law; Classic Bioethics: Autonomy</td>
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<tr>
<td>2/3</td>
<td>#4</td>
<td>Classic Bioethics: Beneficence and Justice; Decide on Case for Paper</td>
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<td>2/10</td>
<td>#5</td>
<td>Alternative Bioethical Theories: Care, Feminist Theory</td>
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<tr>
<td>2/17</td>
<td>#6</td>
<td>Alternative Ethical Approaches: Casuistry, Narrative; Ethical Decision-Making Frameworks and Models</td>
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<td><strong>Unit III: Ethical Issues in the Real World of Nursing Practice</strong></td>
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<td>#7</td>
<td>Intra- and Inter-Professional Dilemmas: Among Nurses, in the Nurse-Physician Relationship; with other Healthcare Team Members; the Concept of Power in Ethical Practice</td>
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<td>3/3</td>
<td>[3/10 Spring Break]</td>
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<tr>
<td>#8</td>
<td>Caring for Difficult Patients/Difficult Situations; Ethical Analysis Paper Due</td>
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<td>3/17</td>
<td>#9</td>
<td>Working in an Institutional Context I: Clinical Leadership in Empowering Nurses to be Moral Agents; Preventive Ethics; Barriers &amp; Facilitators to Building Ethical Environments; Debate #1</td>
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<tr>
<td>3/24</td>
<td>#10</td>
<td>Working in an Institutional Context II: Managed Care; Cost Containment; Organizational Ethics; Debate #2</td>
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<tr>
<td>3/31</td>
<td>#11</td>
<td>Ethics Committees; Finding and Using Institutional Resources; Debate #3</td>
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<td>4/7</td>
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<td><strong>Unit IV: Widening the Frame: Ethical Issues in Public Health; Social Justice</strong></td>
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<td>#12: 4/14</td>
<td>Ethical Issues in the US Health Care System; Debate #4</td>
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<td>#13: 4/21</td>
<td>Ethical Issues and the Global Community; Debate #5</td>
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<td>#14</td>
<td>Leadership Roles in Clinical Ethics and Beyond; Course Conclusion and Evaluation</td>
<td>Final Exam Due?</td>
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**Criteria for Evaluation**

**Course Requirements:**
- Case analysis Paper: 30%
- Debate Presentation: 35%
- Final take-home exam: 35%

**Case Analysis Paper [Due 3/17]:**
Students will write a 5-6 page paper analyzing a specific case representing an ethical dilemma or moral distress. The instructor will review the case in advance, which should draw upon the student’s clinical experience. The steps of ethical analysis discussed in class will be used, with conclusions about ethically appropriate action developed based upon the analysis. Any references used should be cited, using APA format.

**Debate [Scheduled the last 6 weeks of class]:**
Students will be divided into five debate groups. Each group will present a 50-minute debate on an issue of their choosing, illuminating all sides of the issue. The last 10 minutes should be reserved for class voting and discussion. Students may develop their own debate topics, with faculty approval. Each debate group should identify a minimum of 3 references to give to the class to read one week in advance of their debate.

**Potential Debate Topics:**
- Are we ethically required to provide care to patients who refuse, in spite of our best efforts, to take responsibility for their health?
- Are we ethically obligated to provide care for illegal aliens who need major surgery?
- Should nurses assist patients who request aid in dying?
- Are nurses ethically obligated to provide life-prolonging care to terminally ill patients whose families request continued aggressive therapy?
- Should parents be able to refuse life-saving treatment for their children on the basis of their religious beliefs?
- Should the nursing profession take political action to adopt a single payor insurance system to cover all citizens?
- Do richer countries have an obligation to help poorer countries to ensure the health of their citizens?
- Are we ethically obligated to provide treatment (such as chemotherapy) to an elderly patient who may have a small chance of remission, but whose quality of life may be harmed?

**Final Exam [Due last week of class or during exam period – we will discuss]**
This take-home examination will consist of a series of short-answer essay questions covering the major themes of the course. You will be given a choice of three questions to answer. These essay questions will contribute to your CNL portfolio.

**Grading Policy:**
This course follows the standard grading scale for the SON. Please refer to the GRADUATE student manual for the complete policy on the grading scale and unsatisfactory grades; note that a grade below B- is not passing in the Graduate Program. One-half letter grade will be deducted for each week an assignment is late.
Privacy:

Faculty and students who utilize patient information as part of any educational experience must follow patient privacy and confidentiality guidelines outlined in the School of Nursing Handbook policy on research and clinical data.

The Honor Pledge

The University of Virginia has one of the oldest Honor Systems in the country. Integrity and honor and the Community of Trust are integral to our work together. I expect to see all of your work signed with the Honor Pledge, and more importantly, I expect that your signature signifies that you uphold the meaning of the Pledge. Individual assignments will not be accepted unless they are pledged.

Required Texts:


READINGS:

**Class #1: Overview**


**Class #2: Historical Foundations and Codes of Ethics**


**Class #3: Overview of Bioethics Theory; Autonomy**


Beauchamp & Childress, Chapter 3

**Class #4: Beneficence and Justice**


**Class #5: Care and Feminist Theory**


Beauchamp & Childress: Chapter 8, pp. 369-376.

**Class #6: Casuistry, Narrative, Ethical Decision-Making Frameworks**


Beauchamp & Childress: Chapter 9, pp. 391-397.


**Class #7: Intra- and Inter-Professional Dilemmas**


**Class #8: Caring for Difficult Patients/Difficult Situations**


**Class #9: Working in an Institutional Context I: Clinical Leadership; Barriers & Facilitators to Building Ethical Environments**


**Class #10: Working in an Institutional Context II: Managed Care; Cost Containment; Organizational Ethics**


**Class #11: Ethics Committees; Finding and Using Institutional Resources**


**Class #12: Ethical Issues in the US Healthcare System**

Beauchamp & Childress, pp. 250-264.


**Class #13: Ethical Issues and the Global Community**


**Class #14: Leadership Roles in Clinical Ethics and Beyond**


**Suggested References for Assignments:**


**Quick, Pragmatic Pocket Reference:**