COURSE DESCRIPTION

This seminar emphasizes contemporary controversies about methodology, including the role of theory, principles, cultural systems, pragmatic goals, cases, and particular judgments. Specifically, the course will: (1) examine so-called theories of biomedical ethics, (2) analyze the place (if any) of principles in bioethical theory, (3) ask whether a framework of universal principles should be replaced by or augmented by a virtue theory, casuistry, communitarianism, rights theory, moral-rules theory, pragmatism, or the ethics of care, and (4) inquire into the status of multiculturalism, moral relativism, and retrospective moral judgments.

The format in class is that of seminar papers and discussion. Discussion will be directed at the broader dimensions of the theories and methods, rather than at details of textual analysis or applications to specific problems, topics, or areas of bioethics. Discussion is expected to involve a minimum of interpretation and a maximum of discussion of the issues.

REQUIREMENTS

One classroom presentation is required of all class members, even if they are auditing the course. Two classroom reports are required of each graduate student taking the course for credit. Undergraduate students taking the course for credit will give only one classroom report.

The oral classroom presentation must be based on a written document exactly 2 1/2 pages long (5 minutes reading time). This document is to be distributed to all members of the class at the time of the student's presentation. The point of this document is not to exposit the texts or the issues, but rather to present a philosophical evaluation. Papers that are exclusively summative, expository, or interpretative are strongly discouraged. The specific topics for the class reports are provided below.

One term paper is required of all credit students. Specific topics will not be assigned to students for the term papers. Each student should make an individual proposal. The final papers must be no longer than 25 pages and no shorter than 15 pages (double-spaced). Papers not of this length will be returned for rewriting. Specific topics for term papers should be discussed early in the semester with the professor. A full draft manuscript of the term paper is due no later than April 15. The final paper is due one week before the end of the examination period.

ORIGINALITY, STANDARDS OF WRITING, AND SCHOLARLY RESEARCH

Papers and class presentations must contain creative thought and writing. Mere summaries of the views of others are unacceptable. As for style, quality of argument,
organization, and the like, pretend that you are submitting the paper to a journal. Consult the Chicago or Oxford Manuals on matters of style and form. You are also expected to know the standards of research and publication in philosophy, how to read and study texts, and how to construct a philosophical argument. Deficiencies in these areas will affect the grades awarded to papers.

ATTENDANCE
   Regular attendance is required. Auditors must make a firm commitment to attend all sessions throughout the semester.

TEXTS AND ABBREVIATIONS


   [Suggested for possible purchase:]

   [Expensive for purchase, but in KI Library]
TOPICS BY WEEK

1. What are the Problems of Theory and Method in Bioethics?
   B-C, "Criteria for Theory Construction," in B-C, Ch. 8 (5th edn.).

2. What Place for Principles?
   B-C, Chs. 1-2 (5th edn.).

3. Fundamentalism in Bioethics: the Common Morality as Fundamental

4. Specified Principilism
   B-C, Ch. 9 (5th edn.) (also repeat ch. 1).


5. Casuistry

B-C, Ch. 9 (5th edn.), "Casuistry: Case-Based Reasoning."

6. Pragmatism and Bioethics

Jonathan Moreno, “Bioethics is a Naturalism,” in McGee, pp. 11-16 only.
P.R. Wolpe and G. McGee, “‘Expert Bioethics’ as Professional Discourse: The Case of Stem Cells,” in McGee, pp. 190-91 only.
M. Benjamin, “Pragmatism and the Determination of Death,” in McGee, pp. 203-6 only.

7. The Ethics of Virtue

B-C, Ch. 2 (5th edn.) on Character Ethics and Virtue-Based Theory.
8. Ethics of Care


B-C, "Ethics of Care," in Ch. 8 (5th edn.).

9. Multiculturalism and the Role of Community and Traditions


B-C, Ch. 8 (5th edn.), "Communitarianism: Community-Based Theory."

10. Relativism and Nonrelativism in Bioethics: Does Bioethics Have the Resources to Resist Relativism?


11. Retrospective Moral Judgments in Bioethics: On What Basis?


