Teaching Ethics in the Health Care Setting
Part II: Sample Syllabus

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The National Reference Center for Bioethics Literature at the Kennedy Institute of Ethics receives many inquiries from instructors at institutions that are just beginning to teach medical ethics. In an effort to assist those individuals, we have devised a syllabus that could be adapted for many uses. This is intended to be an introductory level syllabus, perhaps one that would be appropriate for continuing staff education in a hospital or for an undergraduate college course. Of course, every instructor has his or her own style and preference for course content. This is offered merely as a place to start.

Recognizing that participants bring a variety of backgrounds to a course, four possible text books and two casebooks have been selected as texts for a course in health care ethics. There are a number of other books that also could have been chosen. Some of these are listed in Scope Note 15: Basic Resources in Bioethics (published in the Kennedy Institute of Ethics Journal 1 (1): 75–90, March 1991). Other video selections are listed in Scope Note 9: Bioethics Audiovisuals: 1982–Present (1988); (available directly from the National Reference Center for Bioethics Literature). Additional recommendations for works that provide cross-cultural or international views of medical ethics appear in the supplemental readings list at the end of this syllabus.

TEXTBOOKS


This text is well-suited for undergraduate education, with selected readings by philosophers, lawyers, and physicians. Includes 45 brief case studies to
illustrate various units of readings.


Appropriate for upper-level undergraduate or graduate education, this text includes selected readings by important philosophers, lawyers, physicians, and organizations. Includes the abridged texts of many significant court cases and government or organizational documents. Does not include case studies.


This text is suitable for upper-level undergraduate or graduate studies. It includes selections from well-respected lawyers, philosophers, and a few physicians. Includes excerpts from important court cases and policy documents. Provides only a few hypothetical case studies but does relate some authentic cases that are relevant to the various sections.


A compilation of contrasting readings from the popular Hastings Center Report, this book is appropriate for undergraduate or continuing health care education. It does not include an introduction to basic biomedical ethical theory. Perhaps less systematic in its approach to bioethics than the previous textbooks, this book covers twenty topics relating to reproduction, death and dying, human and animal experimentation, and selected public policy issues. Provides pro and con arguments for each issue.

CASEBOOKS


This text includes cases studies taken from the well-known Hastings Center Report. Two or three commentaries usually accompany each case.


This book describes a collection of famous (and infamous) cases from the history of biomedical ethics. The accounts of the cases here are more detailed than in other texts, and the style is more casual.
Below are possible topics for discussion, listed with the relevant portions for each book. It is anticipated that only one textbook and one casebook would be chosen for a course. Whenever possible, price information for video purchase or rentals has been included, however this information is subject to change.

Session 1: INTRODUCTION TO ETHICAL THEORY

Texts:
1) M&Z: Biomedical Ethics and Ethical Theory, pp. 1-44.
2) B&W: Ethical Theory and Bioethics, pp. 1-43.
3) A&R: Ethical Theory in the Medical Context, pp. 1-34.
4) L: (No introductory essay; see the first two chapters of Medical Ethics. Edited by Robert M. Veatch. Boston: Jones and Bartlett Pubs., 1989, pp. 1-48.)

Video:
The Belmont Report: Basic Ethical Principles and their Application. 1986, VHS, Beta or 3/4", 34 min., color. Available at no cost from the Office for Protection from Research Risks VIDEO, National Institutes of Health, Bldg. 31, Room 5B59, 9000 Rockville Pike, Bethesda, MD 20892, telephone 301-496-7005.

One of three films in the series Protecting Society's Mandates that discusses the rights and well-being of biomedical or behavioral research volunteers. This film on the Belmont Report identifies three basic ethical principles: respect for persons, beneficence, and justice.

Session 2: PHYSICIAN-PATIENT RELATIONSHIP

Texts:
4) L: Is it Ethical to Withhold the Truth from Dying Patients?, pp. 52-75.

Cases:
1) M&Z: The Patient's Role in Determining Therapy; The Physician's Abandonment of a Patient; Voluntary Sterilization and a Young Unmarried Man; The Dentist and Patient Autonomy; A Nurse's Obligations and a Patient's Living Will; Who Communicates with the Patient?; Hospitals, Surgeons and Economic Incentives, pp. 623-28.
3) HCR: I Want to See My Mother's Picture; Using a Cadaver to Practice and Teach; When the Doctor and the Minister Disagree; The Nurse's Appeal to Conscience; Sex in the MD's Office, pp. 3-20.

Video:
Deception. 1986, VHS, 34 min., color. Purchase: $240; rental: $50 (1 day) or $100 (1 week). Fanlight Productions, 47 Halifax St., Boston, MA 02130, telephone 617-524-0980.

Produced for Dartmouth College's Institute for the Study of Applied and Professional Ethics, the video discusses what a patient must be told about a treatment the physician deems necessary.
Session 3: INFORMED CONSENT

Texts:

Cases:
1) M&Z: Withholding Information About Risks; The Nurse and Informed Consent; The Office Nurse and Informed Consent; Alzheimer's Disease, Memory Continuity, and Autonomy, pp. 624-28.
2) CC: Mayor Koch, Joyce Brown, and Involuntary Psychiatric Commitment, pp. 265-85.
3) HCR: The "Student Doctor" and the Wary Patient; Proxy Consent for a Medical Gamble; Faith Healing for Childhood Leukemia; Who Speaks for the Patient with the Locked-In Syndrome?, pp. 21-38.

Videos:

Dax's Case. 1984, VHS, Beta, or 16 mm film, 58 min., color. Purchase: $495 (VHS or Beta); $850 (16 mm); rental: $80. Filmmakers' Library, 124 East 40th Street, New York, NY 10016, telephone 212-808-4980.

A follow-up of the 1974 Concern for Dying film, Please Let Me Die: The Wish of a Blind Severely Maimed Burn Patient, which discussed a patient’s right to refuse treatment and die. Ten years later, the patient, now a lawyer and married, maintains that he should have been allowed to die.

Session 4: PROFESSIONAL RESPONSIBILITY

Texts:
1) M&Z: Professionals’ Obligations, Institutions and Patients’ Rights, pp. 131-84.
2) B&W: Medical Confidentiality, pp. 399-413.
4) L: Are There Limits to Confidentiality?, pp. 126-47.

Cases:
1) M&Z: An HIV Infected Surgeon and a Duty to Disclose; Liberty and the Elderly Patient, pp. 627, 629.
2) CC: Mandatory Testing for AIDS, pp. 320-47.
3) HCR: AIDS and a Duty to Protect; When X-Rays Show, Must a Prison Doctor Tell?; My Husband Won’t Tell the Children, pp. 39-54.

Video:

One of a 10-part television series
where well-known panelists debated ethical, legal, and social questions. The physician-patient relationship is examined in the light of the physician’s responsibilities to the patient and to society.

Session 5: EUTHANASIA, KILLING, AND LETTING DIE

Texts:

Cases:
3) HCR: A Cardiac Arrest and a Second-Hand Report; Does “Doing Everything” Include CPR?; Surgical Risks and Advance Directives; Suicide Attempts and Emergency Room Ethics, pp. 97–118.

Video:
MICU. 1985, VHS, 58 min., color. Purchase: $235; rental: $50 (1 day) or $100 (1 week). Fanlight Productions (see session 2 for order information.)

Host Richard Kahn of WGBH Boston visits the medical intensive care unit of Beth Israel Hospital and shows three extremely ill patients in the unit. Family, staff and physicians discuss the patients and their care. One says that practicing physicians do not really know what “do everything” means. The film points out that patients can change their mind about treatment even after a DNR order is written, and the health care provider must decide which direction to follow.

The Right to Die . . . The Choice is Yours. 1987, VHS or Beta, 14 min., color. Purchase: $35. Society for the Right To Die, 250 West 57th St., New York, NY 10107, telephone 212-246-6973.

Discusses the Society’s views on living wills, proxy appointments for health care decisions, and two ‘allowing to die’ situations.

Session 6: RIGHT TO REFUSE LIFE-SUSTAINING TREATMENT

Texts:
3) A&R: The Right to Refuse Treatment, pp. 157–84; Proxy Consent for Adults, pp. 185–220.
4) L: Must Fluids and Nutrition Always Be Given to Dying Patients?, pp. 94–111.

Cases:
1) M&Z: Refusal of Life-Sustaining Treatment by a Minor; Depression and Autonomy; Suicide and Pain Control; Physician Disagreement Regarding a Patient’s Wishes; Honoring the Living Will; Refusing Life-Sustaining Treatment, pp. 631–34.
2) CC: Elizabeth Bouvia and Voluntary Death, pp. 25–44.
3) HCR: A Demand to Die; Family
Wishes and Patient Autonomy; If I Have AIDS, Then Let Me Die Now!; No Feeding Tubes for Me!; Active Euthanasia with Parental Consent; When the Doctor Gives a Deadly Dose, pp. 119–50.

Video: Discussions in Bioethics: The Courage of One's Convictions. 1986, VHS, 3/4", or 16 mm film, eight different 12–15 min. segments (one tape), color. Purchase: $395 (VHS); $445 (3/4’’); rental: $95. Pyramid Film and Video, P.O. Box 1048, Santa Monica, CA 90406, telephone 213-828-7577.

Dramatizes the right to refuse treatment in the context of a young woman who is a Jehovah's Witness member. (Part of a series produced by the National Film Board of Canada, all eight vignettes are extremely well presented open-ended dramas based on actual cases prepared to stimulate discussion of ethical dilemmas.)

No Heroic Measures. 1986, VHS, Beta, or 3/4”, 16 mm film, 23 min., color. Purchase: $385; rental: $65 (3 days) or $100 (5 days); (no Beta). Carle Medical Communications, 110 West Main St., Urbana, IL 61801-2700, telephone 217-384-4838.

The film portrays a niece's efforts to have a feeding tube removed from an elderly incompetent patient.


Three physicians, Nancy Cummings of the NIH, Edmund D. Pellegrino, director of the Center for the Advanced Study of Ethics at Georgetown University, and Mark Seigler of the University of Chicago, tell why they are each opposed to a physician helping a patient commit suicide. Dr. Seigler suggests that in certain cases conscientious persons (friends or family) may assist in mercy-killing, but never medical professionals.

Session 7: REPRODUCTIVE ISSUES: ABORTION AND REPRODUCTIVE TECHNOLOGIES

Texts:

Cases:
3) HCR: When Baby's Mother is Also Grandma—and Sister; AID and the Single Welfare Mother; The Unwanted Child: Caring for the Fetus Alive After an Abortion; When a
Mentally Ill Woman Refuses an Abortion; The Hospital’s Duty and Rape Victims; Selective Termination of Pregnancy, pp. 57–91.

**Video:**


Part of the NOVA television series, the new reproductive technologies are depicted and ethical and legal issues are discussed.

**Session 8: HUMAN EXPERIMENTATION**

**Texts:**

1) M&Z: Ethical Issues in Human and Medical Experimentation, pp. 204–46.


**Cases:**

1) M&Z: Randomized Clinical Trial and a Physician’s Responsibility to a Patient; Enrolling Ineligible Patients in a Clinical Trial; A Teenager’s Consent to Participate in Research, pp. 628–29.

2) CC: The Tuskegee Syphilis Study; Christiaan Barnard’s First Heart Transplant; Barney Clark’s Artificial Heart; Baby Fae, pp. 184–262.

3) HCR: Studying Grief Without Consent; Parental Consent and a Teenage Sex Survey; Can a Subject Consent to a “Ulysses Contract”?: Informed Consent in a Developing World; When Research Is the Best Therapy; The Last Patient in a Drug Trial; Mrs. X and the Bone Marrow Transplant; Can a Research Subject Be Too Eager to Consent; Can a Healthy Subject Volunteer to Be Injured in Research?: Transplanting a Chimpanzee Heart, pp. 153–98.

**Videos:**

*Balancing Society’s Mandates: Criteria for Review.* 1986, VHS, Beta, or 3/4”, 38 min., color, free. Office for Protection from Research Risks (see session 1 for order information).

This video depicts an institutional review board in action. Research protocols are clearly explained by Edmund D. Pellegrino.

*Evolving Concern: Protection for Research Subjects.* 1986, VHS, Beta, or 3/4”, 23 min., color, free. Office for Protection from Research Risks (see session 1 for order information).

This National Institutes of Health film stresses the importance of voluntary informed consent in biomedical research.

**Session 9: GENETICS**

**Texts:**


Cases:
1) **M&Z**: Sickle-Cell Disease and a Question of Paternity; Children at Risk for Huntington's Chorea, pp. 637–38.
2) **CC**: Nancy Wexler and Genetic Markers, pp. 303–19.
3) **HCR**: Risk Taking and a Minor Birth Defect, pp. 91–95.

Videos:
**The Genetic Gamble.** 1985, VHS, 16 mm film, 58 min., color. Purchase $250 VHS or $800 16 mm; rental $125/3 days. Coronet Film and Video (see session 7 for order information.)

Another in the NOVA series, this work presents cases showing how genetic research has moved from the laboratory to the clinical setting, and discusses the ethical problems of gene splicing treatment.

**Life Revolution: The Human Genome.** 1990, VHS, Beta, 26 min., color. Purchase: $149 (VHS or Beta); rental: $75. Films for the Humanities and Sciences, Inc. P. O. Box 2053, Princeton, NJ 08543, telephone 609-452-1128.

The film opens with identical twins whose lives are remarkably similar even though they grew up apart. Other genetic similarities are presented and cystic fibrosis is discussed as the most common of the inherited diseases. The human genome mapping project is illustrated and explained.

**Prenatal Diagnosis: To Be or Not To Be?** 1981, VHS, 55 min., color. Purchase: $395 (VHS), $650 (16 mm); rental: $65. Filmmakers' Library (see session 3 for order information).

David Suzuki hosts this Canadian Broadcasting Corporation documen-
tary about prenatal diagnosis and counseling in Canada. Several Toronto hospitals participate and various health professionals talk about amniocentesis, fetoscopy, and ultrasound studies of pregnant women to discover abnormalities in the fetus. Down's syndrome, Tay Sachs disease and spina bifida are among the problems discussed, as well as other questions concerning use of such testing for sex determination or minor disabilities and differences.

Session 10: RESOURCE ALLOCATION

Texts:
1) **M&Z**: Social Justice and Health Care Policy, pp. 545–622.
2) **B&W**: The Allocation of Medical Resources, pp. 553–99.
3) **A&R**: Allocation, Social Justice and Health Policy, pp. 485–571.

Cases:
3) **HCR**: Forced Transfer to Custodial Care; The Last Bed in the ICU; Refusing an Amputation: Who Should Pay for the Extra Care?; Two Cardiac Arrests, One Medical Team; The Doctor, The Patient and the DRG; The HMO Physician's Duty to Cut Costs; In Organ Transplants, Americans First?, pp. 223–53.
SCOPE NOTE 16

Videos:


A hospital’s monetary quandary is dramatized; if funds are allocated for a possible liver transplant, what is the impact on other services requested by staff?


Ted Koppel moderates a nationwide video teleconference which begins with a brief illustrative drama followed by a panel discussion with Joseph Califano, Barbara Sklar, Samuel Thier, and James Todd which includes telephoned questions.


Judy Woodruff interviews AIDS patients in various American cities. Their plight is described, highlighting the difficulties each has had in receiving health care and obtaining the funds to pay for it.

SUPPLEMENTAL READINGS

Various religions and cultures have different perspectives on bioethical problems that impact health care decisions. The following books provide summaries that may be useful supplements to basic texts in health care ethics.


A compilation of essays on 20 western religions and their perspectives on the nature of well-being, sexuality, passages, morality, dignity, madness, healing, caring, suffering, and death from the Park Ridge Center for the Study of Health, Faith and Ethics in Chicago.


A collection of codes of ethics and various cultural views on important problems in medical ethics. Provides a broad variety of viewpoints and selected readings on principles of medical ethics.


Provides a foundation for ethical analysis of medical ethical problems by introducing the basic theories of philosophical ethics.

Health Policy: Ethics and Human Values—An International Dialogue. Ed-
The highlights of the 28th CIOMS Round Table Conference held in Athens, Greece are reported. Five case studies are presented to compare and contrast the international and cultural responses to important ethical dilemmas. Comparisons are also made to the different faiths and their concepts of the meaning of life, suffering and death.

SYLLABUS EXCHANGE PROJECT

In 1985, the National Reference Center for Bioethics Literature at Georgetown University's Kennedy Institute of Ethics established the Syllabus Exchange Project. The goal of the project is to encourage the exchange of ideas regarding curriculum, course materials, and teaching methods for bioethical education. Because the field of bioethics is so interdisciplinary and so few teachers have their formal training in bioethics, many instructors find themselves branching out into unfamiliar literature in diverse fields. As many new courses in biomedical ethics are developed each year, we hope to facilitate the use of bioethical literature by exchanging syllabi. The Syllabus Exchange collection consists of syllabi from a variety of programs ranging from medical, law, and nursing schools and philosophy and religion courses in community and undergraduate colleges to full-fledged graduate bioethics programs. Some syllabi are simply one-page synopses of classes; others are detailed reading lists including exams, methods of evaluation, and course reading material. A current Syllabus Exchange Catalog may be obtained free of charge by calling 800-MED-ETHX (or 687-3885 in Washington, DC). A fee of $2.00 per syllabus is charged to cover photocopying and handling costs. We welcome additional syllabi to be included in future updates to the catalog.

ADDITIONAL READINGS

The literature of medical ethics is vast, and an entire course could be designed around any one of these sessions. The National Reference Center for Bioethics Literature (NRC) collects literature on all of the topics above, among others. The NRC is open to the public and provides reference service for those designing courses, and for students enrolled in such courses. Searches of the BIOETHICSLINE database are available upon request. Please feel free to contact the NRC at 800-MED-ETHX (or 202-687-3885 in Washington, DC).
The SCOPE NOTE Series is intended to present a current overview of issues and viewpoints related to specific topics in biomedical ethics. It is not designed as a comprehensive review, but rather offers immediate reference to facts, opinion, and legal precedents (if applicable) for scholars, journalists, medical and legal practitioners, students, and interested laypersons.

SCOPE NOTES are available for $3.00 prepaid from: National Reference Center for Bioethics Literature, Kennedy Institute of Ethics, Georgetown University, Washington, DC 20057 or telephone 1-800-MED-ETHX (toll-free) or 1-202-687-6738. Series editor: Doris Goldstein.

The following SCOPE NOTES are presently available:

No. 4. Diagnosis Related Groups (DRGs) and the Prospective Payment System: Forecasting Social Implications. June 1984. 11 p.

PLEASE NOTE: beginning with Scope Note 15, the series appears in the Kennedy Institute of Ethics Journal.