

Introduction to Biomedical Ethics Sample Syllabus

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Course Description

In this course, we will critically examine core issues in bioethics with a focus on medical issues. After introducing the main ethical theories and concepts, we will apply these theories and concepts to traditional debates about abortion, euthanasia, and genetic enhancement. Then we will consider specific issues on biomedical sciences, such as the moral aspects of research on humans, the ethical relationship between doctors and patients, and how to decide for resource allocation in health care.

Course Learning Outcomes

By the end of this course, students should have a broad knowledge of key topics in bioethics and medical ethics. More specifically, they should be able to identify, analyze, and evaluate views and arguments about the topics of the course. Students should also be able to present and defend arguments about those issues both in oral and written form. They should be able to give constructive feedback to each other's work and also to develop group work.

Course Assessment I (1st and 2nd-year undergraduate course)

Quizzes: Each quiz contains ten multiple choice questions about the reading assigned during that week. To pass a quiz, it is necessary to have seven correct answers. – 20% total

Midterm and Final Exam: In-class exams will take 90 minutes of class. Each exam consists of 2 essay questions. Versions of the questions will be provided beforehand for study purposes. – 50% total

Group Work: Students form groups at the beginning of the semester and have to accomplish specific tasks on a weekly-basis. These tasks will guide students to develop a final product, namely a 10-min presentation on a chosen topic. Presentations occur in the last week of classes followed by Q and A. – 30% total

Course Assessment II (3rd and 4th-year undergraduate course)

5 Discussion questions: Once a week, students provide a written question about one of the readings of the week and justify why this question is relevant for discussion. We discuss some of these questions in class – 25%

In-Class exam: The exam will take 90 minutes of class and consists of 2 essay questions. Versions of the questions will be provided beforehand for study purposes. – 25%

Paper Outline: Students provide an outline for the final paper and discuss it with the instructor. The outline has to contain the structure of the paper (sections), the main goal and idea of each section, the main thesis, and basic bibliography – 10%

Paper: students write a 3000 words paper on one of the topics of the course. The instructor will provide specific guidelines for the paper. Students have to submit a hard copy to the instructor on the due date.
– 40%

Topics and Readings

Topic 1 – Introduction to Ethical Theories, Concepts and Reasoning

Kant, Immanuel, "Ethics is Based on Reason," (excerpts) In Gensler, H.j., Spurgin, E, W., and Swindal, J.C., *Ethics: contemporary Readings*

Stuart Mill, J, "Utilitarianism," (excerpts) In Gensler, H.j., Spurgin, E, W., and Swindal, J.C., *Ethics: contemporary Readings*

Aristotle, "Nichomachean Ethics," (excerpts) In Gensler, H.j., Spurgin, E, W., and Swindal, J.C., *Ethics: contemporary Readings*

Driver, Julia, "The History of Utilitarianism", *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Winter 2014 Edition)

Alexander, Larry and Moore, Michael, "Deontological Ethics", *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Winter 2016 Edition)

Topic 2 – Abortion and Reproductive Rights

Thomson, J. "A Defense of Abortion," In Kuhse, H., Schkuklenk, U., and Singer., *Bioethics: An Anthology*

Marquis, D. "Why Abortion is Immoral" In Kuhse, H., Schkuklenk, U., and Singer., *Bioethics: An Anthology*

Callahan, S. "Pro-Life Feminism" In Gensler, H.j., Spurgin, E, W., and Swindal, J.C., *Ethics: contemporary Readings*

Singer, P. *Practical Ethics*. Chapter 6

Feinberg, J "Potentiality, Development, and Right," in: *The Problem of Abortion*, 145-150.

Savulescu, J. (2007). "Procreative Beneficence and Disability: is there a moral obligation to create children with the best chance of the best life?". Blackwell.

Topic 3 – Death and Euthanasia

Glover, J. "The Sanctity of Life," In *Bioethics: An Anthology*

Brandt, Richard. "The morality and rationality of suicide." *A Handbook for the Study of Suicide* 61 (1975): 65-66.

Rachel, J. "Active and Passive Euthanasia" In *Bioethics: An Anthology*

Reichenbach, Bruce R. "Euthanasia and the active-passive distinction." *Bioethics* 1.1 (1987): 51-73.

Yang, Y. Tony, and Farr A. Curlin. "Why physicians should oppose assisted suicide." *Jama* 315, no. 3 (2016): 247-248.

Quill, Timothy E., Anthony L. Back, and Susan D. Block. "Responding to patients requesting physician-assisted death: physician involvement at the very end of life." *Jama* 315, no. 3 (2016): 245-246.

Nesbitt, W. "Is Killing No Worse than Letting Die?" in *Bioethics: an Anthology*

Kuhse, H. "Why Killing is Not Always Worse – and sometimes Better – than Letting Die" in *Bioethics: an Anthology*

Topic 4 – Human Enhancement and Gene Therapy

Sandel Michael, J., 2004. "The case against perfection." *Atlantic Monthly*.

Savulescu, J., 2005. "New breeds of humans: the moral obligation to enhance". *Reproductive BioMedicine Online*, 10, pp.36-39.

Weckert, J. "Playing God: What is the problem?" In *Ethics of Human Enhancement*

Kamm, Frances. "What is and is not wrong with enhancement?" In *Human Enhancement*.

Lappe, M. Ethical Issues in Manipulating the human Germ Line. *Bioethics: an Anthology*

Savulescu, J. "Sex Selection: The Case for" *Bioethics: an Anthology*

Topic 5 – Medical Research in Humans

Beecher, "Ethics and Clinical Research," in *Bioethics: An Anthology*

Miller, Franklin G, and Howard Brody. "A Critique of Clinical Equipoise. Therapeutic Misconception in the Ethics of Clinical Trials." *The Hastings Center Report* 33.3 (2003): 19-28.

Brody, Baruch A., Flather, Marcus, Knatterud, Genell, Terrin, Michael, and Pocock, Stuart. "Ethical Issues in Clinical Trials in Developing Countries." *Statistics in Medicine* 21.19 (2002): 2853-858.

Harris, J. (2005). "Scientific research is a moral duty." *Journal of medical ethics*, 31(4), 242-248.

Shapshay, S., & Pimple, K. D. (2007). "Participation in biomedical research is an imperfect moral duty: a response to John Harris." *Journal of Medical Ethics*, 33(7), 414-417.

Topic 6 – Informed Consent and Doctor-Patient Relationship

Macklin, Ruth. "The doctor-patient relationship in different cultures." *Against relativism, cultural diversity and the search for ethical universals in medicine* (1999): 86-107.

Alfano, Mark. "Placebo effects and informed consent." *The American Journal of Bioethics* 15, no. 10 (2015): 3-12.

Veatch, R. "Abandoning Informed Consent" in *Bioethics: An Anthology*

Collins, "Should Doctors Tell the Truth?" in *Bioethics: An Anthology*

Jauhar, Sandeep. "When doctors need to lie." *New York Times* 23 (2014).

Topic 7 – Health Care and Resource Allocation

Warren S. Browner. "Decision Analysis" in *Hospital Medicine*, Wachter, Goldman and Hollander (Eds), 2nd Ed, 2005.

Pence, Gregory E., and Gregory Pence. *Classic cases in medical ethics: Accounts of cases that have shaped medical ethics, with philosophical, legal, and historical backgrounds*. New York, NY: McGraw-Hill, 2004.

Rescher, Nicholas. "The allocation of exotic medical lifesaving therapy." *Ethics* 79, no. 3 (1969): 173-186.

Cohen, Carl, and Martin Benjamin. "Alcoholics and liver transplantation." *Jama* 265, no. 10 (1991): 1299-1301.

Daniels, Norman. "Is There a Right to Health Care and, if so, What does it Encompass?." (1998).

Daniels, Norman. "A lifespan approach to health care." In *Aging and Ethics*, pp. 227-246. Humana Press, Totowa, NJ, 1992.

Topic 8 – Vaccination

Chervenak, Mccullough, and Brent. "Professional Responsibility and Early Childhood Vaccination." *The Journal of Pediatrics* 169 (2016): 305-09.

Lessin, and Hackell. "Real World Vaccine Ethics." *The Journal of Pediatrics* 175 (2016): 243-44.

Caulfield, Timothy R., Alessandro R. Marcon, and Blake Murdoch. "Injecting Doubt: Responding to the Naturopathic Anti-vaccination Rhetoric." *Journal of Law and the Biosciences* 4.2 (2017): 229-49.