

PHILOS 2D03: *Bioethics*

Fall Term, 2017 | Tuesday & Friday | 9:30 – 10:20 | MDCL 1305

Instructor: Dr. James L Sikkema

Office: UH 314A

Office Hour: By Appointment

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- Aesclepius and his Family - Votive relief, 4th Century BCE

Course Description

This course serves as an introduction to ethical reasoning about issues surrounding human life. The course will i) begin with a brief introduction to various conceptions of human life and the value accorded to it, ii) will then introduce some basic normative ethical theories (natural law, deontology, utilitarianism and feminism), and will, iii) finally, and for the most part, explore the various applications of these concepts to topics peculiar to bioethical quandaries. Topics may include problems concerning life and death, reproduction, genetic manipulation, resource allocation, clinical research, healthcare both private and public, and body modification.

Course Objectives

By the end of the course students will:

- Have a basic understanding of, and capacity to clearly reason about, issues surrounding bioethics
- Be able to critically evaluate philosophical ideas and their implications and applications to concrete reality

Required Texts

[Bioethics: An Anthology, 3rd Edition](#). Edited by Helga Kuhse, et al. Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2016. *Available in the Campus Bookstore.

Method of Assessment

- Tutorial Attendance & Participation – 10%
- Case Study 1 – 20% (Due Friday, October 6)
- Mid-Term Exam – 25% (In Class Friday, October 27)
- Case Study 2 – 20% (Due Friday, November 24)
- Final Exam – 25% (TBA)

Note on Tutorial Attendance & Participation

While being physically present in your tutorial section is a necessary condition for your tutorial grade it is not, in itself, sufficient. Given that, i) the purpose of tutorials is to provide you with a forum for deepening your understanding of the ideas we will be investigating in the lectures, and ii) tutorials largely involve a dialogical format, you are required to come to tutorial prepared to participate. This requires that you have attended the lectures and have done the readings on which they will be based.

Note on Case Studies

Since bioethics is a species of applied ethics, it will be both necessary and useful to navigate real-life applications of the concepts we will be investigating. Because it involves critically analyzing and evaluating the viability of a theoretical framework, a case study is a great way to approximate to this real-life application. You will, therefore, be required to complete 2 case studies during the course of the term.

For both assignments you will be provided with 5 possible case studies to choose from. Once you have chosen your case study you will be required to, i) **identify** the essential facts of the case (1 paragraph), ii) **identify and explain** the fundamental ethical features of the case (1 – 2 paragraphs), iii) **raise 4-5 pertinent questions** with respect to (i) and (ii), and iv) provide **answers to these questions** by **marshaling an argument** for a course of action in relation to the situation (4-5 paragraphs).

Note on Exams

Both exams will be composed of short-answer questions. The mid-term will be written during class and will consist of 12 questions of which 10 must be answered. The final exam will consist of 20 questions of which 15 must be answered. The final may include some material prior to the mid-term, but will largely consist of post mid-term content.

Policy on Missed Work, Extensions and Late Penalties

All extension requests must be communicated with the instructor *and* your TA via email at least one day prior to the due date of the assignment. Should you fail to perform such a communication your assignment will not be protected from late penalties.

The late penalty for any assignment not submitted on time will be 2% per day.

If you must use MSAF for any assignment please be sure to send the instructor an email stating that you have used MSAF for X assignment. Once the instructor receives word he will then work out an alternate date for you to submit the missed coursework. Any late submissions after that time will be subject to late penalties.

Should you fail to communicate your use of MSAF and fail to work out an alternate deadline for the missed assignment with the instructor you may be liable to receive no credit for the missed coursework.

Course Schedule

Tuesday 09/05 – *Introduction*
No Reading

Friday 09/08 – *Human Life and Its Value*
No Reading

I: Normative Ethics

Tuesday 09/12 – *Natural Law*
Reading: Aquinas, [Treatise on Law](#); (Q90, Articles 1-2; Q91, Ars. 1-4,6; Q92, Ars. 1-2; Q93, Ars. 1-3,6; Q94, Ars. 2, 4; Q95, Ars. 1-2; Q96, Ars. 2,4,6); *SEP:* [Natural Law Tradition](#) (optional)

Friday 09/15 – *Deontology*
Reading: Kant, [Groundwork for the Metaphysics of Morals](#) (Sections I, II to pg.32); *SEP:* [Deontological Ethics](#) (optional)

Tuesday 09/19 – Utilitarianism

Reading: Mill, [Utilitarianism](#) (Chapter 1, 2, 5 to pg. 38); SEP: [Consequentialism](#) (optional)

Friday 09/22 – Feminism

Reading: Jaggar, [Feminist Ethics](#); Noddings, [Caring](#); SEP: [Feminist Ethics & Feminist Bioethics](#) (optional)

II: Life, Death, & Reproduction

Tuesday 09/26 – The Ethics of Abortion

Reading: John Finnis, *Abortion and Health Care Ethics* (Anthology, p.11); Judith Jarvis Thompson, *A Defense of Abortion* (Anthology, p.38)

Friday 09/29 – Reproduction

Reading: Derek Parfit, *Rights, Interests, and Possible People* (Anthology, p.86); Michael Tooley, *The Moral Status of Cloning Humans* (Anthology, p.156)

Tuesday 10/03 – Prenatal Screening

Reading: Adrienne Asch, *Prenatal Screening and Selective Abortion* (Anthology, p. 112); Ruth Chadwick and Mairi Levitt, *Genetic Technology: A Threat to Deafness* (Anthology, p.125)

Friday 10/06 – The Ethics of Euthanasia

Reading: Jonathan Glover, *The Sanctity of Life* (Anthology, p.225); Rachels, *Active and Passive Euthanasia* (Anthology, p.248)

(*First Case Study Due)

Tuesday 10/10 – NO CLASS – MID SEMESTER BREAK

Friday 10/13 – NO CLASS – MID SEMESTER BREAK

Tuesday 10/17 – Voluntary Euthanasia

Reading: Daniel Callahan, *When Self-Determination Runs Amok* (Anthology, p.357); John Lachs, *When Abstract Moralizing Runs Amok* (Anthology, p.362)

Friday 10/20 – Death and Quality of Life

Reading: Peter Singer, *Is the Sanctity of Life Ethic Terminally Ill?* (Anthology, p.321); Ronald Dworkin, *Life Past Reason* (Anthology, p.333)

Tuesday 10/24 – Review

Friday 10/27 – Midterm Exam (*In Class)

III: Humanity, Autonomy, & Public Responsibility

Tuesday 10/31 – Genetic Manipulation

Reading: Jonathan Glover, Questions about Some Uses of Genetic Engineering (Anthology, p.177); David B. Resnik, The Moral Significance of the Therapy – Enhancement Distinction in Human Genetics

Friday 11/03 – Body Modification

Reading: Ainsley Newson and Robert Williamson, Should We Undertake Genetic Research on Intelligence? (Anthology, p.199); Nick Bostrom, In Defense of Posthuman Dignity (Anthology, p.208);

Tuesday 11/07 – Neuroethics

Reading: Jonathan D. Moreno, Neuroethics: An Agenda for Neuroscience and Society (Anthology, p.733); Neil Levy, Neuroethics: Ethics and the Sciences of the Mind (Anthology, p. 744); Henry Greely, et al. Towards Responsible Use of Cognitive-Enhancing Drugs by the Healthy (Anthology, p.753; optional)

Friday 11/10 – Resource Allocation

Reading: Alvin H. Moss and Mark Siegler, Should Alcoholics Compete Equally for Liver Transplantation? (Anthology, p.390); John Harris, The Value of Life (Anthology, p.397)

Tuesday 11/14 – Body Commodification

Reading: Debra Satz, Ethical Issues in the Supply and Demand of Human Kidneys (Anthology, p.425); John Harris, The Survival Lottery (Anthology, p.437)

Friday 11/17 – Clinical Research and Public Good

Reading: Henry K. Beecher, Ethics and Clinical Research (Anthology, p.451); Samuel Hellman, The Patient and the Public Good (Anthology, p.466)

Tuesday 11/21 – Stem Cell Research

Reading: Jeff McMahan, Killing Embryos for Stem Cell Research (Anthology, p.508)

Friday 11/24 – Infectious Disease Control

Reading: Michael J. Selgelid, Ethics and Infectious Disease (Anthology, p.555); Jerome Amir Singh, et al., XDR-TB in South Africa: No Time for Denial or Complacency (Anthology, p.582)

(*Second Case Study Due)

Tuesday 11/28 – Confidentiality and Honesty

Reading: Mark Siegler, Confidentiality in Medicine: A Decrepit Concept (Anthology, p.599); Roger Higgs, On Telling Patients the Truth (Anthology, p.621)

Friday 12/01 – Autonomy and Informed Consent

Reading: Carl Elliott, *Amputees by Choice* (*Anthology*, p.654); Julian Savulescu, *Rational Desires and the Limitation of Life-Sustaining Treatment* (*Anthology*, p.665)

Tuesday 12/05 – Review

Reading: *None*

Please note the following policies and statements:

Academic Dishonesty

You are expected to exhibit honesty and use ethical behavior in all aspects of the learning process. Academic credentials you earn are rooted in principles of honesty and academic integrity.

Academic dishonesty is to knowingly act or fail to act in a way that results or could result in unearned academic credit or advantage. This behaviour can result in serious consequences, e.g. the grade of zero on an assignment, loss of credit with a notation on the transcript (notation reads: 'Grade of F assigned for academic dishonesty'), and/or suspension or expulsion from the university.

It is your responsibility to understand what constitutes academic dishonesty. For information on the various types of academic dishonesty please refer to the Academic Integrity Policy, located at www.mcmaster.ca/academicintegrity

The following illustrates only three forms of academic dishonesty:

1. Plagiarism, e.g. the submission of work that is not one's own or for which other credit has been obtained.
2. Improper collaboration in group work.
3. Copying or using unauthorized aids in tests and examinations.

Email correspondence policy

It is the policy of the Faculty of Humanities that all email communication sent from students to instructors (including TAs), and from students to staff, must originate from each student's own McMaster University email account. This policy protects confidentiality and confirms the identity of the student. Instructors will delete emails that do not originate from a McMaster email account.

Modification of course outlines

McMaster University reserves the right to change or revise information contained in course outlines in extreme circumstances. If a modification becomes necessary, reasonable notice and communication with the students will be given with an explanation and the opportunity to comment on changes. It is the responsibility of students to check regularly their primary email account via their @mcmaster.ca alias and course websites.

McMaster Student Absence Form (MSAF)

In the event of an absence for medical or other reasons, students should review and follow the Academic Regulation in the Undergraduate Calendar Requests for Relief for Missed Academic Term Work. Please note these regulations have changed beginning Fall 2015. If you have any questions about the MSAF, please contact your Associate Dean's office.

Academic Accommodation for Religious, Indigenous and Spiritual Observances

Students requiring academic accommodation based on religion and spiritual observances should follow the procedures set out in the Course Calendar or by their respective Faculty. In most cases, the student should contact his or her professor or academic advisor as soon as possible to arrange accommodations for classes, assignments, tests and examinations that might be affected by a religious holiday or spiritual observance.