

Medical Ethics

Phil. 164H
T/Th 2:30-3:45 p.m.
Bartlett 310

Instructor Information

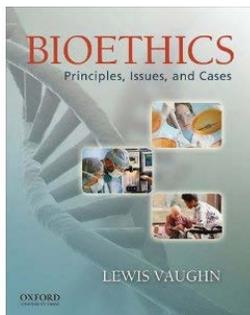
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Office Hours: Thursday 4:00-5:00 p.m. and by appointment

Course Description

In this course, we will discuss a number of issues in medical ethics: abortion, infanticide, in vitro fertilization, euthanasia, the treatment of genetically disabled fetuses, genetic engineering, and experimentation on animals for medical purposes. However, before we turn to these issues, we will cover some background material that's needed in order to understand any issue in medical ethics. We will, for instance, discuss the nature of ethics as well as some of the most influential ethical theories (such as relativism, utilitarianism, and Kantianism). Along the way, you will learn a bit of logic and learn how to reconstruct valid arguments from texts.

Textbook

Vaughn, Lewis. *Bioethics: Principles, Issues, and Cases*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009. It looks like this:



This book is available for purchase at the Textbook Annex.

Many of the assigned readings will come from this book. Some will not; I will put these on Moodle.

Grade Breakdown

Exam 1: 25%
Exam 2: 25%
Exam 3: 25%
Logic Quiz: 5%
Homework Assignments: 20%

More Grading Info

Exams:

There will be three in-class exams. The exams will consist mostly of short-answer/essay types of questions, and they will cover material discussed in class. Exam 1 will be at the beginning of October (exact date TBD). Exam 2 will be at the beginning of November (exact date TBD). Exam 3 will be during finals week.

No make-up exams will be permitted unless you let me know ahead of time that you're going to miss the exam and have a legitimate excuse.

Logic Quiz:

There will be a short logic quiz at the beginning of the semester. It is designed to ensure that you understand the basic logic material that will be covered during the first week of class. I will give you a good idea of what will be on it.

You will not be allowed to make up the logic quiz unless you let me know ahead of time that you're going to miss it and have a legitimate excuse.

Homework Assignments:

There will be frequent homework assignments (about one per week). They will often consist of a few questions that you will need to answer after doing the assigned reading. However, the homework assignments may involve other tasks as well. Sometimes they will be graded on a credit/no credit grading scale. Other times, they may be graded more rigorously. I will let you know ahead of time how I intend to grade the homework assignments.

You must turn in the homework assignments in person at the beginning of class (i.e., no electronic submissions), unless you let me know ahead of time that you need to miss class and have a legitimate excuse.

Attendance:

I will not take attendance. However, attending class regularly is essential to doing well in the class. When you need to miss class, have someone take notes for you.

Participation:

You won't get any points just for participating in class. But if, at the end of the semester, you have a borderline grade (say, between an A and an A-), I may bump up your grade if you participate in class regularly.

Other Stuff

PowerPoint:

I may use PowerPoint from time to time. However, I won't distribute the PowerPoint presentations. If you miss class, get the notes from a friend.

Office Hour:

I encourage you to come to my office hour and talk to me about the class. Don't be afraid to ask me your questions! If you are not available to meet during my office hour, I'd be happy to arrange another time to meet with you.

Academic Dishonesty:

You can find the UMass academic honesty policy here:

<http://www.umass.edu/dean_students/codeofconduct/acadhonesty/index.php>. Acts of academic dishonesty will be subject to the maximum penalty allowed by this policy.

Moodle:

Check it often. I will use it regularly to make announcements and post readings.

Laptops/Smartphones:

Using these things during class is distracting and negatively impacts class discussion. Please put them away.

Respect:

Most of the issues we'll be discussing in this course are controversial. They tend to rile people up. In a course like this, it's good to remind ourselves to be respectful of each other and their opinions. Disrespect will not be tolerated.

Schedule:

Here is a list of most of the readings we will (likely) cover this semester:

Vaughn, "Moral Reasoning in Bioethics," "Bioethics and Moral Theories," "Abortion," "Euthanasia and Physician-Assisted Suicide," "Reproductive Technology," and "Genetic Choices"

Shafer-Landau, "Consequentialism: Its Nature and Attractions," "Consequentialism: Its Difficulties," "The Kantian Perspective: Autonomy and Respect"

Feldman, "Ross's Formalism"

Singer, "Taking Life: The Embryo and the Fetus"

Tooley, "Abortion and Infanticide"

Warren, "On the Moral and Legal Status of Abortion"

Thomson, "A Defense of Abortion"

Marquis, "Why Abortion Is Immoral"

Gay-Williams, "The Wrongfulness of Euthanasia"

Brock, "Voluntary Active Euthanasia"

Callahan, "When Self-Determination Runs Amok"

Rachels, "Active and Passive Euthanasia," "The Morality of Euthanasia"

Singer, "IVF: The Simple Case"

Cohen, "'Give Me Children or I Shall Die!' New Reproductive Technologies and Harm to Children"

McMahan, "The Morality of Screening for Disability"

Purdy, "Genetics and Reproductive Risk: Can Having Children Be Immoral?"

Glannon, "Genetic Enhancement"

Resnik, “The Moral Significance of the Therapy-Enhancement Distinction in Human Genetics”

This list is tentative. It may change some. I won't make a more precise schedule at this time; it's too hard to predict how long it will take us to get through each reading. I will announce in class and on Moodle whenever there is a new reading assignment.

A note about the readings. There's not a ton of reading for this class. However, the readings are dense and difficult. In order to fully understand them, you'll need to read them multiple times. It's also very helpful to take notes on them.