

**Phil. 164-6 Medical Ethics  
Syllabus  
Fall 2019**

**Instructor**

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Office Hours: Mon. 10:30-12  
and by appointment

**M-W-F 9:05-9:55am  
South College  
Room E470**

**Course Description**

Medical treatment is typically used to do two things: prolong life and treat disease or injury. In this course, we will look at three broad themes, two centering on times when medicine departs from its usual purpose, and the last focusing on more general concerns with the medical resources needed for that purpose. First: when should medicine be used not to avoid death, but to bring it about? We will look at two issues: abortion and euthanasia. Second: when should medicine be used to change our physical condition, in non-disease or non-injury contexts? We will again look at two issues: the nature of disability and questions concerning whether and when we may cause or remove disability and the permissibility of human enhancement. Finally, we will end the semester by looking at the question of how we should distribute medical resources.

This is, first and foremost, a philosophy course, and specifically a course in *ethics*. While scientific and technological questions will be relevant to our inquiry, they will not be our focus. Our primary concern is with whether certain actions (or lack thereof) in medical contexts are morally permissible. These questions are complex and arise in both public discourse and likely in your own personal lives, regardless of whether you continue on in medicine. This class is an opportunity to think about these issues from multiple points of view.

**Course Goals**

The aim of this course is to introduce you to some prominent questions, arguments, and views in medical ethics. This course will also introduce you to philosophical methodology, focusing on reasoning and arguments that could support various positions in medical ethics. The goal is for you to be able to clearly articulate arguments for different views on controversial questions, analyze and evaluate different and competing lines of reasoning, and give reasoned and critical support for your own views. Crucially, we'll come to see that, as is generally the case with philosophy, the topics discussed are far more complex than they initially seem.

**Grading**

Reading Responses	10%
Unit Quiz 1	10%
Unit Quiz 2	10%
Unit Quiz 3	10%
Unit Quiz 4	10%

Unit Quiz 5	10%
Final Paper	15%
Presentation	15%
Attendance and Participation	10%

### Assignments

Students will complete short responses of various types throughout the semester. Some of these are reading questions, some are open-ended invitations for thoughts on a topic, and some are requests for questions about something you didn't understand in the reading. Collectively, these are worth 10% of your grade. They will be graded pass/fail. Complete and submit your responses on Moodle.

The bulk of your grade will come from five short, in class quizzes, each at the end of a unit. Each quiz is worth 10% of your final grade. Quiz formats will be short answer questions that focus on the readings and class discussion thereof.

There is a final paper, to be submitted in hard copy, worth 15% of your final grade. This will include a summary of an argument taken from the readings, an objection to the argument, and a reply. Paper prompts and instructions are available on Moodle. There will be an in-class writing workshop during the semester to work on the final paper (see below).

There is a final presentation, worth 15% of your grade. These projects will be presented during the last two week of class. These will be done in groups (class size permitting). There will be an in-class workshop devoted to working on them (see below). Instructions are on Moodle.

There is also an attendance and participation grade. Your showing up and being attentive and engaged in lecture will be reflected in your attendance and participation grade. This grade will start off at 100%, but can be negatively affected by unexcused absences from lecture (I will regularly take attendance; you have two 'freebies'), if you regularly violate the electronics policy or if you are disruptive in lecture (wearing headphones, regularly coming in late, doing homework for other classes, etc.).

### Class Expectations

- **Course Readings:** Students should do all the assigned readings *before* the class in which they're discussed. All readings are available on the course webpage. There is no textbook, but students should print articles so they can bring them to class.
- **Attendance and Participation:** Attendance in class is expected. I will take attendance and keep track of student contributions in class. You can miss up to 2 classes without penalty and without notifying me. Any further absences will need to be justified.
- **Electronics Policy:** Laptops, tablets, and phones are not permitted during class. Using electronics is distracting to both yourself and others, and studies have shown that it lowers grades of the user and those around them. If you require a special accommodation regarding electronics please come see me to request an exemption.

- **Late Work Policy:** Late assignments without an extension will be downgraded by 1/3 of a letter grade per day after the due date, up to a penalty of 2 full letter grades (after which they won't be accepted). Consult with me to request an extension. Late reading responses will not be graded.
- **Classroom Etiquette:** Students are expected to respect each other, allow others the chance to speak, and be open-minded to views different from their own. The topics covered are difficult and controversial and many of your classmates have struggled with them in their own lives. Please be aware of, and sensitive to, the feelings and experiences of others.
- **Syllabus:** Readings and schedule are subject to change. Any changes will be announced in class and on the course Moodle page.

### Accessibility

I am committed to making this class accessible and welcoming for all students. Students with documented disabilities are encouraged to contact Disability Services in 161 Whitmore, or at <http://www.umass.edu/disability> to register and request any accommodations you might need. If you anticipate receiving accommodations from Disability Services, but are still waiting on paperwork, please come tell me as soon as you can so that we can put necessary accommodations in place.

### Schedule

#### Week 1: Sept. 4, 6

#### Introduction

- W Introduction and course overview
- F Scope and methods of philosophy and medical ethics (no readings)

#### Week 2: Sept. 9, 11, 13

#### Abortion

- M Pope John Paul II, "The Unspeakable Crime of Abortion" (1995)
- W Judith Jarvis Thomson, "A Defense of Abortion" (1971);
- F Thomson, "A Defense of Abortion", *continued*

#### Week 3: Sept. 16, 18, 20

#### Abortion

- M Don Marquis, "Why Abortion is Immoral" (1989); **Add/Drop Deadline**
- W Mary Anne Warren, "On the Moral and Legal Status of Abortion" (1973)
- F Warren, "On the Moral and Legal Status of Abortion," (*postscript*, 1984)  
*continued*

Giubilini and Minerva, "After-Birth Abortion: Why Should the Baby Live?" (2013)

**Week 4: Sept. 23, 25, 27**                      **Euthanasia**

**M**     **Abortion Unit Quiz (in class)**

**W**     Margaret Battin, "Euthanasia and Physician-Assisted Suicide" (2005)

**F**     Christine Wicker, "Burn Victim Survived Hell, Still Insists on Right to Die" (Orlando Sentinel, 1989).

David Velleman. "A Right of Self-Termination?" *Ethics* (1999) [only read pg. 606-620].

**Week 5: Sept. 30, Oct. 2, 4**                      **Euthanasia**

**M**     Velleman, "A Right of Self-Termination?" *continued*

**W**     James Rachels, "Active and Passive Euthanasia," *The New England Journal of Medicine* (1975).

**F**     Winston Nesbitt, "Is Killing No Worse Than Letting Die?" *Journal of Applied Philosophy*, 12(1), 101-106, (1995).

**Week 6: Oct. 7, 9, 11**                              **Euthanasia**

**M**     Thomas Sullivan. "Active and Passive Euthanasia: An Impertinent Distinction?" *Human Life Review*, (1977).

**W**     **Euthanasia Unit Quiz (in class)**

**F**     **Class Cancelled**

**Week 7: Oct. 15, 16, 18**                              **Disability**

**T**     Leon Kass, "Implications of Prenatal Diagnosis for the Human Right to Life" (1976).

**W**     M. Spriggs, "Lesbian couple create a child who is deaf like them." *Journal of Medical Ethics* 2002 28: 283.

N. Levy, "Deafness, culture, and choice." *Journal of Medical Ethics* 2002 28: 284-285.

**F**     Dan Brock, "The Non-Identity Problem and Genetic Harms" (1995).

**Week 8: Oct. 21, 23, 25                      Disability**

- M**     K. W. Anstey, “Are Attempts to Have Impaired Children Justifiable?” (2002)
- W**     H-Dirksen L. Bauman, “Designing Deaf Babies and the Question of Disability”;  
**Presentation Groups/Topics Assigned**
- F**     Elizabeth Barnes, “Bad Difference and Mere Difference”, ch. 2 of  
*The Minority Body*, Oxford University Press, (2015) (skip section 2.2)

**Week 9: Oct. 28, 30, Nov. 1                  Enhancement**

- M**     **Disability Unit Quiz (in class)**
- W**     Malcolm Gladwell, “Man and Superman.” *The New Yorker*. September 9, (2013).  
  
Julian Savulescu, B. Foddy and M. Clayton, “Why We Should Allow  
Performance Enhancing Drugs in Sport” *British Journal of Sports Medicine*  
(2004) 38: 666-670.
- F**     Ted Chiang, “Understand” (short story; 1994).

**Week 10: Nov. 4, 6, 8                      Enhancement**

- M**     Walter Veit, “Cognitive Enhancement and the Threat of Inequality” *Journal of  
Cognitive Enhancement*, (2018)
- W**     Michael Sandel, “The Case Against Perfection” (2004).
- F**     **Enhancement Unit Quiz (in class)**

**Week 11: Nov. 13, 15                      Distribution of Medical Resources**

- W**     Presentation Workshop (bring your laptops)
- F**     Nicholas Rescher, “The Allocation of Exotic Medical Lifesaving Therapy”  
(1969).

**Week 12: Nov. 18, 20, 22                  Distribution of Medical Resources**

- M**     Berkman and Zhou, “Ban the Ban: A Scientific and Cultural Analysis of the  
FDA’s Ban on Blood Donations from Men Who Have Sex with Men” (2015).
- W**     **Distribution of Medical Resources Unit Quiz (in class)**
- F**     Class Discussion

**Week 13: Nov. 25, 27, 29      Thanksgiving Break – No Classes**

**Week 14: Dec. 2, 4, 6          Workshop and Presentations**

**M**      Writing Workshop for Final Paper (bring your laptops)

**W**      Presentations

**F**      Presentations

**Week 14: Dec. 9, 11          Presentations and Wrap-Up**

**M**      Presentations

**W**      Presentations

**Thursday, December 12: Final Papers Due by 4:30pm (in my office or in my department mailbox)**