

**Phil. 164-2 Medical Ethics
Syllabus
Spring 2019**

Instructor

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Office Hours: M & W 12-1pm or by appointment

**M-W-F 10:10-11:00am
Hasbrouck Laboratory
Room 138**

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 a more general concern 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 performance-enhancing drugs in sport. 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

Short Responses	15%
Reading Summary and Objection	15%
Reading Summary and Objection	20%
Final Paper	25%
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 15% of your grade. They will be graded pass/fail. Complete and submit your responses on Moodle.

We will have three short writing assignments in this class. All are to be submitted in hard copy. These will be incremental so that by the end of the semester, you will be able to write a short paper of the type we are reading in class. The first and second papers will be an exercise in summary and considering an objection, while the third will be a full paper including a summary, objection, and reply. 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 week of class. These may be done in groups depending on class size. 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.
- **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 webpage.

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: Jan. 23, 25 Introduction

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

Week 2: Jan. 28, 30, Feb. 1 Abortion

- M** Pope John Paul II, “The Unspeakable Crime of Abortion” (1995)
- W** Don Marquis, “Why Abortion is Immoral” (1989)
- F** Discussion of Marquis

Week 3: Feb. 4, 6, 8 Abortion

- M** Judith Jarvis Thomson, “A Defense of Abortion” (1971)
- W** Thomson, “A Defense of Abortion”, *continued*
- F** Discussion of Thomson

Week 4: Feb. 11, 13, 15 Abortion

- M** Mary Anne Warren, “On the Moral and Legal Status of Abortion” (1973)
- W** Warren, “On the Moral and Legal Status of Abortion,” (*postscript*, 1984)
continued
- F** Discussion of Warren

Week 5: Feb. 19, 20, 22

Euthanasia

- T** Christine Wicker, “Burn Victim Survived Hell, Still Insists on Right to Die” (Orlando Sentinel, 1989).
- James Rachels, “Active and Passive Euthanasia,” *The New England Journal of Medicine* (1975).
- W** Andrew Bomford, “Wanting to die at ‘five to midnight’ – before dementia takes over” (BBC, 2019).
- Winston Nesbitt, “Is Killing No Worse Than Letting Die?” *Journal of Applied Philosophy*, 12(1), 101-106, (1995).
- F** Discussion of Rachels and Nesbitt; **First writing assignment (summary and objection) due**

Week 6: Feb. 25, 27, Mar. 1

Euthanasia

- M** Thomas Sullivan. “Active and Passive Euthanasia: An Impertinent Distinction?” *Human Life Review*, (1977).
- W** John Rawls, Judith Jarvis Thomson, Robert Nozick, Ronald Dworkin, T. M. Scanlon, Thomas Nagel. “Assisted Suicide: The Philosophers’ Brief” *New York Review of Books* (1997; excerpts).
- F** Discussion of Sullivan and Rawls *et al.*

Week 7: Mar. 4, 6, 8

Euthanasia

- M** David Velleman. “A Right of Self-Termination?” *Ethics* (1999) [only read pg. 606-620].
- W** Velleman, “A Right of Self-Termination?” *continued*
- F** Discussion of Velleman

Week 8: Mar. 18, 20, 22

Disability

- M** Leon Kass, “Implications of Prenatal Diagnosis for the Human Right to Life” (1976)
- W** Julian Savulescu, “In Defense of Procreative Beneficence” (2007)
- F** 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

Week 9: Mar. 25, 27, 29 Disability

- M** Dan Brock, "The Non-Identity Problem and Genetic Harms" (1995)
- W** K. W. Anstey, "Are Attempts to Have Impaired Children Justifiable?" (2002)
- F** Presentation Workshop (bring your laptops); **Second writing assignment (summary and objection) due**

Week 10: Apr. 1, 3, 5 Disability

- M** H-Dirksen L. Bauman, "Designing Deaf Babies and the Question of Disability"
- W** John Harris, "Is Gene Therapy a Form of Eugenics?" (1993) (only pages 180-181)

Sara Goering, "Rethinking Disability: The Social Model of Disability and Chronic Disease." *Current Reviews in Musculoskeletal Medicine*, 8(2), 134–138 (2015).
- F** Elizabeth Barnes, "Bad Difference and Mere Difference", ch. 2 of *The Minority Body*, Oxford University Press, (2015) (skip section 2.2)

Week 11: Apr. 8, 10, 12 Enhancement

- M** 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.
- W** Ted Chiang, "Understand" (short story; 1994).
- F** Discussion of enhancement

Week 12: Apr. 17, 19 Distribution of Medical Resources

- W** Ronald Dworkin, "Will Clinton's Plan be Fair?" *New York Review of Books*, 1994.
- F** Nicholas Rescher, "The Allocation of Exotic Medical Lifesaving Therapy" (1969).

Week 13: Apr. 22, 24, 26

Presentations and Workshop

M Writing Workshop for Final Paper (bring your laptops)

W Presentations

F Presentations

Week 14: Apr. 29, May 1

Presentations and Wrap-Up

M Presentations

W Presentations

Wednesday May 8: Final Papers Due by 5pm (in my office or in my department mailbox)