FALL 2015

COURSE TITLE: INTRODUCTION TO BIOETHICS

COURSE NUMBER: BIOE 6000 – THST 698.03

SECTION TIMES/DAYS: M 7:15-9:45 – UH 4511 (BIOETHICS CONFERENCE ROOM)

INSTRUCTOR: DR. ROBERTO DELL’ORO

OFFICE HOURS: M 4-7 and by appointment

COURSE DESCRIPTION

Bioethics represents a complex intellectual phenomenon in the canon of newly emerging disciplines. Although an established academic field, it still struggles to find a formal and coherent methodology for the analysis of ethical problems triggered by advances in medicine and the life sciences. The course introduces students to the historical, theoretical, and thematic dimensions of bioethics. More specifically, the course looks at historical contribution of theologians and philosophers to bioethics; it addresses the theoretical challenges of bioethics as an interdisciplinary field, with an emphasis on dominant theories in bioethics; and, finally, it touches upon the main topics of bioethics, including medical experimentation, assisted reproductive technologies, genetics, transplantation, assisted suicide and euthanasia.

STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES

Understand the basic problems, methods, and approaches to the field of bioethics.

Familiarize with the main ethical theories of bioethics and identify the philosophical components of the public discussion on bioethical issues.

Engage in the critical analysis of bioethical questions and articulate their theoretical and practical dimension.

Appreciate the importance of ethical dialogue across different philosophical traditions.

PREREQUISITES/RECOMMENDED BACKGROUND

Undergraduate degree.

REQUIRED TEXTS


ADDITIONAL TEXTS

T5. Edmund Pellegrino, “From Medical Ethics to Bioethics” (to be distributed)


T7. Edmund Pellegrino and David Thomasma, *For the Patient’s Good: The Restoration of Beneficence in Health Care* (to be distributed)

T8. Hans Jonas, “Philosophical Reflections on Experimenting with Human Subjects” (to be distributed)


COURSE WORK/EXPECTATIONS

This graduate course is a combination of lectures and student participation. Students are invited to come to class having done all the readings assigned for the day. Additional assignments include 1 in class presentations, a midterm and a final exam.

ACADEMIC HONESTY

In accordance with the statement of the University Bulletin on Academic Honesty, the work you do in this course is expected to be your own. Therefore, a student will receive a 0 (zero) on any assignments that is done in such a way as to violate any of the University’s rules on academic honesty.

GRADING

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participation/Discussion</th>
<th>15%</th>
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EXPLANATION OF GRADES

A (Excellent): An A is a mark of true excellence. Papers with errors in spelling, grammar, or reasoning are not excellent. Coming to class unprepared is not excellent. Failing to be an engaged participant in class discussions is not excellent. Superficial reading and consequent failure to grasp the fundamental themes in the reading is not excellent. Illogical or poorly argued papers are not excellent. Given that an A indicates excellence, you should not expect to receive an A in my class without significant effort on your part. Excellence is rarely, if ever, merely the product of innate skill or intelligence; true excellence requires effort.
A- (Superior): An A- indicates superior work, which clearly surpasses the work of good graduate students, but which falls short of true excellence in some way.

B’s (B+, B, B-) (Good): A B is a mark that indicates good performance. A B+ indicates work that is very good, while a B- indicates work that, while above average, falls short of a “B” in some way.

C’s (C+, C, C-) (Satisfactory or Average): A C is a mark given for average performance. The student can correctly reproduce factual information, or “use the right words,” but has not really digested the information to make it his or her own. A C+ indicates work that is above average, while a C- indicates work that is close to average/satisfactory, but which falls short of satisfactory work in some way.

D (Unsatisfactory, but passing): A D is a mark that usually indicates passing but unsatisfactory work (although there are certain cases in which a D is in fact not a passing grade, these are intended to be general comments on grading). A mark of D indicates that the student has completed minimal requirements for the assignment in question, but has produced work that is not satisfactory.

F (Failing): An F indicates failing work that does not meet minimal standards for acceptable graduate university work. In addition, any work that fails to meet the requirements for an assignment—e.g., work turned in late, work turned in via email, plagiarized work, work that ignores the criteria of the prompt—will receive a failing grade.

Statement on the University Mission in Relation to Courses in the Bioethics Institute

Courses in the Bioethics graduate program at Loyola Marymount University seek to provide educational opportunities that will enable students to reflect systematically on contemporary issues in bioethics through a challenging liberal arts and sciences curriculum with a commitment to social justice.

Courses in the Bioethics Institute require students to think, speak, write, and reflect critically about the deepest ethical questions of the day, especially those emerging in the areas of the life sciences and medicine. To do this, students are required also to “acquire the arts of precise and elegant expression, a sound and critical grasp of ideas, a familiarity with the modern world’s ways of knowing itself, a personal understanding of this nation’s history and multicultural heritage, and an appreciation of other cultures and societies around the globe.” (University Bulletin)

Statement on Academic Excellence in the Bioethics Institute

In keeping with the larger context of LMU’s mission, academic excellence is grounded in critical thinking, moral reflection, and articulate expression (both in written and oral form). Such critical thinking, reflection, and expression are rooted in the discipline of academic work. Critical thought and reflection, as well as the ability to articulate one’s ethical beliefs clearly and thoughtfully, are the result of disciplined work, which constitutes the necessary condition for academic achievement.
The Bioethics Institute maintains high expectations for academic excellence. Students in the Bioethics Institute’s courses are expected to be engaged listeners and careful readers as well as to write and speak cogently about substantive ethical matters. They are expected to understand and analyze pertinent primary texts, scholarly literature, and to assimilate lectures on complex topics. Moreover, students are expected to generate their own questions about the material under consideration, questions appropriate to the area they are studying, reflecting a firm grasp of the basic course content and methodological approach.

Courses in the Bioethics Institute may require approximately 150 pages of reading a week and up to 40 pages of writing over the course of the semester. Moreover, class attendance, preparation, and participation are not optional, but essential. Faculty are not required to prepare detailed “study guides” that repeat or summarize class and lecture content, nor are they required to prepare students for quizzes or exams beyond the content of the course lectures. Grading standards are high for all courses in the Bioethics Institute.

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WEEKLY SCHEDULE AND ASSIGNED READINGS

Remember, this is only a tentative schedule, an attempt to articulate the subject matter that might not reflect the real unfolding of the class content. The latter depends on factors that cannot be established a priori, such as the learning pace of students, their ability to assimilate the material, as well as the need to continue in class discussions on particular points. For all these reasons, the schedule could be modified any time at the professor’s discretion.

COURSE INTRODUCTION AND OVERVIEW

August 31   Introduction to the Course: Goals, Method, and Content

SECTION 1: THE FIELD OF BIOETHICS: HISTORY AND INTERPRETATION

September 14  Medical Ethics before Bioethics: Challenges and Developments
   T1, 3-33
   T5 (to be distributed)
   T6 (to be distributed)

SECTION 2: MORAL FOUNDATIONS: NORMS, CHARACTER, AND MORAL STATUS

September 21  Normative Framework of Bioethics
T4, 1-100  
T2, 121-149

September 28  *Philosophical Methodologies and Theories*  
T4, 351-389  
→*Test Case: Abortion and Maternal-Fetal Care*

(1) In Class Presentations: Aceves and Alkin

SECTION 3: COMMON MORALITY THEORY AND THE SEARCH FOR MID-LEVEL ETHICAL PRINCIPLES

October 5  *The Principle of Autonomy*  
T4, 101-149  
T2, 70-120  
→*Test Case: Advanced Directives*

(2) In Class Presentations: Lynell and Duvoisin

October 12  *The Principle of Non-Maleficence and Beneficence*  
T4, 150-201  
T2, 286-320  
→*Test Case: Care of Critically Ill Newborns*

T4, 202-247  
T7, 3-58 (to be distributed)  
→*Test Case: Withholding and Withdrawing Treatment*

(3) In Class Presentations: Machen and Millstein

DISTRIBUTION OF MIDTERM EXAM

October 19  ANNUAL BIOETHICS LECTURE:  
*Neuroethics: Navigating Issues of Neuroscience from Bench to Bedside*  
Prof. James Giordano, Georgetown University

October 26  DEADLINE FOR RETURN OF MIDTERM EXAM

November 2  *The Principle of Justice*  
T4, 249-301  
T2, 458-483  
→*Test Case: Health Care Reform*

(4) In Class Presentations: Monson and Pilotin
November 9  The Health Care Professional-Patient Relationship
T4, 302-349
T2, 321-356
T7, 61-124 (to be distributed)
→Test Case: Physician Assisted Suicide

In Class Presentations: Bando and Jones

SECTION 4: FROM THEORY TO PRACTICE IN BIOETHICS

November 16 Theme 1: Research Ethics
T1, 125-165
T2, 357-393
T8 (to be distributed)
T3, 487-537
T9 (to be distributed)
→Case Study: The Tuskegee Syphilis Study

In Class Presentation: Savariyar

November 23 Theme 2: The Ethics of Human Reproduction
T1, 282-321
T3, 317-351
T2, 232-262
→Case Study: The Case of Baby M

In Class Presentation: Yuey

November 30 Theme 3: The Ethics of Death and Dying
T1, 233-281
T2, 150-230
→Case Study: Karen Quinlan and Nancy Cruzan

In Class Presentation: Zucker

December 7 Last Day of Class
Topic TBA

DISTRIBUTION OF FINAL EXAM

December 14:
DEADLINE FOR FINAL EXAM
IN CLASS PRESENTATIONS

CRITERIA

During the course of the semester, you will be asked to make one in class presentation. Here are some criteria for your assignment.

The presentation will be on a specific “test case” or a “case study.” As you can see from the syllabus, we will discuss six test cases, i.e., (1) abortion and maternal-fetal care; (2) advanced directives; (3) the care of critically ill newborns; (4) withholding and withdrawing treatment; (5) health care reform; and (6) physician-assisted suicide. In addition, there will be three case studies: (7) the Tuskegee Syphilis study; (8) the case of Baby M; (9) the cases of Karen Quinlan and Nancy Cruzan.

You will be assigned a topic by the professor. Your charge is as follows: you will select one journal article or book chapter on the topic in question. You will discuss your choice with the professor, and provide him with a copy of the reading you selected. The reading will be made available to everyone in the class. You will then present the reading in class on the day assigned to you. You should submit your paper in advance - i.e., by the end of the week before your presentation, so that it can be made available to your fellow students.

Your presentation will aim at clarifying and faithful articulating the article/book chapter of your choice, so as to make possible for your fellow students a better grasp of the piece and facilitate discussion.

Remember: your essay is neither a book review, nor a critical assessment. It is, rather, an intelligent synthesis, based on understanding and, of course, your own interpretation. Also, refrain from quotations, since everyone will have the text at hand, or from mindless paraphrasing of the text. The scope of the exercise is personal appropriation based on study of the text.

For the in-class presentation, you will be asked to read your essay, which should not exceed six double spaced pages. The presentation will last no more than ten minutes and will open up the class discussion for which the professor, not you, will be responsible.

MIDTERM EXAM

A) General Scope of the Exam

The midterm is an opportunity to return to the material examined, to probe more carefully some of the main points, and to facilitate a deeper personal appropriation of what you have studied. More concretely, what you will do for the midterm is not all that different from the kind of exercise you have already done with the in-class presentation. Remember what the syllabus says about it:
Your essay is neither a book review, nor a critical assessment. It is, rather, an intelligent synthesis, based on understanding and, of course, your own interpretation. Also, refrain from quotations ... or from mindless paraphrasing of the text. The scope of the exercise is personal appropriation based on study of the text.

You are being asked to study, understand, reflect, and convey in writing the content you have appropriated.

B) The Structure of the Exam

You are given a set of 9 questions, divided in 3 groups. The questions cover the entire material. You will select one of the questions for each of the 3 groups. You should develop a total of 3 questions, dedicating at least 5 double spaced pages to each question. Ideally, your final paper, that is, the result of your 3 responses, should be around 15 pages. Of course, you are allowed to dedicate more pages to a particular question, if you feel necessary to do so.

C) How to Address the Questions?

Each question tackles a particular question/problem, which you need to address in your response. Ultimately, the goal of your essay is to respond to the problem posed. How will you go about it? By bringing all that is relevant in the material we have covered to bear on the question. You should be both complete and creative in your response, that is, you should try to make sure that, for each of your responses, the question is fully exhausted with respect to two dimensions, i.e., the analysis of the material, and, secondly, your personal appropriation of it. Let me say something about both:

(1) The analysis of the material relevant to each question presupposes that you identify appropriate content. Understand that the issue here is not simply to rely on specific texts, but to exploit, so to speak, all sources of insights available to you, such as lecture notes, in class discussions, additional sources that, perhaps, you might have accessed through personal research, etc.

(2) Appropriation of the material goes beyond mechanical “explanation” of relevant points. It entails a personal judgment, or a personal “take” on the question you are considering. To be able to “appropriate” the material is to show: (a) that you can make a particular question interact with a larger spectrum of issues; (b) that you can have a particular opinion, or develop personal considerations on a given topic.

In synthesis: the virtues needed for (1) are: patience, attentiveness, carefulness, insightfulness. The virtues needed for (2) are: creativity, capacity to make connection, critical attitude toward the material.

D) Grading

It might be helpful for you to know how criteria for grading are being applied to your responses. Each essay is worth 30 points (which adds to a total of 90 points for the 3 questions.).

Five dimensions are being considered for each question:
(a) Formal compliance with the criteria – 6 points
(b) Writing (grammar, syntax, style, etc...) – 6 points
(c) General Content – 6 points
(d) Analysis – 6 points
(e) Appropriation – 6 points

\[\Rightarrow \text{Finally, Remember...!}\]

• To indicate clearly the group and the question you are selecting (ex.: Group 3, Question 9)

• To staple your essay(s)

• To put page numbers on your essay(s)

• To number your pages consecutively, as you move from one essay to the next

FINAL EXAM

Criteria for the final exam will be given in due time.

GUIDELINES ON HOW TO WRITE AN ESSAY

An essay is to be conceived as an organic whole, yet it should have a very precise structure. Therefore, it is important for it to have different parts, reflecting the process of your thinking and researching.

I suggest you consider four parts for any essay you will write, whether for the in class presentation, the midterm, or the final exam.

You do not need to actually divide the essay in four parts; all I want is for your piece to reflect these four components: an introduction, an objective part, a subjective part, and a conclusion.

**Introduction**

After you have clearly defined your title, you will introduce the reader to the topic. Assume nothing in the reader you are addressing, thus be simple and clear in your writing. *I suggest the following thought experiment: imagine your reader is a fellow student of yours who is not taking your class, and to whom you have to explain the main dimensions of an ethical issue, together with your personal position on it.*

**Objective Part**

In this second part, you will carefully analyze the scholarly sources on which you are drawing. Proper quotations, bibliography, in addition to endnotes or footnotes, are expected. You might also provide a list of the sources you have consulted at the end of the paper. The selection of pertinent bibliography is a careful exercise that requires research and discernment on your part. Your task, in this part, is to
explain to the reader the general meaning and the main points of the sources you are discussing. What are your authors saying? Why are they saying that? What are their reasons and what is the logic of their arguments? This part is called objective because it relies upon your ability to faithfully convey the position of the authors you are discussing. What is important here is to be respectful and insightful so that the other’s position gets fairly represented. Of course, this will be easy if you tend to agree with the authors. It may be more difficult, if you disagree or feel like rejecting what your articles are saying. Intellectual patience will be important here. Sometimes, articles selected for your study have different points of view for you to consider. For an example, on the topic you selected, you might encounter readings that have different ideological inclinations. It is essential for you to entertain all relevant points of view and to argue their differences, so as to arrive, eventually, at your own conclusions.

Subjective Part
In this part, you will provide your own personal assessment of the arguments and general points raised by the sources you analyzed in the previous section. This part is subjective because you will say what you think and possibly state your own position on the issue. Subjective stands for reflective, i.e., for critical analysis rather than superficial expression of your own ideas. If you don’t go beyond the latter, it means that intellectually you have not gone beyond elementary moral intuitions: indeed, you are saying what you think, but you have not worked those ideas into a real ethical reflection.

Conclusion
At the end of your essay you will synthetize your findings and reflections, so as to give the reader a quick summary of your piece. Also, you might provide, when necessary, something like a “final statement” on the topic you are considering, one that reflects your personal position on a given issue. At times, you will have to end your essay with a simple confession of humility: the recognition that you need to think further!

NOTICE

THIS SYLLABUS REPRESENTS THE PROFESSOR’S BEST JUDGMENT AND PROJECTION OF THE CONDUCT OF THE COURSE. HOWEVER, THE PROFESSOR RESERVES THE RIGHT TO MODIFY THE ASSIGNMENTS AND REQUIREMENTS FOR THIS COURSE. AMPLE NOTIFICATION (WRITTEN OR ORAL) WILL BE GIVEN FOR ANY CHANGES.