

ETHICS: BIOETHICS

SUMMER 2016 ♦ PHIL 105-20 ♦ MTWR 5:45PM-7:45PM ♦ ST. MARYS 120

INSTRUCTOR: Michael Randall Barnes ♦ EMAIL: mrb238@georgetown.edu

OFFICE HOURS: location: New North 214 – time: TBD (and by appointment)

**NOTE: SYLLABUS SUBJECT TO CHANGE. CHECK BLACKBOARD REGULARLY FOR UPDATES. **

COURSE OVERVIEW

This course serves as an introduction to contemporary bioethics, a fundamentally interdisciplinary field that draws from philosophy, biology, medicine, law, sociology, and many other areas to probe questions that arise in medical practice, health policy, biological research, and more. While philosophical ethics provides the main theoretical tools to be implemented in this course, our attention will be thoroughly practical, focusing on pressing moral issues drawn from real life involving real human—and non-human—lives.

Topics covered with specific attention in this course will include: research ethics, at both the local and global level; end-of-life issues, including doctor-assisted suicide; beginning- and pre-beginning-of-life issues, such as abortion, surrogacy, and the ethics of procreating itself; as well as questions concerning the distribution of scarce healthcare resources, again, in both the local and global context.

This course will aim to develop both students' understanding of traditional ethical theories—such as virtue ethics, Kantianism, and utilitarianism—as well as how these theories apply (or perhaps fail to apply) in concrete ethical situations. **Students are responsible for three (approx. 4-7 pg.) papers, periodic short quizzes, and active class participation. There is no required text for this course, and readings will be provided through Blackboard.**

COURSE GOALS

The course has several goals, three of the most important are:

- (1) To introduce you to important texts and ideas in the broad fields of ethics and bioethics.
- (2) To cultivate your own thinking about central problems in bioethics, especially as they bear on issues that you may encounter in your own life and the lives of those around you.
- (3) To improve your analytical reading and writing skills, which for philosophy involves: (a) recognizing the parts of arguments; (b) understanding how these parts work together; (c) critiquing the steps, reasoning, consistency, or validity of an argument, while remaining charitable.

DESCRIPTION OF ASSIGNMENTS

PARTICIPATION: You are expected to participate regularly and thoughtfully. You should demonstrate that you have read the required material, and you should also engage with your classmates—active listening is an important component of this. Class participation is a significant component of the final grade.

As part of class participation, you are expected to come to class each day with a **1-3 sentence written reading response**. This can be a question, comment, or connection, but it should be specific to at least one of the texts assigned for the day. We will sometimes share these responses at the beginning of class, and sometimes we will have a **brief quiz** instead.

Meetings with me outside of class may supplement, though not replace, participation in class discussions. **Your in-class participation, both its quantity and quality, is worth 10% of your final grade, and completion of the reading responses and quizzes is worth 10%.**

WRITING ASSIGNMENTS: You are required to write **three short papers** (4-7 pages) based on the prompt(s) that I provide. The prompt can be on any readings that we have done up to that point. The point of these papers is to help you build your philosophical writing skills. You must submit to Blackboard SafeAssign. **Paper 1 is worth 15% of your final grade, Paper 2 and Paper 3 are worth 30% each.**

SUMMARY OF ASSIGNMENTS:

- **Class Participation – 10%**
- **Short Reading Responses / Quizzes – 15%**
- **Paper 1 – 15%**
- **Paper 2 – 30%**
- **Paper 3 – 30%**

CLASS MATERIALS

All readings and other materials will be available on Blackboard (<http://campus.georgetown.edu>).

POLICIES

ATTENDANCE: Students are permitted two “free passes” where they can miss class without excuse. However, any unexcused absences after that bring your participation grade down a full letter grade. *Students who have more than four unexcused absences cannot pass the course.*

ACADEMIC RESOURCE CENTER AND ADA ACCOMMODATIONS: If you have a disability or believe you might and would like to receive accommodations in my course, then you should contact the Academic Resource Center (arc@georgetown.edu) to register as a student with a disability or for an evaluation referral. You should do this at the beginning of the term. The Academic Resource Center is the campus office responsible for reviewing documentation provided by students with disabilities and for determining reasonable accommodation in accordance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and University policies.

I am happy to accommodate the multitude of different learning styles that people may have. Please come speak to me early in the term about any disability-related accommodations you may need. Also, if you find over the course of the term that additional accommodations are necessary, let me know so we can work together to make this course a beneficial experience. In general, students are encouraged to contact the instructor with suggestions, requests, or comments about how to best support their learning styles or needs.

TITLE IX: Please note: while I am happy to discuss both academic and personal matters with students, if I am made aware of discrimination, harassment, or other crimes occurring at or in relation to Georgetown University I am bound by Title IX's mandatory reporting rules. Under Title IX representatives of the University are required to report violations within 24 hours of being made aware of the problem.

ACADEMIC HONESTY: When it comes time to write your papers, you must use the skills you have developed by thinking through the relevant issues on your own. You have all signed the **Georgetown University Honor pledge** and have agreed to be honest in your academic endeavors and to hold yourself to the high ideals and rigorous standards of academic life. I expect you to be familiar with both the letter and the spirit of the pledge. **The Honor Council** adjudicates cases of suspected academic dishonesty. In effort to uphold this university's high standards, I will submit any and all suspected cases of academic dishonesty to the Honor Council, who will investigate. Confirmed academic dishonesty will result in automatic failure of the course.

WRITING CENTER: Please consider taking advantage of the resources of the Writing Center. The Writing Center provides one-on-one peer tutoring focused on improving your writing skills. I encourage you to take your paper drafts to the Writing Center. Visit <http://writingcenter.georgetown.edu> for more information. You can also schedule an appointment with a Writing Center tutor online on the center's website.

EXTENSIONS: Under some circumstances, it is possible to get an extension for written work. If you need an extension or reassignment, email me as soon as possible with a brief description of your situation and how long you think it will take you to resolve the issue. I will then respond and we will work out a timeframe for the extension. Barring emergencies, extensions must be requested at least 48 hours before the assignment is due.

LATE PAPERS: You are responsible for turning in your work on time. Each 24 hours or portion thereof that a piece of written work is late will result in the subtraction of 1/3 letter grade.

GRADE APPEALS: if you believe the work you submitted deserves a different grade than it received, you may ask in writing for reconsideration. Your request must be submitted *within one week*, but no sooner than *two days* after the assignment is returned. Your written request must *explain why* you believe the work deserves a different grade. Most appeals will not result in a change of grade, but if a change is made please note that the grade may be either higher or lower.

IN-CLASS BEHAVIOR: You are responsible for comporting yourself in an appropriate manner. This includes both actively participating in discussion as well as treating other members of the class with respect and courtesy. While philosophy is best done collectively and collaboratively, the questions we will be discussing are likely to generate contentious claims, spirited discussions, vehement disagreements, and trenchant criticisms. In discussing, disagreeing, criticizing, and arguing, we must also make an effort to remain courteous and respectful to one another. I promise to do my best to raise philosophical issues and to start philosophical discussions in ways that are as sensitive as possible to the variety of viewpoints and opinions that we are sure to find among the members of this class. But, I will only be able to do this if each of you helps me to create an atmosphere where we can develop ideas in a friendly and welcoming environment where we all learn from one another. Perhaps more importantly, if you want to disagree with someone, or if you want to offer a criticism of their viewpoint, be sure to offer reasons for the approach that you are suggesting. If we reason through things together, we can help each other have a great class.

Lastly, you are responsible for being prepared for class. This includes reading assigned material, thinking about it so that you can ask intelligent questions, and arriving on time.

CLASS SCHEDULE

WEEK ONE: Introduction to Ethics / The Right to Die

M	R.M. Hare, "A Utilitarian Approach" / Watch: Episode 06 of "Harvard University's Justice with Michael Sandel," available at http://www.justiceharvard.org/2011/02/episode-06/
T	Lewis Vaughn, "Moral Reasoning in Bioethics"
W	Lori Gruen, "Seeking an Alternative Ethic" / Dan W. Brock, "Voluntary Active Euthanasia"
R	J. David Velleman, "Against the Right to Die" / Ron Amundson & Gaile Taira, "Our Lives and Ideologies: The Effect of Life Experience on the Perceived Morality of the Policy of Physician-Assisted Suicide"

WEEK TWO: Surrogacy, IVF, and Exploitation (pt. 1)

M	Rosemarie Tong, "Surrogate Motherhood," / Jeffrey Kirby, "Transnational Gestational Surrogacy: Does it have to be Exploitative?"
T	Vida Panitch, "Surrogate Tourism and Reproductive Rights,"
W	Melissa Seymour Fahmy, "On the Supposed Moral Harm of Selecting for Deafness"
R	Watch: Zippi Brand Frank - <i>Google Baby</i> (2009), film (available on youtube).

WEEK THREE: Medical Research, Exploitation (pt. 2), and Race

M	Jennifer S. Hawkins, "Research Ethics, Developing Countries, and Exploitation: A Primer," / "Introduction: Why Exploitation,"
T	Alan Wertheimer, "Exploitation in Clinical Research," / Vida Panitch, "Exploitation, Justice, and Parity in International Clinical Research,"
W	Alisa Carse & Margaret Olivia Little, "Exploitation and the Enterprise of Medical Research,"
R	Michael Root, "The Problem of Race in Medicine," / Dorothy Roberts, "Debating the Cause of Health Disparities: Implications for Bioethics and Racial Equality"

WEEK FOUR: Abortion and Moral Status

M	Don Marquis, "Why Abortion is Immoral" / Judith Jarvis Thomson, "A Defense of Abortion,"
T	Margaret Olivia Little, "Abortion, Intimacy, and the Duty to Gestate"
W	Watch: <i>After Tiller</i>
R	Jon A. Shields, "Abortion and the Limits of Philosophy" / Margaret Olivia Little, "Abortion and the Margins of Personhood," <i>only sections 1-3</i> .

WEEK FIVE: Moral Status and Non-Human Animals

M	Tom Regan, "The Case for Animal Rights"
T	Elizabeth Anderson, "Animal Rights and the Values of Non-Human Life"
W	Cora Diamond, "Eating Meat and Eating People"
R	David Foster Wallace, "Consider the Lobster"

*** PAPERS ARE DUE VIA BLACKBOARD AT 12PM ON 7/25; 8/5; AND 8/15 ***

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