

PHIL 105: BIOETHICS

Summer 2018, July 9–August 10

Meeting Location/Time: ICC 219A, MTWR 10:45-12:45

Email: dkt23@georgetown.edu

Note on email: I'll aim to respond to emails within 48 hours, but when class deadlines are approaching, response times may slow—plan ahead and email sooner than later.

Instructor: Daniel Threet

Office Hours: by appt

Course Description

This course introduces students to contemporary philosophical issues in bioethics, a subject focused on ethical issues in health care, health policy, medical practice, medical and scientific research, and more. Students will engage with philosophical ethical theories and case studies to gain familiarity with foundational bioethical concepts and topics. Students will learn to use ethical concepts and normative theory to analyze and evaluate cases, to understand, articulate, and defend philosophically and ethically sound positions, and to engage with opposing views. Topics include theories of normative ethics, norms of clinical and research ethics, animal rights, informed consent, paternalism and autonomy, disability, enhancement, abortion, euthanasia, healthcare rights, and organ markets.

Course Goals

- Read seminal work in normative ethics and bioethics and apply it to contemporary issues.
- Learn to analyze and formulate philosophical arguments, in class discussion and through formal and informal writing.
- Refine skills for critical and cogent argumentative writing, with particular attention to recognizing the economy of claims, specifying and disambiguating theses, and judiciously setting bounds to arguments/projects.

Required Texts

All readings supplied as PDF.

Components of Class Grade

- Class participation: 20%
- Paper #1: 15%
- Paper #2: 30%
- Paper #3: 35%

Important Dates

- First Paper – 7/19
- Second Paper – 7/31
- Third Paper – 8/9

HOW CLASSES ARE RUN

ATTENDANCE

Attendance is mandatory. Part of the ambition of the course is to “do philosophy” together—where that means constructing, testing, and evaluating arguments together as a group. As such, attendance plays a role in determining your participation grade; students who are not present cannot participate. Students who have three or more unexcused absences run the risk of automatic failure. Students involved in Georgetown-recognized organizational travel should provide me with the appropriate sponsor forms at the beginning of the semester.

LAPTOP/TABLET/PHONE POLICY

There are good reasons to ban devices like laptops and tablets in the classroom: we are generally less good at multitasking than we think (see, e.g., http://www.eurekalert.org/pub_releases/2013-01/uou-fma011813.php), the rare student who spends the class streaming Final Four games distracts everyone around him or her, and conversation can be impeded by a wall of screens. Laptops, tablets, and phones are not permitted in class unless you have a documented need for such an accommodation on file with the ARC. Students need such accommodations for a wide variety of reasons—if you are unsure if you would qualify, go talk with the ARC staff. PDF readings should be printed and brought to class.

PARTICIPATION

Active participation in class discussions is absolutely essential to doing well in the course. In-class discussions themselves are where a lot of the substantive work of the course is done. Class participation will account for 20% of your overall grade. Informal responses will contribute to your participation grade. What kind of class participation is expected in a philosophy classroom? The following are ways of making yourself an active and helpful contributor:

(1) Read the assigned material at least once before class. Outline the argument, and paraphrase for yourself what you think the author’s conclusion is and how she argues for that conclusion. Write down three or four questions about the article. Those questions can be about the definition of terms or ambiguities in the writing. More substantively, they can be questions about confusions you had when you tried to understand the argument, or places you felt unconvinced by what you read. Imagine what kinds of responses other philosophers we’ve read would have, and write down those as well. Have those questions ready when you come to class.

(2) In class itself, in addition to asking your prepared questions, be ready and willing to raise new questions about things that come up as others speak. It can be helpful to everyone involved if you express confusion when you don’t understand what’s been said. I may ask the class as a whole to consider questions that didn’t occur to you when you were reading, and it’s important that you’re willing to talk even when you aren’t fully confident about what you have to say. Good participation is not simply about demonstrating preparedness and your own knowledge; just as often it is about being willing to experiment and think aloud with others.

(3) Be a respectful collaborator in the classroom. A respectful collaborator gives others a chance to speak, remembers what others has said and credits their contributions, and helps others by asking follow-up questions of other students’ comments. Respectful disagreement is also possible. Just as you would tell a good friend when you think they are wrong, because you want to help, think of your classmates as partners. In fact, if we treat the authors we read in the same manner, we are likely to develop more charitable, sophisticated understandings of the material.

(4) Speaking up is essential, but it’s not the only way to participate. Some of us are shyer or less comfortable talking in front of large groups. To some degree, that’s something that has to be overcome in the philosophy classroom, as you have to be willing to talk to do well as a participator. You can make additional contributions, however, by emailing me questions in advance of class or by asking your class partners and friends to raise questions. Coming to talk with me in office hours is

also a good way to try out ideas in a smaller environment before introducing them in class discussion. Finally, the required informal responses will go into your participation grade.

The participation grade is a holistic and qualitative assessment, though, so the halves of the semester are not weighted in any formulaic manner. You can also get a better sense of this at any time by coming to speak with me in office hours.

THE WORK YOU'LL DO FOR THE CLASS

DESCRIPTION OF ASSIGNMENTS

Full assignment instructions for papers are available on Canvas. Read them early!

- **Papers** – The three required term papers (4–5 pages) will ask you to respond to a particular reading from the course, indicated in the prompt, by developing one and only one objection (or one novel reason to support) the argument presented in the reading. The focus here is on explaining the relevant argument in detail and beginning or extending debate in a slow, focused manner.
- **Informal Responses** – You are required to submit five (5) over the course the semester. To receive credit, each informal response should be around 200-300 words, sent via email to the instructor at least two (2) hours before class. An informal response should respond to the material for the upcoming class—what we have not yet discussed. Informal responses are good places to try out new ideas, raise questions for class, flag ambiguities in the readings, or register disagreement.
- **Completion of Course** – Students who do not complete all papers are liable to being marked as earning an incomplete in the course, which is automatically converted into an F by the dean without extenuating circumstances.

HONOR CODE

You are expected and required to uphold standards of academic honesty in this course. You should be familiar with the Standards of Conduct outlined in the Georgetown Honor System and on the Honor Council website (<https://honorcouncil.georgetown.edu/system>). I am committed to academic integrity and obliged to uphold the Honor System. I will report all suspected cases of academic dishonesty.

LATE POLICY

Assignments submitted after the deadline will be subject to a half-grade late penalty for each day they are late. (An 'A' paper turned in 24 hours late will be docked to an A-, within 48 hours will be docked to a B+, etc.). Contact me at least 24 hours in advance of the deadline if there are extenuating circumstances, so that we can make appropriate arrangements.

BASIC GRADING STANDARDS

(This is most pertinent for formal papers. The language here is borrowed from Professor Kate Withy. Feel free to ask me for more information about the elements of good papers, and read the supplementary writing advice on Canvas!)

An 'A' paper displays a sophisticated understanding of the arguments under discussion and their immediate and distant implications; it makes an original or interesting contribution (not obvious from the reading or lectures) and provides compelling reasons for agreeing with it; it is elegantly written, and it is clearly and logically structured. 'A' papers are extraordinary.

A 'B' paper displays a solid grasp of, and thoughtful engagement with, the arguments and positions under discussion, and it begins to explore their implications; it includes the student's own interpretive contribution, along with good reasons for agreeing with it; it is clearly organized, coherently argued, on-topic and well-written. 'B' papers are good papers.

A 'C' paper is on topic; shows familiarity and engagement with the material; it may misunderstand or misrepresent key ideas in the texts; it may have few of the student's own ideas or interpretations, or insufficiently explained reasons in support of these; it may have some reasoning problems or gaps; it may

have some stylistic or structural problems; or it may be a little dogmatic (i.e., offering unargued claims). A 'C' paper indicates that the student should work on reasoning skills, writing clearly, and/or thinking through the material more deeply.

A 'D' paper may exhibit any of the following: it is off-topic; it displays a weak or spotty grasp of the material; it has little original content; it provides few (if any) reasons for agreeing with the positions argued for, or consists mainly in summary; it is unclearly written or organized; it may be dogmatic; and it may be too short or too long. A 'D' paper indicates that the student should seek assistance with academic writing (see the Resources section of the syllabus).

An 'F' paper is plagiarized (either in whole or in part), or it does not engage with the material, or it is well short of (or well over) the suggested page length, or it cannot be understood.

COURSE READING SCHEDULE

Course schedule subject to change; this list is provisional. All readings will be posted to Canvas as PDFs. Readings on Canvas may be selections from the articles listed; take the version on Canvas as authoritative.

Normative Ethics

7/9, Monday - Course intro, Rachels – “What is Morality?” and “The Challenge of Cultural Relativism”, Wilkinson – “Cultural Relativism and FGM”

7/10, Tuesday – Bentham – “Of the Principle of Utility,” O’Neill – “A Simplified Account of Kant’s Ethics,” Beauchamp – “The Four Principles Approach to Health Care Ethics”

Foundations of Bioethics and Professional Ethics

7/11, Wednesday – Callahan – “Bioethics as a Discipline,” Veatch – Selection from *The Basics of Bioethics*, The Belmont Report, The Declaration of Helsinki

7/12, Thursday – Shuster – “Fifty Years Later: The Significance of the Nuremberg Code,” Brandt – “Racism and Research: The Case of the Tuskegee Syphilis Study,” The Hippocratic Oath, Fleck – “Please Don’t Tell!”

7/16, Monday – Pellegrino – “Professionalism, Profession, and the Virtues of a Good Physician,” Ackerman – “Why Doctors Should Intervene”

Research Ethics

7/17, Tuesday – Emanuel, Wendler, and Grady – “What Makes Clinical Research Ethical?,” Freedman – “Equipose and the Ethics of Clinical Research,” Glantz et al. – “Research in Developing Countries: Taking ‘Benefit’ Seriously”

7/18, Wednesday – Regan – “Empty Cages: Animal Rights and Vivisection,” Frey – “Animals and Their Medical Use”, DRAFT WORKSHOP

7/19, Thursday – Strong – “Informed Consent: Theory and Policy,” Kottow – “The Battering of Informed Consent,” Struhkamp – “Patient Autonomy: A View from the Kitchen,” PAPER 1 DUE

Autonomy and Disability

7/23, Monday – Dworkin – “Paternalism,” Emanuel and Emanuel – “Four Models of the Physician-Patient Relationship”

7/24, Tuesday – Shakespeare – “The Social Model of Disability,” Asch – “Disability, Bioethics, and Human Rights,” Ho – “The Individualist Model of Autonomy and the Challenge of Disability”

7/25, Wednesday – Sandel – “What’s Wrong with Enhancement,” Kamm – “Is There a Problem with Enhancement?”

Reproductive Ethics

7/26, Thursday – Marquis – “Why Abortion is Immoral”

7/30, Monday – Little – “Abortion and the Margins of Personhood,” DRAFT WORKSHOP

7/31, Tuesday – Wilkinson – “The Exploitation Argument Against Commercial Surrogacy,” Macklin – “Is There Anything Wrong with Surrogate Motherhood?”, PAPER 2 DUE

End of Life Decisions

8/1, Wednesday – Selection from Gawande – *Being Mortal*

8/2, Thursday – Rachels – “Active and Passive Euthanasia,” Burt – “The Medical Futility Debate,” Cowart and Burt – “Confronting Death”

8/6, Monday – Robertson – “Extreme Prematurity and Parental Rights after Baby Doe,” Paris et al. – “Resuscitation of the Preterm Infant Against Parental Wishes”

Healthcare Justice

8/7, Tuesday – Daniels – From *Just Health*

8/8, Wednesday – “The Case for Allowing Kidney Sales,” Joralemon and Cox – “Body Values: The Case Against Compensating for Transplant Organs,” DRAFT WORKSHOP

8/9, Thursday – Research presentations, PAPER 3 DUE

CAMPUS RESOURCES

- Academic Resource Center
<http://academicsupport.georgetown.edu>
The ARC facilitates a number of accommodations for students with disabilities.
- Writing Center
<http://www.library.georgetown.edu/writing-center>
Lauinger 217A
The Writing Center provides general advice and feedback on academic writing.
- Academic Integrity Guidelines
<http://honorcouncil.georgetown.edu/system/useful-information>
- Counseling and Psychiatric Services
<http://studenthealth.georgetown.edu/mental-health/>
Rear of Darnall Hall, 202-687-6985 (202-444-7243 after-hours emergencies)
- Health Education Services
<http://studenthealth.georgetown.edu/health-promotion>
Poulton Hall, Suite 101
- Student Health Center
<http://studenthealth.georgetown.edu/medical-care>
Ground Floor, Darnall Hall, 202-687-2200

For more on available self-care resources on campus: <https://studenthealth.georgetown.edu/self-care>

PRIVACY AND CONFIDENTIALITY IN THE CLASSROOM

A healthy academic climate requires freedom to speak and to try out ideas without fear of outside sanctions or repercussions. I'll ask you to abide by the Chatham House Rule (<https://www.chathamhouse.org/about/chatham-house-rule>) for conversations in the class—you are free to use any information received in class, but do not identify class participants when sharing that information with others.

A healthy academic climate also requires an environment of respect for others. Frame disagreements with care, avoid personal invective, and remember that what may be merely theoretical for you (e.g., abuse or trauma) can be a matter of lived experience for others.

Georgetown University and its faculty are committed to supporting survivors of sexual misconduct, including relationship violence, sexual harassment and sexual assault. **University policy requires faculty members to report any disclosures about sexual misconduct to the Title IX Coordinator**, whose role is to coordinate the University's response to sexual misconduct. Contact: Jen Schweer, MA, LPC^{CSA}, Associate Director of Health Education Services for Sexual Assault Response and Prevention (202) 687-0323 jls242@georgetown.edu; Erica Shirley, Trauma Specialist (CAPS) (202) 687-6985 els54@georgetown.edu