



GEORGETOWN UNIVERSITY  
School of Continuing Studies

## Bioethics and Public Health

Georgetown University  
School of Continuing Studies, Master of Arts in Liberal Studies

Spring 2021 LSHV 452-01

Instructor: John Shook, PhD

Contact: [jrs384@georgetown.edu](mailto:jrs384@georgetown.edu), text to 703-801-3645

Semester: January 13 – May 15, 2021 – our first Zoom class is WEDNESDAY JAN 13

Class Meetings: Mon 6:30pm – 9:30pm ONLINE via Canvas and Zoom

Office Hours: Mon 4pm – 6pm, or by appointment

### Course Description

The protection of public health meets many policy and ethical challenges while prioritizing community welfare. Disasters, epidemics, wars, and other health emergencies place special burdens on health care systems and medical professionals. Biomedical principles help to ensure that patient safety, human rights, and citizen involvement are respected during phases of public preparedness, communication, mobilization, treatment, and recovery. Particular attention is given to clinical ethics, triage ethics, pandemic ethics and vulnerable populations, vaccine and drug trials, research ethics and patient rights, justice in health care distribution, health surveillance, and big data.

### Course Objectives

Students will understand the impacts of significant advances in medical and health care fields, while arriving at a comprehensive appreciation for the complexities of science policy and bioethical principles. Students will examine questions at the intersections of public health, medicine, and ethics in order to evaluate various interdisciplinary answers:

How have technoscience advances in the health sciences exemplified principled values at every stage – from experimental research to translational applications?

Why must the public carefully consider moral principles that motivate diverse and sometimes opposed convictions about public health programs?

Where does the public's ability to understand health science, and the public's moral judgments about medicine, play a critical role in the development and deployment of new healthcare technologies?

How might government measures to paternalistically protect and improve public health come into conflict with other important values such as liberty, autonomy, and justice?

Where can balances be found between maximizing health benefits for a whole population and serving the particular needs of disadvantaged and vulnerable groups and individuals?

Students will additionally achieve individualized learning objectives while completing their assignments, with opportunities to:

- explore how controversies over healthcare “progress” are always multi-dimensional and many-layered, rather than just a matter of “pro” or “con”;
- take multiple perspectives on the public’s engagement with policy issues arising from scientific and technological innovations in medicine and healthcare;
- imagine how medical research and policy agendas could have proceeded very differently under different socio-cultural conditions or divergent historical scenarios; and
- join their own voices to ongoing debates about ethical and scientific controversies by contributing their well-informed assessments for academic consideration.

### **Required Texts**

[ see course announcements in Canvas before purchasing texts ]

Veatch. *The Basics of Bioethics*, 4th edn. Routledge, 2019. ISBN: 9781138580084

Cohen et al., eds. *Big Data, Health Law, and Bioethics*. Cambridge University Press, 2018. ISBN: 9781108449670

Jennings, Arras, et al eds. *Emergency Ethics - Public Health Preparedness and Response*. Oxford University Press, 2016. ISBN: 9780190270742

Additional Readings: Handouts provided during the semester, including chapters from  
*Oxford Handbook of Public Health Ethics*  
*Public Health Law and Ethics*

### **Course Requirements**

1. Class Participation. Regular participation in online classes via Zoom and in Discussion via Canvas. Each week, a discussion area provides the student forum for conversations about the weekly course material. Also, each student will give a 10 minute presentation about their research paper at the end of the semester. In total, 200 points possible. 20% of total grade.

2. Issue Brief. 1000 words, fully referenced. On a topic chosen from the issues raised during the first 5 weeks of the course. This Brief will outline the significance of a chosen medical innovation during 1940-2020, by either (a) defending an optimistic stance about this innovation improving public health while satisfying ethical principles, or (b) defending a pessimistic stance towards this innovation affecting public health because of its failures to satisfy ethical principles. Your Brief must only have an optimistic, or a pessimistic, perspective. Write for a public audience: stay close to the facts, but be argumentatively persuasive to your readers. 100 points possible. 10% of total grade.

3. Short Essay. 3000 words, fully referenced. You will write about an ethical issue that arises during epidemics. For inspiration, read articles accessible here: <http://naturalisms.org/epidemic-ethics/> For example, you might write about the ethical testing of new vaccines, the problem of people refusing vaccinations, or concerns about distributing scarce vaccines, or the issue of quarantines. You will first develop a one-page prospectus [1-2 paragraph description, outline, 5-10 references] about your essay plan, to be approved by the instructor. Deadlines for the prospectus and the final paper are listed on the course schedule. 300 points possible. 30% of total grade.

4. Seminar Paper (5000 words minimum, fully referenced) upon a topic discussed in this course, except for the short paper topic. This paper will focus on a specific public health initiative or program from governmental or corporate America, sometime during 1990-2020 (and perhaps looking ahead into the 2020s). The paper will explain the public’s reception of this initiative and analyze the ethical and legal issues raised by the program’s potential. A successful paper will synthesize relevant information gained throughout the course (lectures and readings), information from a selected body of secondary literature, and the student’s academic background and interests. 400 points possible. 40% of total grade.

Citation Style: The APA Style (APA Publication Manual 6th Edition) is used widely in SCS courses. Consult <http://pitt.libguides.com/citationhelp/APA>

**Final Grade**

ASSIGNMENT	PERCENT OF TOTAL GRADE	POSSIBLE POINTS
Class Participation	20%	200
Issue Brief – 1,000 words	10%	100
Short Essay – 3,000 words	30%	300
Seminar Paper – 5,000 words	40%	400
	TOTAL	1000 points

Total Points	Grade	Quality Points
920-1000	A	4.00
900-919	A-	3.67
881-899	B+	3.33
800-880	B	3.00
781-799	B-	2.67
761-780	C+	2.33
700-760	C	2.00
690-699	C-	1.67
680-689	D+	1.33
660-679	D	1.00
Less than 660	F	0.00

**Course Policies: Remote Course Delivery**

This course is subject to the University’s ongoing status of Instructional Continuity and will be delivered remotely throughout the term/semester. This means you will be required to attend and actively participate in synchronous

sessions via Zoom. Further, all coursework (assignments, announcements, projects, discussion boards etc.) outside of the synchronous sessions must be submitted through Canvas. Canvas is Georgetown University's learning management system. You can access this course and related material in the Canvas learning management system by going to [canvas.georgetown.edu](https://canvas.georgetown.edu) and logging in with your Georgetown netID credentials.

**Virtual Office Hours:** If you would like to meet with me or should you have questions or concerns about the course, please schedule with my virtual office hours or email me to schedule a one-on-one meeting.

#### Participation and Engagement - Domestic Students

Participation is a key component of your success as a student engaged in a remote learning environment as it encourages rich discussion and interaction with your classmates and demonstrates your command of course concepts to the instructor. In this course, participation is worth 20% of your grade. Synchronous participation will primarily take place via Zoom. What does good participation look like?

1. Actively contribute to class conversations by answering instructor questions and responding to peers' comments and ideas
2. Demonstrate your comprehension of course content by sharing stories the real-world application in class discussions
3. Ask relevant clarifying and contextual questions during synchronous sessions
4. Appropriately use Zoom tools to meaningfully contribute to class conversations: The hand raise tool, reaction emojis, the chat function, and participating in breakout rooms.

#### Participation and Engagement - International Students

Participation is a key component of your success as an international student engaged in a remote learning environment as it encourages rich discussion and interaction with your classmates and demonstrates your command of course concepts to the instructor. In this course, participation is worth 20% of your grade. Synchronous participation will primarily take place via Zoom. What does good participation look like?

1. Submit a Zoom video of your reflection after watching the recorded lecture
2. Schedule a time to meet with your teammates to work on projects
3. Attend the rotating synchronous class meeting

#### Student Expectations in a Remote Learning Environment

1. If you have questions or concerns about the course, schedule time to meet with the instructor 1-1 or attend virtual office hours.
2. Given Zoom will serve as the primary tool for synchronous sessions, please adhere to the following practices:
  - a. Attend class on-time and remain on Zoom throughout the session
  - b. Arrive to the Zoom class prepared to discuss readings, current events, and other materials assigned by the instructor
  - c. Unless you have received prior approval from the instructor, keep webcams and speakers on throughout the entire class session
  - d. Keep your microphone muted unless speaking
  - e. Dress appropriately for class (business casual or casual is best)
  - f. Limiting eating to before or after class (or during breaks)
3. Submit completed assignments by the date specified in the syllabus.
4. Complete all assigned reading and watch all pre-recorded videos by the assigned due date
5. Complete Canvas modules or other online literature by specified dates.
6. Meet with team members or partners virtually to complete assignments equitably (if applicable).

**Remote Learning Tips:** As a student engaging in this class remotely, you must take a far more active role in learning and accessing information than traditional students in face-to-face classrooms. Click the [link](#) to learn about 10 ways to ensure distance learning success.

**Announcements:** Announcements related to this course will be posted in Canvas regularly. They will appear on your Canvas dashboard when you log in and/or they will be sent to you directly through your preferred method of notification. Please make certain to check them regularly, as they will contain important information about upcoming projects or class concerns.

**Email:** In this course we will use Canvas to send email for private messages. You can either check your messages in the Canvas system or set your notifications to your preferred method of contact. Please check your messages at least once

per day. When submitting messages, please do the following:

- Put a subject in the subject box that describes the email content with your name and module
- Do not send messages asking general information about the class, please post those in the “Ask the Instructor Discussion Form” in the Canvas course

Academic Support: Services and resources may include an online orientation; access to library resources; a readiness assessment or survey; testing services; tutoring; non-native language services; writing and/or math centers; tutorials or other forms of guidance on conducting research, writing papers, citing sources, using an online writing lab, and using institution-specific technology; supplemental instruction programs; and teaching assistants.

Writing Center: The Georgetown University [Writing Center](#) is a free resource open to all enrolled Georgetown students and offers online appointments.

Technical Support for Students:

- Canvas - Students have 24/7 access to <http://canvas.georgetown.edu/getting-help>, including live chat and a support hotline at (855) 338-2770
- Zoom - For support with Zoom, email: [zoom@georgetown.edu](mailto:zoom@georgetown.edu)
- Use of [Georgetown University-issued accounts](#) for Google Mail, Calendar, Groups, Talk, Docs, Sites, Video, and Contacts is governed by the contract between Georgetown University and Google. For help managing your Google Documents, visit [Google Drive Help Center](#). Contact the UIS Service Center at [help@georgetown.edu](mailto:help@georgetown.edu) if you have a question regarding: your GU netID and/or password; your GU email account; or any connectivity issues.

### Support Services:

SCS offers a variety of support systems for students that can be accessed online, at the School of Continuing Studies downtown location, and on the main Georgetown campus:

- [Academic Resource Center](#)
- 202-687-8354 | [arc@georgetown.edu](mailto:arc@georgetown.edu)
- [Counseling and Psychiatric Services](#)
- 202-687-6985
- [Institutional Diversity, Equity & Affirmative Action \(IDEAA\)](#)
- (202) 687-4798

**Students' Religious Observances:** The following is university policy: Georgetown University promotes respect for all religions. Any student who is unable to attend classes or to participate in any examination, presentation, or assignment on a given day because of the observance of a major religious holiday or related travel shall be excused and provided with the opportunity to make up, without unreasonable burden, any work that has been missed for this reason and shall not in any other way be penalized for the absence or rescheduled work. Students will remain responsible for all assigned work. Students should notify professors in writing at the beginning of the semester of religious observances that conflict with their classes.

**Disabilities:** If you are a student with a documented disability who requires accommodations or if you think you may have a disability and want to inquire about accommodations, please contact the Academic Resource Center at 202-687-8354 or [arc@georgetown.edu](mailto:arc@georgetown.edu). Individuals with disabilities have the right to specific accommodations that do not fundamentally alter the nature of the course. Some accommodations might include note takers, books on tape, extended time on assignments, and interpreter services among others. Students are responsible for communicating their needs to the Academic Resource Center before the start of classes to allow time to review the documentation and make recommendations for appropriate accommodations. The University is not responsible for making special accommodations for students who have not declared their disabilities and have not requested an accommodation in a timely manner. Also, the University need not modify course or degree requirements considered to be an essential requirement of the program of instruction. For the most current and up-to-date policy information, please refer to the Georgetown University Academic Resource Center website. Students are highly encouraged to discuss the documentation and accommodation process with an Academic Resource Center administrator.

**Extreme weather, Emergencies, and Instructional Continuity:** During inclement weather or other emergencies on a day when we are scheduled to meet face-to-face, check the university's Web site or call (202) 687-7669 for information on whether the university is open. If the university is open, this class will meet. If the university is closed, this class will meet through distance means such as online videoconferencing; check your e-mail for a message from me on how we will proceed in that situation. Due dates for written assignments submitted through Blackboard will not be changed due to campus closings. The university recently has acquired the capability to send text messages and recorded messages about emergencies to cell phones and other mobile devices. Sign up on MyAccess.

**Georgetown Honor System:** All students are expected to follow Georgetown's honor code unconditionally. We assume you have read the honor code material located at <http://scs.georgetown.edu/academic-affairs/honor-code>, and in particular have read the following documents: Honor Council Pamphlet, What is Plagiarism, Sanctioning Guidelines, and Expedited Sanctioning Process. Papers in this course will all be submitted to turnitin.com for checking.

Submitting material in fulfillment of the requirements of this course means that you have abided by the Georgetown honor pledge: *In the pursuit of the high ideals and rigorous standards of academic life, I commit myself to respect and uphold the Georgetown Honor System: To be honest in any academic endeavor, and to conduct myself honorably, as a responsible member of the Georgetown community, as we live and work together.*

**Plagiarism:** In accord with university policy, all incidents of suspected plagiarism or other Honor Code violations will be reported to the Honor Council without fail. If the Honor Council finds that a student has plagiarized or has violated the Honor Code in any other way, the student may receive a grade of F for the course.

**Turnitin.com:** Students acknowledge that by taking this course all required papers can be submitted for a Textual Similarity Review to Turnitin.com for the detection of plagiarism. Use of the Turnitin.com service is subject to the terms of use agreement posted on the Turnitin.com site.

**Sexual Misconduct:** Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 ("Title IX") prohibits discrimination based on sex in any educational programs, which includes sexual harassment or any acts of sexual misconduct. Title IX requires the University, upon becoming aware of any incident of sexual harassment and misconduct to respond appropriately to protect and maintain the safety of the University community, including students, faculty, and staff. Georgetown University prohibits sexual misconduct, including sexual harassment, sexual assault, domestic/dating violence, and stalking. Discrimination based on sex, including sexual misconduct and discrimination based on pregnancy or parenting status, subverts the University's mission and threatens permanent damage to the educational experience, careers, and well-being of students, faculty, and staff. Please know that as a faculty member I am committed to supporting survivors of sexual misconduct, including relationship violence and sexual assault. However, University policy also requires me to report any disclosures about sexual misconduct to the Title IX Coordinator, whose role is to coordinate the University's response to sexual misconduct. Georgetown has a number of fully confidential professional resources who can provide support and assistance to survivors of sexual assault and other forms of sexual misconduct. These resources include:

**Jen Schweer, MA, LPC**

Associate Director of Health Education Services for  
Sexual Assault Response and Prevention

[\(202\) 687-0323](tel:(202)687-0323)

[jls242@georgetown.edu](mailto:jls242@georgetown.edu)

**Erica Shirley**

Trauma Specialist

Counseling and Psychiatric Services (CAPS)

[\(202\) 687-6985](tel:(202)687-6985)

[els54@georgetown.edu](mailto:els54@georgetown.edu)

More information about campus resources and reporting sexual misconduct can be found at:

<https://sexualassault.georgetown.edu/get-help>.

**Pregnancy Adjustments and Accommodations:** Georgetown University is committed to creating an accessible and inclusive environment for pregnant and parenting students. Students may request adjustments based on general pregnancy needs or accommodations based on a pregnancy-related complication. Specific adjustments will be handled on a case by case basis and will depend on medical need and academic requirements. Students seeking a pregnancy adjustment or accommodation should follow the process laid out at: <https://titleix.georgetown.edu/student-pregnancy>.

## Class Schedule

This tentative schedule is subject to change as necessary.

Week	Topic	Readings, Events
Week 1 Jan 13	<u>Ethics and Medicine</u> Ethical theories and principles of ethics.	<i>Basics of Bioethics</i> chaps. 1, 2, 4, 5
Week 2 no class	No class on Monday Jan 18 – MLK Day	
Week 3 Jan 25	<u>Medical Goals and Moral Standing</u> Death, abortion, stem cells, animals	<i>Basics of Bioethics</i> chaps. 3, 6, 7, 8, 9
Week 4 Feb 1	<u>Controlling Death</u> Genetic engineering, extending life, human nature	<i>Basics of Bioethics</i> chaps. 10, 11, 12
Week 5 Feb 8	<u>Public Health Programs: Ethical Justifications</u> Preventing disease, the public good, improving health, delivering justice, human rights.	<i>Handbook of Public Health Ethics</i> pp. 5-108 [60-174] Feb 10: Issue Brief due
Week 6 no class	No class on Monday Feb 15 – President’s Day	
Week 7 Feb 22	<u>Defining Public Health Law</u> Ethical purposes of public health policy and law.	<i>Public Health Law and Ethics</i> chaps. 1, 2, 3 <i>Handbook of Public Health Ethics</i> pp. 815-868 [939-1001]
Week 8 no class	No class on March 1 – spring break	
Week 9 March 8	<u>Public Health Crises</u> Ethical aspects of emergency preparedness and response.	<i>Emergency Ethics</i> chaps. 1, 2 <i>Public Health Law and Ethics</i> chap. 11 <i>Handbook of Public Health Ethics</i> pp. 767-811 [887-938] March 8: Prospectus due
Week 10 March 15	<u>Public Health Justice</u> Health disparities, vulnerable populations, and individual rights.	<i>Emergency Ethics</i> chap. 3 <i>Public Health Law and Ethics</i> chap. 4, 14 <i>Handbook of Public Health Ethics</i> pp. 175-255 [250-340]
Week 11 March 22	<u>Public Health Practices</u> The engagement of the public with health emergencies. Epidemic control, quarantines.	<i>Emergency Ethics</i> chap. 4 <i>Public Health Law and Ethics</i> chap. 10 <i>Handbook of Public Health Ethics</i> pp. 429-485 [521-582]
Week 12 March 29	<u>Public Health Protections and Research</u> Responsibilities of professionals, officials, and individuals. and research agendas.	<i>Emergency Ethics</i> chap. 5, 6 <i>Handbook of Public Health Ethics</i> pp. 109-126 [175-194]
Week 13 no class	No class on April 5 – Easter break	
Week 14 April 12	<u>A New Age of Medical Information</u> Big data and precision medicine for corporate profit.	<i>Big Data, Health Law, and Bioethics</i> chaps. 1-4 <i>Handbook of Public Health Ethics</i> pp. 315-367 [400-457] April 14: Short Essay due
Week 15 April 19	<u>Healthcare Data for Everyone, or Only Some?</u> Discrimination, injustice, surveillance.	<i>Big Data, Health Law, and Bioethics</i> chaps. 5-10 <i>Handbook of Public Health Ethics</i> pp. 259-311 [341-399]
Week 16 April 26	<u>Protecting Medical Information</u> Big data and informed consent, patient privacy, sharing healthcare data.	<i>Big Data, Health Law, and Bioethics</i> chaps. 11-17 <i>Public Health Law and Ethics</i> chap. 9



Week 17 May 3	student presentations	
Week 18 May 8-12	complete Seminar Paper	Seminar Paper due May 12