

WILLIAM RAINEY HARPER COLLEGE
LIBERAL ARTS DIVISION
GENERAL COURSE OUTLINE

PHI Course Prefix	180 Course Number	Biomedical Ethics Course Title	3-0 (Lec-Lab)	3 Semester Hours
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COURSE DESCRIPTION

Considers the ethics of the professional-patient relationship (confidentiality, informed consent, paternalism, truth-telling), the ethics of life and death (abortion, euthanasia, suicide), and the ethics of medicine on a social scale (the right to health care, the distribution of medical resources).

TOPICAL OUTLINE

- I. Introduction to Ethical Theory
 - A. The Place of Ethics in Human Action and Human Thought
 - B. The Distinction between Mores and Morals (the aspects of human action which social science studies vs. the aspects of human action which the moral philosopher studies)
 - C. Normative Ethical Theories
 1. Deontological Theories
 2. Teleological Theories
 - D. Rights
 1. Moral
 2. Legal
 - E. The Nature of Biomedical Ethics
- II. The Professional-Patient Relationship
 - A. Characterization of the Relationship (expert/layperson?, social contract between equals?, etc.)
 - B. Confidentiality
 - C. Truth-Telling
 - D. Informed Consent
 - E. Paternalism
- III. Ethical Problems Concerning Life and Death
 - A. The Morality of Killing
 1. Doctrine of the Double Effect
 2. Actions vs. Omissions
 3. Slippery-Slope Arguments (empirical and logical)
 - B. Abortion and Infanticide
 - C. Euthanasia
 - D. Suicide
- IV. Medical Ethics on a Social Scale
 - A. Theories of Distributive Justice
 - B. The Right to Health vs. the Right to Health Care
 - C. Distribution of Medical Resources

METHODS OF PRESENTATION

1. Lecture/discussion format
2. Students encouraged to raise questions/participate

STUDENT OUTCOMES: (*The student should . . .*)

- A. Attitudes
 1. maintain an open mind and the ability to listen.
 2. demonstrate tolerance for other views and respect for other persons.
 3. value clarity of thought and the honest self-examination of motives.

4. recognize the importance and seriousness of moral judgments.
5. take personal responsibility for struggling with moral issues he or she might face as a health care professional or as a patient.

B. Skills

1. be able to read, write and speak effectively about ethical issues in the field of medicine and biomedical research as presented in the texts and in lecture.
2. be able to spot and explain issues and cases with a biomedical and ethical component as they appear in the daily news.
3. be able to read and comprehend articles on issues in biomedical ethics that appear in professional journals and/or anthologies.
4. be able to comprehend and use the specialized vocabulary involved in the discussion of biomedical issues.
5. be able to formulate and defend independent positions with respect to ethical theories and to biomedical issues and cases.

C. Knowledge/Content

1. be able to distinguish ethical judgments from conformity to legal, professional, or cultural.
2. be able to broadly describe, compare, and alternative ethical theories as presented in and lecture, including:
 - a. act and rule teleological theories
 - b. act and rule deontological theories
 - c. virtue ethics, and others
3. be able to define and apply the major moral principles in particular:
 - a. the principle of respect for autonomy
4. the principle of beneficence.
5. the principle of non-maleficence.
6. the principal of distributive justice.
7. be able to define and apply secondary moral principles with special relevance to biomedical issues, for instance:
 - a. the principle of confidentiality
 - b. the principle of privacy
 - c. the principle of double-effect
 - d. the principle of surrogate decision making
8. be able to identify key and contemporary issues in the field of biomedical ethics, and to be able to give an account of arguments on both sides of these issues. Such issues include:
 - a. problems of death and dying
 - b. problems of abortion and maternal-fetal conflict
 - c. problems patient/physicians relationships
 - d. problems relative to organ transplants
 - e. problems of medical testing, and screening
 - f. problems of genetic and reproductive interventions
 - g. problems of biomedical research content and methods
 - h. problems of access to health care for all
9. be able to read and analyze medical case studies in terms of the ethical theories and principles, and in light of current discussions on biomedical issues, and to be able to form and communicate mature and supported judgments with respect to such cases.

SOME METHODS OF EVALUATION

1. Essay examination and/or short papers. Papers and examinations require students to exposit an argument and to evaluate it. Evaluation of an argument may take the form of its logical inadequacies, its moral presuppositions, certain medical facts, etc.
2. Quizzes
3. Exams (may be oral)
4. Written reading responses
5. Debates

6. Homework
7. Class activities
8. Participation

SOME TEXTBOOKS/INSTRUCTIONAL MATERIALS

Arras, John D. and Bonnie Steinbock, & Alex London. *Ethical Issues in Modern Medicine*, 8th ed, McGraw-Hill, 2012.

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