

PHIL 1008: Introduction to Medical Ethics
MWF 10:10-11:00am in Calhoun Hall 103

Professor: Sarah Raskoff
Office: Furman Hall 105
Office Hours: W 11:15-1:15pm (or by appointment)
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Course Overview

Ethics is the study of questions such as: How should we live? What should we do? What is good or bad? Medical ethics is the study of ethical issues that arise in the practice of medicine. In this course, we will begin with an overview of contemporary ethical theory and its application to medical ethics before exploring a variety of ethical issues in medicine, including decision-making capacity, informed consent, paternalism, abortion, and medical aid in dying.

Course Goals

- To read and engage with contemporary philosophical texts.
- To understand important concepts in medical ethics.
- To engage in constructive discussion and analysis of ethical issues.
- To apply philosophical arguments and concepts to concrete cases in medical ethics.

Required Course Materials

Textbook: There is no textbook for this course. All readings will be uploaded to Brightspace. If you have any issues accessing the material, please let me know!

Accessibility and Accommodations

Vanderbilt University is committed to providing reasonable accommodations for all persons with disabilities. If you have disability or medical condition that you think will impact your ability to complete certain assignments or participate in class and you wish to seek accommodation, please contact the Student Access Center at disabilityservices@vanderbilt.edu or drop by the Baker Building, Suite 108. I also welcome you to contact me with any concerns.

Assignments

Attendance and Participation (ongoing)

Please come to class prepared to discuss the readings. A high participation grade will be awarded to all students who contribute to class discussions by engaging with the course material and with their classmates. This course will sometimes focus on sensitive and controversial issues about which members of this class may reasonably disagree. It is therefore especially important to be respectful and to interpret each other with charity.

Capacity Assessment Activity (Friday, September 27, Week 6, in class activity)

You will watch a video featuring a conversation between a man who lives in a care home and a social worker who is trying to understand his abilities. Using the framework for assessing decision-making capacity that we covered in class, you will evaluate the man's capacity to make various decisions and provide a written assessment of your conclusions. Your assessment should clearly and directly relate to the framework and material discussed in class and provide a well-justified explanation of your conclusions.

Case Study Analysis (Wednesday, October 16, Week 9, in class activity)

We will devote a class to break into teams and discussing a Case Study. Case Studies are specific examples of situations requiring ethical analysis. Each student will write a short, 1000-word Case Study Analysis in which you:

- Summarize your team's analysis of the main ethical factors in the case, including important facts, stakeholders, and values/principles.
- Present an argument for your evaluation of the correct course of action and indicate whether you agree or disagree with your team's analysis.

Argumentative Essay (draft due Friday, November 8, week 12, revised paper due Friday, November 15, week 13 via Brightspace)

You will submit one 1500-word argumentative essay that has been through at least one set of revisions in response to constructive comments and feedback. You will choose the topic of this essay from the list of four prompts available on Brightspace, where you will also find additional guidance for writing a philosophy paper.

To aid you in your revision process, I will host a paper workshop in class. The workshop will take place on Friday, 11/8. During class, you will trade paper drafts with a partner and provide constructive comments and feedback. Please note that participating in the paper workshop is not optional. At the end of class, you and your partner must email your drafts (with comments) to me.

The revised version of your paper is due Friday, 11/15. As you revise, keep in mind that I will be familiar with both your original draft and the comments you received during the workshop. Your revised paper should incorporate the feedback and comments you received and your grade will in part depend on your success responding to this feedback.

Test (Friday, September 20, week 5; Friday, October 18, week 9; Saturday, December 13, Finals Week)

Each unit will end with an test, which will include multiple-choice, true-false, and short-answer questions. I will provide a study guide for each test.

Evaluation

Attendance and Participation: 10%
Capacity Assessment Assignment: 10%
Case Analysis Assignment: 10%
Argumentative Essay: 20%
Test: 3 x 15%

Electronic Submission Policy

Written work should be submitted electronically through Brightspace and is due by 11:59pm on due dates. Papers received on or after midnight on are late.

Late Work Policy

The term goes by quickly. It is important to submit work on time. Except in exceptional circumstances, late work will be penalized at a rate of a partial letter grade per day (e.g. a B paper

that is one day late receives a B-; a B paper that is two days late receives a C+; etc). Each weekend day counts as a day.

Academic Integrity

All submitted work will be analyzed by Turnitin, which is a plagiarism-detection software. Cases of plagiarism will result in a failing grade on the assignment and will be submitted for review by the Honor Council. To avoid plagiarism, do not:

- (1) Present another’s ideas without citing them.
- (2) Present another’s words without quoting and citing them.

If you are unclear on what constitutes plagiarism or cheating, please email me. If you feel that your only chance to pass this course is to plagiarize or cheat, please email me. I am here to help!

AI Policy:

You should not use AI to generate any of the text of your essay, but it is fine to use AI for other purposes, say, when brainstorming. As far as the essay is concerned, you should think of AI like a friend or parent: it’s okay and even good to discuss your essay with them, but not for them to write the essay for you. I will not use AI detection software, so this is an honor system (unless you are extremely obvious).

Course Schedule

(subject to change with reasonable notice)

UNIT I: Fundamentals of Ethics and Medical Ethics			
Week 1	W	Aug 21	Welcome and introductions
	F	Aug 23	Julia Driver, <i>Ethics – The Fundamentals</i> , “Introduction”
Week 2	M	Aug 26	Jeremy Bentham, “On the Principle of Utility”; John Stuart Mill, “Utilitarianism”
	W	Aug 28	Robert Nozick, “The Experience Machine”
	F	Aug 30	NO MEETING (instructor away)
Week 3	M	Sep 2	Immanuel Kant, “The Moral Law”; Onora O’Neil, “A Simplified Account of Kant’s Ethics”
	W	Sep 4	Christine Korsgaard, “Kant’s Formula of Universal Law”
	F	Sep 6	<i>Spillover and discussion</i>
Week 4	M	Sep 9	Aristotle, “Virtue and Character”; Rosalind Hursthouse, “Virtue Theory”
	W	Sep 11	TBA
	F	Sep 13	<i>Spillover and discussion</i>
Week 5	M	Sep 16	Beauchamp, “Principlism in Bioethics”
	W	Sep 18	<i>Discussion and review</i>
	F	Sep 20	Unit I Test
UNIT II: Decision-Making Capacity, Autonomy, and Paternalism			
Week 6	M	Sep 23	Paul Appelbaum, “Assessment of Patients’ Competence to Consent to Treatment”

	W	Sep 25	Emily Largent et. al, "Deciding with Others - Interdependent Decision-Making"
	F	Sep 27	<i>Capacity Assessment In-Class Assignment</i> (due Friday, Sep 27 by 1:59pm)
Week 7	M	Sep 30	Gerald Dworkin, "Paternalism"
	W	Oct 2	Gerald Dworkin, "Paternalism" continued
	F	Oct 4	Alan Goldman, "The Refutation of Medical Paternalism"
Week 8	M	Oct 7	Terrence Ackerman, "Why Should Doctors Intervene"
	W	Oct 9	Bennet Foddy and Julian Savulescu, "A Liberal Account of Addiction"
	F	Oct 11	NO MEETING (fall break)
Week 9	M	Oct 14	Kristin Voigt, "Smoking and Social Justice"
	W	Oct 16	<i>Case Analysis In-Class Group Assignment</i> (due Wednesday, Oct 16 by 11:59pm)
	F	Oct 18	Unit 2 Test
UNIT III: The Beginnings and Ends of Life			
Week 10	M	Oct 21	Julian Savulescu, "Procreative Beneficence"
	W	Oct 23	TBD
	F	Oct 25	<i>Spillover and discussion</i>
Week 11	M	Oct 28	TN SB1257 and TN SB745
	W	Oct 30	Lee and George, "The Wrong of Abortion"
	F	Nov 1	<i>Spillover and discussion</i>
Week 12	M	Nov 4	Mary Anne Warren, "On the Moral and Legal Status of Abortion"
	W	Nov 6	Don Marquis, "Why Abortion is Immoral"
	F	Nov 8	<i>Argumentative Essay workshop</i>
Week 13	M	Nov 11	Judith Jarvis Thomson, "A Defense of Abortion"
	W	Nov 13	Susan Sherwin, "Abortion Through a Feminist Lens"
	F	Nov 15	No meeting (Argumentative Essay Due!)
Week 14	M	Nov 18	Daniel Brock, "Voluntary Active Euthanasia"
	W	Nov 20	Daniel Callahan, "When Self-Determination Runs Amok"
	F	Nov 22	<i>Discussion and spillover</i>
BREAK	Nov 23-Dec 1		NO MEETING (THANKSGIVING)
Week 15	M	Dec 2	J. David Velleman, "Against the Right to Die"
	W	Dec 4	<i>Discussion and spillover</i>
EXAM	M	Dec 9	Unit III Test (3-4:15pm)