

Course Outline

PHIL 1105, 002, Biomedical Ethics

Year and semester: 2024, Fall

Course Format: In Person, Tuesdays and Thursdays 4.30pm - 6.20pm, Room A334

Credits: 3

Transfer Credit: For information, visit
bctransferguide.ca

Course Description, Prerequisites, and Corequisites:

A consideration of selected moral problems arising in the health professions: experimentation on humans and animals, euthanasia, death, confidentiality, truth telling, abortion, and the allocation of scarce medical resources. The aim of the course is to put ourselves in a position to frame rational and informed opinions on these important matters. Classes will be organized to allow for ample discussion; readings will be drawn from medical, legal, and philosophical sources. No background in law, medicine, or philosophy is presupposed.

This course has no prerequisites.

Learning Outcomes:

Upon successful completion of this course, students will be able to:

- Analyze an author's writing and identify their arguments
- Construct and motivate their own arguments
- Articulate their thoughts in a clear philosophical manner
- Write a philosophical essay
- Provide feedback to others
- Use an ethical framework for thinking about biomedical issues
- Apply those frameworks to classic and contemporary issues in biomedical ethics

Instructor(s): Jasper Heaton

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Office Hours: Thursdays, 3pm - 4.15pm

Textbook and Course Materials:

All readings for this course are made available in a course pack available from the Langara bookstore, or are free and available online and are linked on the syllabus.

Assessments and Weighting:

Weekly Reading Responses (10%)

A sentence or two reflecting on the reading that week

Due before Thursday class every week

Pass/fail

In-Class Exam (15%)

September 19th

Short-answer exam covering the concepts addressed in Module 1

2 Written Essays (15% each, 30% total)

Essay 1

Due October 4th by 11.59pm

1000 words

Pre-set topics (to be set)

Peer review session prior to submission

Essay 2

Due November 5th to receive instructor feedback OR November 12th, by 11.59pm. Essays submitted after November 5th will not receive instructor feedback.

1000 words

Pre-set topics (to be set)

Peer review session prior to submission

2 Peer Review Sessions (5% each, 10% total)

In class

Oct 3rd and Nov 5th

Students will review each others' essay drafts, and provide feedback

Group Presentations (15%)

In class November 26th and 28th

Students will prepare a presentation and present an argument on any topic of their choice, and respond to audience and instructor questions

In groups of ~5

Final Exam (20%)

Details TBA

Grading:

Rubrics will be made available for each assessment

[Grades, Grade Points, & Notations](#)

Detailed Course Schedule:

Week	Topic	Reading
1	Example topic	Chapter 1
Module 1	Thinking Ethically	
Week 1, Sep 3 and 5	Introductions Thinking normatively	<i>Euthyphro</i> , Plato: Link here <i>The Hippocratic Oath Today</i> , Peter Tyson: Link here
Week 2, Sep 10 and 12	Ethical theories	<i>Utilitarianism</i> , John Stuart Mill, pages 12-18 and 48-55: Link here <i>On Liberty</i> , John Stuart Mill, pages 192-193: Link here <i>Beginner's Guide to Kant's Moral Philosophy</i> , PhilosophyTube: Link here
Week 3, Sep 17 and 19	Applying ethics Assessment Due - Sep 19 In-class exam (60 mins)	<i>For and Against the Four Principles of biomedical ethics</i> , Richard Huxtable <i>Applying the Four Principles</i> , Ruth Macklin <i>Judgment and the Role of the Metaphysics of Values in Medical Ethics</i> , Tim Thornton
Module 2	Classical Problems in Biomedical Ethics	
Week 4, Sep 24 and 26	Abortion	<i>Acorns and Embryos: on bad metaphors in debates about the beginning of life</i> , Robert P. George and Patrick Lee: Link here <i>A Defence of Abortion</i> , Judith Jarvis Thompson: Link here
Week 5, Oct 1 and 3	Voluntary euthanasia Peer review session Oct 3 Assessment Due - Oct 4 Essay 1	<i>A Right of Self-Termination?</i> J. David Velleman <i>MAiD and Mental Illness</i> , Maria Kulp: Link here <i>First Do No Harm: Euthanasia of Patients with Dementia in Belgium</i> , Raphael Cohen-Almagor
Week 6, Oct 8 and 10	Human experimentation	<i>Nazi Doctors, Racial Medicine, and Human Experimentation</i> , Robert Proctor <i>Henrietta Lacks, the Tuskegee Experiment, and Ethical Data Collection</i> , Crash Course: Link here
MODULE 3	Contemporary Problems in Biomedical Ethics	
Week 7, Oct 15 and 17	Expertise, trust, and truth	<i>How Can You Spot the Experts?</i> Alvin Goldman
Week 8, Oct 22 and 24	Expertise continued	<i>Honestly, do we need a policy on truth?</i> M. DeVita <i>Informed Consent Under Ignorance</i> , Daniel Villiger

Week 9, Oct 29 and 31	Disability	<i>Valuing Disability, Causing Disability</i> , Elizabeth Barnes
Week 10, Nov 5 and 7	Disability continued Peer review session Nov 5 Assessment Due - Nov 5 Essay 2 <u>first submission</u>	Barnes continued
Week 11, Nov 12 and 14	Addiction Assessment Due - Nov 12 Essay 2 <u>second submission</u>	<i>In the Realm of Hungry Ghosts</i> , Gabor Mate, interview on YouTube: Link here <i>Addiction, Autonomy, and Informed Consent: on and off the garden path</i> , Neil Levy
Week 12, Nov 19 and 21	What is health and medicine?	<i>Health: Crude Concept and Philosophical Questions</i> , Georges Canguilhem <i>The Crisis of Medicine or the Crisis of Antimedicine?</i> Michel Foucault: Link here
Week 13, Nov 26 and 28	Assessment Due - Nov 26 and 29 Student Presentations	No reading

Policy

As a student at Langara, you are responsible for familiarizing yourself and complying with the following policies:

College Policies:

[Student Code of Conduct - E1003](#)

[Academic Integrity - F1004](#)

[Academic Standing - Academic Probation and Academic Suspension - E2008](#)

[Appeal of Final Grade - E2006](#)

[Concerns about Instruction - F1002](#)

[Withdrawal from Courses and Deferred Standing - E2011](#)

Departmental/Course Policies:

Content Warning and Classroom Policy

In this course we will cover a number of topics, issues, and real world events that may have affected the personal lives of students taking this course and the teachers teaching it. While it is important that we be able to freely pursue academic inquiry into these issues, it is equally important we be attentive and sensitive to the different ways people might be affected by these issues and by our study of them. Academic freedom is an important right we all have, but it is also an important responsibility we all share. As a student it is your right to bring your personal and lived experiences to your studies in this course. It is also your duty to be respectful of other people's experiences, no matter how different they are from your own. At its best the study of philosophy is collaborative, constructive, and respectful of individuality. I hope that throughout this course we will all do our best to embody these norms.

Policy on Late Work

You are expected to submit your assignments by the due date. Failure to do so may result in late penalties or a fail grade for the course.

If **FOR ANY REASON** you are not able to submit your work on time **please contact me** to request an extension. Please do not send me personal medical information.

Policy on Email

I will answer all emails within 48 hours. If an issue is especially urgent, please put “URGENT” in the subject line.

If you haven’t heard back from me within 48 hours please feel free to start poking me for a response.

Plagiarism

Plagiarism, which is intellectual theft, occurs where an individual submits or presents the oral or written work of another person as his or her own. Scholarship quite properly rests upon examining and referring to the thoughts and writings of others. However, when another person's words (i.e. phrases, sentences, or paragraphs), ideas, or entire works are used, the author must be acknowledged in the text, in footnotes, in endnotes, or in another accepted form of academic citation. Failure to provide proper attribution is plagiarism because it represents someone else's work as one's own. Students are responsible for ensuring that any work submitted does not constitute plagiarism. If you are unsure, please come and speak with me.

Policy On The Use of A.I. (ChatGPT etc.)

You are permitted to use AI to complete your assignments. This includes having AI write your essays for you. You do not need to indicate whether you have used AI in any assignment.

But **please be aware of the risks of using AI**. The risk is to your grade. It is unlikely that an AI generated essay will receive a grade of more than C-, and will often receive a lower grade. This is not because I as an instructor have a magical ability to detect AI generated essays and will not assign them higher than a C- on principle. It is because **AI software is unable to produce academically rigorous work**.

If you have further questions about using AI please come and speak with me.

Copyright

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