Course Description

In this course we will begin by overviewing the ethical theories that shape our answers to serious ethical dilemmas. In this part of the course we will first introduce philosophical moral theories, and look more closely at theories that apply particularly in biomedical ethics, and finally introduce and develop an understanding of the concept of autonomy and how it relates to issues in biomedical ethics, paying particularly close attention to how different social and cultural factors effect health care interactions. The course will be framed around issues of autonomy and especially on the autonomy of traditionally vulnerable populations. For the second half of the course we will apply these theories to particular moral dilemmas currently confronting health care providers, patients and their families, and society at large. These topics will include issues related to death and dying, pregnancy and birth, genetic testing and therapies, health care allocation, and research ethics. We will be particularly solicitous of issues that pertain to the health care issues of diverse populations and those that historically socially disadvantaged.

Learning Objectives and Learning Outcomes

By the end of the course

- The student will be acquainted with concepts and methods of philosophical ethics that apply to issues regarding health care and medical practices.
- The student will be able to critically assess alternative approaches to, and defenses of, a code of morally responsible medical practice.
- The student will have a repertory of resources and skills with which to formulate his/her own health care ethic.
- The student will be able to articulate and defend his or her own ideas with clarity, consistency and coherence.

Required Texts:


Additional readings and videos will be available on D2L.

Weekly Quizzes (20%)

Every week there will be short quiz on D2L. You must complete the quiz to unlock the weekly discussion forums. The quizzes are designed to take about 5-10 minutes to complete if you have read both the assigned readings and lectures carefully and watched or listened to all videos or podcasts. You will get one chance and 30 minutes to take each quiz. You must get at least 65% on the quiz to unlock the discussion forums.

Online Midterm Essay (20%)

You will be asked to answer one longer essay question. The essay prompt will be available via D2L. Failure to complete the midterm essay will result in an F for the course. Details to follow.

Weekly Discussion Participation (20%)
Discussion is a very important component of this course. It is one of the only ways for us to see that you are keeping up with and comprehending the readings and lectures. Your posts on the Discussion board should demonstrate that you have done and understood the readings, and that you have thought critically about them. Your responses to other students’ posts must constructively engage their ideas. Constructive engagement can, and often will, include disagreement, but this disagreement must be respectful and submitted in the spirit of joint inquiry. You must explain how you disagree and why. If, on the other hand, you agree with another student’s ideas, you must do more than simply say so. You must find something substantial to add to the original student’s ideas, or you may choose to respond to another student’s objections to those ideas. Ideally, you should respond to other student’s comments on your own posts. Each student will be assigned to a smaller discussion group, so that online conversations are manageable.

**Final Essay (20%)**
Students will be required to complete a final essay of 1300-1500 words (4-5 pages). The paper will be a persuasive essay pertaining to a contemporary moral dilemma in health care and research. The topic will be chosen from a set of prompts provided by the instructor. Students should utilize class materials as well as one additional source, which must be from peer reviewed academic journal or book. This may include unassigned articles from our text book. Proper referencing is required. Plagiarism will not be tolerated. Failure to complete the final paper will result in an F for the course. Details to follow.

**Final Exam (20%)**
Students will complete a comprehensive final exam during finals week.

Here’s how it will work:
- Each week the course module will contain quizzes and discussion forums.
- The quizzes unlock the discussions. Students should take the quiz before Thursday.
- You must post an original response to each of the discussion topics for the week **no later than Thursday evening** (i.e. before midnight) each week.
- You must then post a response to at least one classmate’s posting within each topic **no later than Friday evening** (i.e. before midnight) that week.
- Discussion contributions will be graded for clarity, comprehension of assigned readings, analytical ability, and originality.
- You are allowed one **late** submissions without penalty. After that, each late submission will reduce your grade.
- Any submission not received by Saturday at midnight of a given week will be counted as missed. You may miss two submissions without penalty, after which each missed submission will lower your discussion grade by a third of a letter grade. Each required posting and response is considered a submission.
- In addition to the assigned discussion topics there will always be a topic entitled “General Questions and Comments” – please use this optional section to ask general questions or make comments as you would in a face-to-face course. This ensures that all students can benefit from the answers, clarifications, and discussions generated in this section.

**Plan to Succeed:**
To succeed in this course, you will need to be self-motivated, well-organized, and self-disciplined. If you fall behind in an online environment it is very difficult to catch up. You should be actively engaged in the course each week, throughout the week.
Here is a recommended strategy for organizing your time in a typical week:

Monday & Tuesday:
Read assigned readings and lecture; watch any videos and listen to any podcasts; check whether an essay has been assigned and plan accordingly. You cannot do well in the course without reading the readings and lectures. Lectures are particularly important.

Wednesday & Thursday:
Take a quiz to unlock the discussion forums
Compose and post your answers to discussion questions.

Friday:
Read classmates’ answers to discussion questions and post your replies. Reply to students who have engaged you in a discussion on the discussion forums.

Weekend:
Review readings, lectures, and discussion. Reply to students who have engaged you in a discussion on the discussion forums. Work on the midterm or final essay as necessary.

General Policies:
You should always feel free to ask questions, share ideas, and express your opinions. At the same time, I expect all students to be courteous and respectful at all times. Cheating, plagiarism, or any other form of academic dishonesty will not be tolerated. No exceptions. The following university web page provides more information about your rights and responsibilities as a student: http://www.uwm.edu/Dept/SecU/SyllabusLinks.pdf. Also, please contact me as soon as possible if you require any special accommodations in order to complete the requirements for this course.

This 3 credit online course has assignments and work that needs to be done every week during the semester. **Students are expected to put in at least 30 hours per week** (on average) studying and working on assignments to achieve the learning objectives of this course.

Course Schedule and Assigned Readings:
All page numbers refer to the required textbook. Single page numbers are the page on which the reading begins.

**Part 1 Theory**

**Week 1:**
**Welcome**
Review Syllabus and Student Introductions
**Learning to think like an Ethicist**
Chapter 1 (p.3)

**Biomedical Ethics and Moral Theories**
Chapter 2 selections (pp. 34-44 and 47-51 [skip sections on The ethics of care and feminist ethics])
“Utilitarianism” *John Stuart Mill* (p.53)
“The Moral Law” *Immanuel Kant* (p.56)

**To do:** Go over the syllabus, take Syllabus Review Quiz, participate in Introductory Discussion, Read assigned readings, read lectures, take quizzes, participate in discussions

**Week 2:**
**The Ethics of Care, Autonomy, and Paternalism**
Chapter 2 sections on The Ethics of Care (p.43) and Feminist Ethics (p.46)
“The Ethics of Care” *Virginia Held* (p.65)
Chapter 3 Autonomy and Paternalism (p. 81-93 including the cases)  
“The Refutation of Paternalism” Alan Goldman (p. 107 beginning with “The Moral Argument”)  
“In Defense of the Traditional Nurse” Lisa H. Newton (p. 128)  
“Advocacy or Subservience for the Sake of Patients?” Helga Kuhse (p. 136)  
**Autonomy and Informed Consent**  
Chapter 5 (pp.196-206)  
“Transparency: Informed consent in primary care” Howard Brody (p. 223)  
**Optional Recommended Readings**  
“Informed Consent: Some challenges to the universal validity of the Western model” Robert J. Levine (p. 229)  
**Midterm Essay Due at End of Week**  

**To do:** Read assigned readings, read lectures, take quizzes, participate in discussions, write midterm essay.

Part 2 Bioethical Dilemmas: Birth, Death, and in Between

**Week 3:**  
**Genetics**  
Chapter 9 (p. 539)  
“Genetics and Reproductive Risk: Can having children be immoral?” Laura M. Purdy (p. 564)  
“Is Gene Therapy a Form of Eugenics?” John Harris (p. 593)  
CRISPR – Time article (D2L)  
**Research Ethics**  
Chapter 6 (p. 239-245 & the In Depth: Women in Clinical Trials on p. 246)  
“Racism and Research: The case of the Tuskegee Syphilis study.” Allan M. Brandt (p. 285)  
“The ethics of clinical research in the third world” Marcia Angell (p. 297)  
“Ethical Issues in Clinical Trials in Developing Countries” Baruch Brody (p. 301)  
“Henrietta’s Tumor” – Radiolab podcast (D2L)  

**To do:** Read assigned readings, read lectures, listen to podcasts, take quizzes, participate in discussions

**Week 4:**  
**Health Care Allocation**  
Chapter 11 (p. 719-727)  
“Is there a right to health care and if so what does it encompass?” Norman Daniels (p.736)  
“QUALfying the value of life” John Harris (p. 774)  
**Death and Dying**  
Chapter 10  
“Death and Dignity: A case of individual decision making” Timothy E. Quill (p. 642)  
“Active and Passive Euthanasia” James Rachels (p. 678)  
A Nurse Reflects on the privilege of Caring for Dying Patients – NPR (D2L)  
A Palliative Care Doctor Weighs California’s New Aid-In-Dying Law – NPR (D2L)  
Peter Saul: Let’s Talk About Death – Ted Talk (D2L)  
B.J. Miller: What really matters at the end of life – Ted Talk (D2L)  
**Optional Recommended Readings**  
“Philosophers Brief” various (p. 693)  
“Against the Right to Die” David J. Velleman (D2L)
Final paper and Final Exam due at the end of week

**To do:** Read assigned readings, read lectures, watch videos and listen to podcasts, take quizzes, participate in discussions, complete final essay and final exam