**Philosophy 305: Biomedical Ethics**

Class meets Monday, Wednesday and Friday 1:15-2:30 in DE 200.

**Your host:** Prof. Michael P. Wolf  
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**Office Hours:** Mondays and Wednesdays 9:00-11:00 and by appointment

**Required Texts**
Tom Beauchamp. *Contemporary Issues in Bioethics.*

(Some additional readings will be made available as reserves or photocopies in class.)

Finally, I recommend a short book called *How to Get the Most Out of Philosophy*, available at Amazon.com. It is not required reading, but it contains a great deal of helpful advice for someone taking their first or second philosophy class.

**What Is This Course About?**
It has been said that ethics and morality are the social institutions that set our to protect us when we are at our most vulnerable. Being in the hands of a doctor or other source of health care certainly fits this description. Most of us lack the knowledge and expertise to chart a course for ourselves, especially when our lives are quite literally at stake. The profusion of new technologies to sustain life beyond what we took to be its limits and to create life in ways we could never have foreseen has generated a novel set of philosophical problems surrounding the ethics of life, death and the medical care we receive between the ends of our lives. In this class we will address some of these issues, including euthanasia, genetic research and cloning and universal access to health care.

**Assessment**
Class participation is an important issue to me, especially in a small class like this. I expect you to come to class with the readings done and ready to discuss them. In order to get you involved in these ways and as an exercise in immersing yourself in the debates that motivated different philosophers to adopt the views they did, each student in this class will take part in a scheduled presentation. The presentation will involve offering a position relevant to some topic in the class, and defending it or challenging some opposing views. You will be expected to provide notes on what you expect to present a week in advance so that others who are presenting may see what is on the table. The level of preparation expected here is roughly the same as a five-page paper. Details of the format and topics will be made available as we progress. This will count for 20% of your final grade. Since the number of students in this class may make it prohibitive to have everyone make such a presentation, I will make provisions for some members of the class to prepare a five page paper on a topic of interest in recent medical news in lieu of such a presentation. Details are available online.

There will also be days that we set aside exclusively for discussion, on which your attendance and participation will be expected. There will inevitably be discussion on other days as well, but these will be occasions on which we do more in small groups, so your personal preparation for these classes is all the more important. Some written work - summaries of arguments, etc. - will be expected in advance. I will combine all of these factors into a class discussion grade, and it will count for 10% of your final grade. I have not scheduled such a discussion period for the very last topic because I suspect K College's "Day of Gracious Living" will fall somewhere in there. We will work around that on the fly. Part of what I will look at in
determining this is who contributes to the class discussion board, accessible through the College's web server. Follow the links for "Dr. Wolf's Board" and then look for the section devoted to this class. There will also be days set aside specifically for discussion where we will spend some time in smaller groups and then reconvene. Your attendance and participation will be expected on these days.

Over the course of the quarter, you will also have to write two papers of about 3000-3500 words, which works out to about 8-10 pages in Times 12-point double spaced with one-inch margins. The two assignments will correspond roughly with the two halves of the course. I will offer you a set of paper topics well in advance of the due date and you may choose from there. You may also suggest your own paper topic and write on it so long as you clear the topic with me first. Each one of these papers will be worth 35% of your final grade. More information on the assignments and how to approach these papers will be available in class.

I should mention a few things in closing. First, you are of course bound by the honor code here and any form of plagiarism will be severely punished. (Speak to me or consult a student handbook if you are unsure what counts as plagiarism.) This does not mean that you cannot use another source, or discuss and consult with your classmates about your assignments. I permit you to do the former and strongly encourage you to do the latter, so long as all the sources and classmates in question are properly cited in your paper. Finally, be forewarned that I reserve the right to lower the grades of papers given to me whose grammar and spelling do not meet college-level standards.

A Tentative Syllabus

Class 1. (March 25): Introduction
Background Ideas

Class 2. (March 27): Core Concepts - Utilitarianism
Read selections from Mill's Utilitarianism and Beauchamp, pp. 1-34.

Class 3. (March 29): Core Concepts - Utilitarianism
Read selections from Mill's Utilitarianism and Beauchamp, pp. 1-34.

Read selections from Kant and Beauchamp, pp. 1-34.

Class 5. (April 4): Core Concepts - Deontology
Read selections from Kant and Beauchamp, pp. 1-34.

Read selections from Aristotle's Nicomachean Ethics and Beauchamp, pp. 34-50.

Class 7. (April 9): CLASS DISCUSSION
Deontology vs. Consequentialism and Rules vs. Character

Informed Consent

Class 8. (April 10): Informed Consent
Read Beauchamp, Chapter 3.

Class 9. (April 12): Informed Consent
Read Beauchamp, Chapter 3.

Class 10. (April 15): Disclosure
Read selections from Milgram, *Obedience to Authority*.

**Class 11. (April 17):** Disclosure
Read selections from Milgram, *Obedience to Authority*.

**Class 12. (April 19):** *Presentations on Informed Consent and Disclosure*

Genetics and Eugenics

**Class 13. (April 22):** Selecting Genetic Characteristics
Read Beauchamp, chapter 9.

**Class 14. (April 24):** Selecting Genetic Characteristics
Read Beauchamp, chapter 9.

**Class 15. (April 26):** CLASS DISCUSSION
*Selecting characteristics*

**Class 16. (April 29):** Cloning
Read Beauchamp, chapter 9 and reserved readings.

**Class 17. (May 1):** Cloning
Read Beauchamp, chapter 9 and reserve readings.

**Class 18. (May 3):** *Presentations on Genetic Issues*

Death and Euthanasia

**Class 19. (May 6):** A Right to Die?
Read Beauchamp, chapter 6.

*First Paper Due May 6 - Click here for topics*

**Class 20. (May 8):** A Right to Die?
Read Beauchamp, chapter 6.

**Class 21. (May 10):** CLASS DISCUSSION
*Is there a right to die?*

**Class 22. (May 13):** Active Euthanasia and Assisted Suicide
Read Beauchamp, chapter 7.

**Class 23. (May 15):** Active Euthanasia and Assisted Suicide
Read Beauchamp, chapter 7.

**Class 24. (May 17):** *Presentations on Euthanasia*

Is There a Right to Health Care?

**Class 25. (May 20):** Justice and Health Care
Read Beauchamp, chapter 10.

**Class 26. (May 22):** Justice and Health Care
Read Beauchamp, chapter 10.
Class 27. (May 24): The Ethics of Shifting Costs
Read Beauchamp, chapter 6.

Class 28. (May 29): The Ethics of Shifting Costs
Read Beauchamp, chapter 6.

Class 29. (May 31): Presentations on Justice Issues

Second Paper Due June 6 - Click here for topics