Biomedical Ethics - Spring 2011
Embodiment: The Experience of
Autonomy and Suffering

Instructor: Eric Lambert
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Office: HH 202

Location: Times: 1:15 – 2:30 pm
Office hrs: TBA

Texts

*Ethical Issues in Modern Medicine, 7th edition, edited by Arras, Steinbock, and London*

*The Body in Bioethics, Alastair V. Campbell*

Course description
We will critically assess ethical issues that arise in health care, including the nature of the health professional-patient relationship; end-of-life decision-making and assisted death; abortion, assisted reproduction and genetics; experimentation on human subjects; and justice in health care. These topics raise difficult questions that resist simple answers. The aim of the course is to provide students with an overview of biomedical ethics so that they become familiar with the range of issues addressed, learn some of the methods used by professionals in the field, and develop the knowledge and skills needed to analyze and assess normative positions taken on these issues. Thus we will identify ethical problems and discuss them in thoughtful, informed, and respectful ways. This requires identifying assumptions, objections and unresolved questions in the readings, as well as developing the ability clearly to articulate viewpoints and arguments concerning the relevant ethical problems.

Grading

45% two essays: one short essay and a final essay
- Short essay (5-6 pages), worth 15% of final grade
- Final essay (8-10 pages), worth 25% of final grade
- Peer review of rough draft of final paper (typed, min. 3-5 pp.), 5%
40% four short papers (target length: 2-3 carefully written pages), worth 10% each
15% participation

Attendance

Attendance is required. Since there are only ten weeks per quarter, each class session is important. Thus three or more unexcused absences will result in 0.5 points being immediately deducted from a student’s final grade (so if your final grade is 2.7 and you have three unexcused absences, you will receive a 2.3). Lateness should also be avoided. Since tardiness is usually disruptive, excessive lateness (three or more times late) will count as an unexcused absence.

Late papers

Unless prior arrangements are made, late papers will be marked down 0.25 points each day the paper is late. Late papers will not be penalized only if prior arrangements are made, appropriate documentation is provided, and the reasons are consistent with Kalamazoo College policy.
Academic Integrity

Per the Kalamazoo College Honor System: “The term "plagiarism" includes, but is not limited to, the use, by paraphrase or direct quotation, of the published or unpublished work of another person without full and clear acknowledgment. It also includes the unacknowledged use of materials prepared by another person or agency engaged in the selling of term papers or other academic materials.” Simply put, do not plagiarize. If you are not sure what plagiarism consists of, talk to me. Plagiarized work will result (at a minimum) in a failing grade for that assignment, and possibly a failing grade for the course.

Schedule of readings

Week 1

Mon, Mar 28: Course introduction and overview

Wed, Mar 30: “Moral Reasoning in the Medical Context,” 1-12, 14-20, 23-26

Fri, Apr 01: “Modes of Moral Reasoning: The Principles Approach,” 35-41
            “Autonomy, Paternalism, and Medical Models,” 43-46 (first column p. 46)
            “The Hippocratic Oath,” 61

Week 2

Mon, Apr 04: Goldman, “The Refutation of Medical Paternalism,” 62-70
             “Beneficence Today, or Autonomy (Maybe) Tomorrow,” 70-72
             Commentaries by Elger and Chevrolet, 71-73

Wed, Apr 06: “Informed Consent and Truth-Telling,” 48-52
             Katz, “Informed Consent: Must it Remain a Fairy Tale?” 89-96

Fri, Apr 08: Baylis, “Errors in Medicine: Nurturing Truthfulness,” 97-100

Week 3

Mon, Apr 11: “Conflicting Roles and Responsibilities,” 52-56 (top of first column)
              “Tarasoff V. Regents of the University of California,” 117-122
              “Please Don’t Tell!” 123
              Commentaries by Fleck and Angell, 123-125

Wed, Apr 13: Cantor and Baum, “The Limits to Conscientious Objection,” 145-149

Fri, Apr 15: “Conflicting Roles and Responsibilities,” 59 (second column)-60
             “Dialysis for a Prisoner of War,” 166
Commentary by Zupan, Solis and Schoonhoven, 166-167

Week 4
Mon, Apr 18: “Experimentation on Human Subjects,” 727-731
“The Nuremberg Code,” 739-740
Brandt, “Racism and Research: The Case of the Tuskegee Syphilis Study,” 753-762

Wed, Apr 20: “Randomized Clinical Trials,” 731-733
Hellman, “Of Mice but not Men: Problems of Randomized Clinical Trials,” 774-778
Freedman, “A Response to a Purported Ethical Difficulty with Randomized Clinical Trials Involving Cancer Patients,” 779-782


Week 5
Mon, Apr 25: Crouch and Arras, “AZT Trials and Tribulations,” 788-792
Glantz, et al, “Research in Developing Countries: Taking ‘Benefit’ Seriously,” 803-807

Sreenivasan, “Opportunity is Not the Key,” 235-236
Kawachi, “Why the U.S. Is Not Number One in Health,” 222-230

Fri, Apr 29: Pogge, “Responsibilities for Poverty-Related Diseases,” 309-313

Week 6
Mon, May 02: Alastair V. Campbell, “My body: property, commodity, or gift?” 11-26
Wed, May 04: Alastair V. Campbell, “Body futures,” 27-54
Fri, May 06: Alastair V. Campbell, “The branded body,” 75-93

Week 7
Mon, May 09: Alastair V. Campbell, “Why the body matters,” 1-10
Drew Leder, “The ecstatic body,” 11-35 (handout)

Eric Cassell, “The Nature of Suffering” (handout)

Week 8
Mon, May 16: Buchanan and Brock, “Deciding for Others: Competency,” 368-378

Commentaries by White and Engelhardt, 383-385
   “Transcript of Proceedings: Testimony of Mary C. Northern,” 365-368

Week 9
Mon, May 23: Steinbock, “Why Most Abortions Are Not Wrong,” 555-566
       Little, “The Morality of Abortion,” 576-584

       Robertson, “The Presumptive Primacy of Procreative Liberty,” 599-609

Fri, May 27:  Asch, “Prenatal Diagnosis and Selective Abortion…” 675-685

Week 10
Mon, May 30: MEMORIAL DAY

       Quill, “Death and Dignity: A Case of Individualized Decision Making,”
              473-476
       Dworkin, “Assisted Suicide: The Philosophers’ Brief,” 484-487

Fri, Jun 03:  Exchange rough drafts/peer review

Due dates for papers:

April 11 the first short paper is due.
April 18 the second short paper is due.
April 25 the third short paper is due.
May 02 the fourth short paper is due.

May 16 the short essay (5-6 pp.) is due.

NOTE: The final paper will be due [June 6-9]. Students are to deliver the final paper to
       Humphrey House 202, no later than 4:00 pm.