

Bioethics

PHIL 3250-001

Spring 2023

MWF, 9:40am-10:30am, GC 5620

This is a short, unofficial version of the actual syllabus meant to give you an idea of what the class will be like in order to help you decide if you want to take it.

The final syllabus will likely have some minor differences.

If you have any questions about the course, just send me an email. :)

Instructor Information:

Adam Smith (he/him/his): adam.c.smith@utah.edu

Contact me using email or Canvas messaging

Office Hours:

TBD

or

By Appointment, in person or via Zoom

Course Description:

Bioethics is the study of the ethical issues that arise in the practice of medicine, the study of human biology, and other biological research. We will begin by learning the basic philosophical skills of constructing a logically sound argument and properly responding to such arguments. Next, we will cover three major moral theories in philosophy and the four main principles of biomedical ethics. The majority of this course will involve applying these skills, theories, and principles to various cases in bioethics, both classic and contemporary. Topics covered in this class include: physician assisted dying, abortion, human research ethics and past abuses, health care justice, racial bias in medicine, genetics, and disability.

This class will be roughly half lecture and half open discussion. While philosophy deals in arguments, this will be a class based on collaboration and support. We will be discussing challenging material that many will have strong feelings about. We will work together to create a space where **everyone** feels comfortable participating in discussions. For more information on discussion norms, see classroom policies below.

Course Objectives:

- Consider classic and recent issues in bioethics.
- Become familiar with major theories of moral philosophy and the standard principles of bioethics.
- Articulate and defend an interpretation of an ethical dilemma using one of the primary moral theories.
- Apply the moral theories and standard principles of biomedical ethics to classic and contemporary cases.
- Extract subtle points from complicated readings, and use these in the construction of your own arguments.

Reading Materials:

All readings will be made digitally available on Canvas. No need to purchase anything!

Grading:

Grades will be based on the following criteria:

1. Reading responses (three 1-page, single-spaced, 12 pt. font): 21%

2. Guest Speaker Questions (four questions, one per speaker): 16%
3. Midterm Exam (six multiple choice questions and two essay questions): 18%
4. Mini-Presentation (four minutes on a topic that interests you; solo or small group): 10%
5. Final Research Paper (5-pages, double-spaced, 12 pt. font) paper: 35%

Grade scale:

A+ = 100-97	C+ = 79-77
A = 96-93	C = 76-73
A- = 92-90	C- = 72-70
B+ = 89-87	D+ = 69-67
B = 86-83	D = 66-63
B- = 82-80	D- = 62-60
	F = 59-0

Assignments

Reading Responses:

There will be 8 chances to do a reading response throughout the semester; you only need to do 4. Each reading response will be about a specific reading and must be uploaded to CANVAS before that reading is discussed in class. For example, if we are discussing a reading on a Wednesday, the reading response must be submitted before class starts on that Wednesday. Each reading response should be 1 page, single-spaced, and 12 pt. font. The first half the response should be a brief summary of the reading. The second half of the response should be some sort of critical engagement with the argument made in the reading: offer further support, state an objection, defend it from a possible objection, point out something that is missing from the discussion and why it's important, apply the material to an example, etc.

Guest Speaker Questions:

We will have four guest speakers throughout the semester. For each guest speaker, you must write a question for them and submit it to CANVAS before the guest speaker visits class. Your questions should be detailed, show some serious consideration, and be engaged with the reading or with the topic of the reading. One sentence is probably too little, though it could be done. Aim for 2-4 sentences.

Midterm Exam:

This exam will cover the three main moral theories in philosophy, the four principles of biomedical ethics, and the first two cases we study. It will consist of 6 multiple choice questions and 2 essay questions. There will be 4-6 essay questions and you choose any 2 to answer.

Min-Presentation:

You will give a short, 4-minute mini-presentation on a bioethics case that interests you. I will provide a list of possible topics but you are welcome to pick something that is not on my list. Just run it by me before you begin working on it. The goal of this assignment is to present the facts of the case, then apply something you have learned from class – a moral theory, a biomedical principle, an argument from an article we read, etc. – to that case. You do not need to have a well-developed argument. After your presentation there will be a 4-minute Q&A where other students can ask you questions. The presentation can be done by yourself or in a group of 2 or 3 and can be done at any point throughout the semester. If you do a group presentation, it will need to be more like 7-8 minutes long.

Final Research Paper:

A 5-page, double-spaced, 12 pt. font research paper will be due at the end of the semester. I will again provide a list of possible topics, and you are again free to pick something not on the list. If you want to do something not on the list, you need to discuss your paper idea with me before you start working on it. In

your paper you will you argue for a thesis. This can be done in many ways and I will spend a day of class talking about how to write a good philosophy paper (they are kind of strange).

Class Policies

Dates/Deadlines & Extensions: All assignments should be completed on time. For each day that an assignment is late, 5% will be taken off with a maximum penalty of 50%. If, due to an unexpected extenuating circumstance – illness, family emergency, etc. – you are unable to complete an assignment, contact me as soon as possible and we will work something out. You will not be penalized in these cases. If you think you will be unable to complete an assignment on time for any reason, get in contact with me BEFORE the assignment is due so that we can discuss your particular circumstance. I will almost certainly give you an extension of some sort.

Classroom Civility Statement: We will be discussing some controversial topics in the class. I will ensure that we all work together to create and maintain a safe and constructive classroom environment. Philosophy deals in arguments but think of this class as a collaborative discussion where we all share our ideas to help each other get a more complete understanding of issues. We benefit by hearing from people with different viewpoints, but I will not tolerate hateful or discriminatory views of any kind. So, be critical but also be constructive and kind. Here are some things to keep in mind:

- Object to arguments, not people.
- Try to state all objections as constructively as possible.
- Don't worry about being right or winning an argument. That does not matter... at all. What matters is developing philosophical skills and understanding the material.
- You can say something in class or in writing and then later change your mind. In fact, changing your mind is often good!
- You can argue for things you don't believe for the sake of argument.
- Do not monopolize the discussion. Follow the "me then three" rule, where you speak and then allow three other people to speak before raising your hand again.
- If you think someone in class (including me!) has said something that crosses a line, feel free to say something, but do so respectfully. You can also tell me after class or through an email. It is imperative that everyone feels comfortable participating in discussions.