

Medical Ethics Syllabus

Philosophy 3320

Instructor: Jeff Edwards

Office Hours: Thursday at 2:30 to 3:30 pm on Teams
or by appointment

Contact: Jeffery.Edwards@utdallas.edu

Class times: Tuesday & Thursday 11:30 am to 12:45 pm

Class Location: Founders North 2.302

Introduction

You can call me Jeff or Mr. Edwards, whichever you prefer. Just don't call me Dr. Edwards, as I'm still working on that.

This is our course syllabus. Each of your instructors at university is required to provide you with a course syllabus, and each is a very important document. Research shows that students who keep their syllabi with them throughout the semester and refer to those syllabi on a regular basis tend to earn better grades than those students who do not do that. If you ask me when an assignment is due, what we will read in the future, or what my late work policy is, I will tell you it is in this syllabus. When I say that, it means you need to look it up for yourself.

A word that will be helpful for you to remember in this class is *bioethics*. Sometimes, bioethics is taken to be another name for medical ethics, while at other times, people take medical ethics for only a subcategory of bioethics. More generally, medical ethics is one variety of *applied ethics*, the application of ethical principles to various professions, such as medicine, computer science, or law enforcement.

Social and legal interest in medical ethics has grown following World War II partly in response to medical experiments carried out by Nazi doctors during the war, similar nonconsensual medical procedures practiced in the United States in the 20th century, and the innovation of new medical technologies that prolong lifespans, make the termination of life less painful, and make abortion more accessible and safer, to name a few.

The aim of medical ethics is to develop a common set of intellectual tools which medical professionals can use when making difficult decisions in their work. Part of that has to do with debates between medical paternalism and patient autonomy: Should the medical professional have the last say in what the patient ought to do, or should the patient be allowed to question and even challenge the doctor's opinion? Is there a third position in addition to these two? Another debate involves who should be given priority in medical treatment: Should generally able-bodied people be given priority over disabled people in emergency situations? Are there social conditions that disadvantage disabled people from the start, so that they are less likely to be given priority in medical care? Do similar concerns affect people from other historically oppressed groups?

These are some questions we will explore this semester. I aim to help you arrive at basic skills needed to be a medical ethicist. If we are successful, perhaps one day, you will serve on an ethics committee at a hospital or other institution.

Required Materials

- 1.) No textbooks are required for this course.
- 2.) You will need a stable internet connection to download reading assignments and upload your writing assignments.

Assignments and Grading

- 1.) **4 Reflections (20%)** You are allowed to write up to 11 of these reflections, but only your 4 highest scores will be counted for your final class grade. You can find instructions for these assignments on eLearning by clicking on the "Writing Assignments" link.
- 2.) **Class Participation (10%)** I will assign small in-class group assignments for you to complete. I may not assign one of these every day, and I will not announce how many I will assign for the semester. You can miss three of these assignments without losing points.
- 3.) **Two Argumentative Essays (35% each)** You will need to write two essays of 1500 to 2500 words each. These essays will serve in place of your midterm and final exams. You will need to draw upon both the readings from our course and research you will conduct on your own.

Learning Outcomes

In addition to exploring the topics described above, during this course students will learn how to:

- 1) Read, understand, and evaluate complex philosophical texts (including for arguments, presuppositions, perspective, and purpose)
- 2) Formulate a thesis by identifying, developing, and clearly presenting their own perspective on a problem, question, idea, or text, and making clear its context and significance
- 3) Support their thesis with appropriate evidence (argument and exegesis), using philosophical sources to support and situate their interpretation of a text and/or stand on an issue
- 4) Organize and effectively communicate their ideas to both philosophical and non-philosophical audiences

Late Work Policy

- For every day a homework writing assignment is late, you will lose half a letter grade on that assignment. That means if you turn in an assignment a day late, you cannot earn more than 95% on that assignment.
- Although you cannot make up class participation points, remember that you are allowed to miss three of those assignments. However . . .
- If you have a doctor's note, jury summons, or some other official documentation that *clearly* suggests you could not complete the assignment on time or be in class for participation, email me that documentation, and I will consider not reducing your grade.

Course Catalog Description

(3 semester credit hours) This course will focus on the underlying principles of medical ethics, such as personal autonomy, beneficence, non-maleficence, and justice, which will be examined as philosophic issues and in their application to medical problems. Readings and discussion will center on end of life issues, beginning of life issues, inherited abnormalities, allocation of scarce medical resources, and research protocols involving human subjects. Prerequisites: (Upper-division standing or any previous PHIL course) or instructor consent required. (3-0)

Class Etiquette

I generally don't like trying to control anyone's behavior. That said, if you give me any reason to control your behavior, I will be very annoyed. Here are some things that will motivate me to intervene in your class behavior. Please "adult" in this class.

- **If you have a private conversation with your neighbor where you talk at the same time someone else is speaking in class, I will ask you to leave class and return when you're ready to not do that.** If you continue to do this, it will negatively affect your grade. It doesn't matter if you're whispering. Everyone in the room can hear you, and it's disruptive and rude. If you have a question or comment, wait your turn to share with the class. Your participation will benefit you and probably someone else in the room.
- **Refrain from using derogatory language.** Don't insult people on the basis of sex, gender, gender identity, race, ethnicity, disability, religion, lack of religion, body type, and so on. (It is probably a good idea to not insult anyone in your classes at all.) While we will discuss racism, sexism, and ableism (bigotry against disabled people) in this class, don't use that as an excuse to antagonize people in bigoted ways. For example, if you want to say a sentence that takes the form "I hate x kind of people," it's a good idea to keep that sentence to yourself. Some may call this "political correctness" or "wokeness." I call it "helping people finish their university degrees."
- **If you are going to use a laptop, cell phone, tablet, or other electronic device in class, sit in the back row.** Research shows that people who use these devices in classes tend to perform worse than those who do not. Such devices are not designed primarily for educational purposes. They are mainly designed to absorb your attention so you will buy more consumer products, thereby lending statistical data to people who want to make more money. That means these devices will also absorb the attention of your neighbors in class. You might think you are immune to such tactics, but generally, people who think they are immune to such things are those most vulnerable to them. Bearing that in mind, what you should *not* use your electronics for in class are non-class related things, such as playing video games, texting friends, shopping, watching funny kitten videos, and so forth. If I catch you doing anything of the sort, I will probably ask you to leave class and return when you are ready not to do that sort of thing.

Plagiarism and Other Academic Dishonesty

- The ancient philosopher Aristotle believed that virtue is a matter of habituation: the more you do virtuous things, the more virtuous you will become. He also believed that vice was a matter of habituation: dishonesty is one kind of vice. If you do dishonest things often enough, you will become a dishonest person. In today's world, being a dishonest person in your profession can get you sued, fired, and/or imprisoned.
- When you cheat, you disrespect me, you disrespect yourself by not demonstrating that you are intelligent enough to complete an assignment, and you disrespect every other student in the university by degrading the worth of the degrees they earn here.
- Plagiarism is cheating. It is a kind of dishonesty because it is when someone tries to mislead their reader or listener as to where their information comes from when completing an assignment.
- Plagiarism is when you present other people's or artificial intelligence's words, ideas, or work as your own.
- Plagiarism is having another person or artificial intelligence (like ChatGPT) write your papers for you.

- Plagiarism is copying from a book, magazine, or website without citing that book, magazine, or website, even if you change some of the words. (This is different than paraphrasing, where you express the author's ideas in your own words and give credit to that author.)
- Turning in a paper to me that you have already turned in for credit in another class is plagiarism. I will not accept a paper of this sort even if you tell me that you have turned it in to another instructor.
- This is not an exhaustive list of kinds of plagiarism, and I cannot provide you with such a list. ***The basic rule is to do your own work, and don't try to get around this rule.***
- I am required to report plagiarism, or other kinds of cheating and student misconduct, to the Office of Community Standards and Conduct (OCSC), and they will decide if any disciplinary action will be taken.

Some Thoughts on Artificial Intelligence

- Artificial Intelligence (AI), while a helpful tool in giving ideas about how to conduct our research and other projects, is fallible, meaning it makes mistakes. At times, it can get things wrong and even fabricate information.
- Part of the reason we at the university want you to do your own work is that in writing for yourself, you will retain what you learn better and learn how to think more carefully. That will not happen if you are simply copy-and-pasting what an AI spits out to you.
- If you let AI write your assignments for you, upon graduation, it likely will not take your future employer long to figure out that you don't have college-level thinking and writing skills, and that might put your career in jeopardy.
- Fortunately for you, there are many people at the university, including myself, who are dedicated to helping you learn how to do these sorts of things so you can be secure in your future career.

UTD Student Resources

AccessAbility Resource Center (ARC)

This description is copied from the UTD website.

"It is the policy and practice of The University of Texas at Dallas to make reasonable accommodations for students with properly documented disabilities. However, written notification from the AccessAbility Resource Center (ARC) is required. If you are eligible to receive an accommodation and would like to request it for this course, please discuss it with me and allow one-week advance notice. Students who have questions about receiving accommodations, or those who have, or think they may have, a disability (mobility, sensory, health, psychological, learning, etc.) are invited to contact ARC for a confidential discussion. ARC is located in the Administration Building, AD 2.224. They can be reached by phone at 972-883-2098, or by email at studentaccess@utdallas.edu."

<https://accessability.utdallas.edu>

UTD Writing Center

If you want extra help with your writing outside of class, you can talk to me, or you can set up an appointment to talk to someone at the UTD Writing Center.

<https://studentsuccess.utdallas.edu/programs/writing-center/>

Comet Cupboard

If you are low on funds and need food or other home supplies, the UTD Comet Cupboard can help. Visit their website for instructions on how to prepare for your visit.

<https://cometcupboard.utdallas.edu>

Class Schedule

All the assigned readings below can be found on eLearning by clicking on our "Assigned Readings" link. For nearly every week listed below, I have included the titles of articles you should read before the week I have listed them. For example, in week three, you should read the articles by Deligiorgi and Tong before we meet that week. That is because we will discuss those readings in class that week, so you should be familiar with them beforehand. There are also due dates for when various assignments are due; I have listed those in the "Other Assignments" column. I reserve the right to adjust this schedule as needed. However, I have never added any extra necessary work to a class beyond what is already in this syllabus.

Dates	Reading/Viewing Assignments	Details & Other Assignments
Week 1 Jan 21, 23	Introductions, Community Building	
Week 2 Jan 28, 30	1.) "The Good Life: Kant" by Chris Surprenant https://youtu.be/F6UQLiHB0k0?si=EIPFgmughOCtepeh 2.) "Ethics: Utilitarianism, Part 1" by Julia Markowitz https://youtu.be/uvvmz5E75ZIA?si=Dwd4GNUzJTqv2S76 3.) "The Good Life: Aristotle" by Chris Surprenant https://youtu.be/VFPBfIAZOOg?si=2MV9kywLJ8nQ19AC 4.) "How to Read Philosophically" Document by Jeff Edwards	1.) There are 3 short videos for you to watch this week and a very short reading written by me. 2.) Download <i>all</i> the readings on this schedule from eLearning and save them in a folder that is easy for you to find.
Week 3 Feb 4, 6	1.) "Autonomy in Bioethics" by Katerina Deligiorgi 2.) "Teaching Bioethics in the New Millennium" by Rosemarie Tong	Reflection 1 due on eLearning February 3 at 11:59 pm.
Week 4 Feb 11, 13	1.) "The Concept of Care Ethics in Biomedical Medicine" by Eva Feder Kittay 2.) "Taking Dependency Seriously: The Family and Medical Leave Act Considered in Light of the Social Organization of Dependency Work and Gender Equality" by Eva Feder Kittay	Reflection 2 due on eLearning February 10 at 11:59 pm
Week 5 Feb 18, 20	1.) "Face to Face with 'It': And Other Neglected Contexts of Health Privacy" by Anita Allen 2.) "Informed Consent and Relational Conceptions of Autonomy" by Natalie Stoljar	Reflection 3 due on eLearning February 17 at 11:59 pm
Week 6 Feb 25, 27	1.) "To What Extent Should a Woman's Autonomy Overrule the Interests of Her Baby? A Study of	Reflection 4 due on eLearning February 24 at 11:59 pm.

	<p>Autonomy-Related Issues in the Context of Caesarean Section" by Rebecca Brionne</p> <p>2.) "The Problem of Abortion and the Doctrine of Double Effect" by Phillipa Foot</p>	
<p>Week 7 Mar 4, 6</p>	<p>1.) "The Extent to Which the Wish to Donate One's Organs After Death Contributes to Life-Extension Arguments in Favor of Voluntary Active Euthanasia in the Terminally Ill: An Ethical Analysis" by Richard C. Armitage</p> <p>2.) "Assisted Dying for Individuals with Dementia: Challenges for Translating Ethical Positions into Law" by Jocelyn Downie and Georgia Lloyd-Smith</p>	<p>Reflection 5 due on March 3 at 11:59 pm on eLearning.</p>
<p>Week 8 Mar 11, 13</p>	<p>Essay Workshop/Librarian Visit</p>	
<p>Week 9 Mar 18, 20</p>	<p>Spring Break: No Classes!</p>	
<p>Week 10 Mar 25, 27</p>	<p>1.) "Racism and Research: The Case of the Tuskegee Syphilis Study" by Allan M. Brandt</p> <p>2.) "Clinicians' Racial Biases as Pathways to Iatrogenic Harms for Black People" by Keisha Ray</p>	<p>1.) Argumentative Essay 1 due on eLearning March 24 at 11:59 pm.</p> <p>2.) Reflection 6 due on eLearning March 24 at 11:59 pm.</p>
<p>Week 11 Apr 1, 3</p>	<p>1.) "Disability Bioethics and Race" by Andrea J. Pitts</p> <p>2.) "Between Choice and Coercion: Women and the Politics of Sterilization in North Carolina, 1929-1975" by Joanna Schoen</p>	<p>Reflection 7 due on eLearning March 31 at 11:59 pm.</p>
<p>Week 12 Apr 8, 10</p>	<p>1.) "Disability, Ideology, and Quality of Life: A Bias in Biomedical Ethics" by Ron Amundson</p> <p>2.) "Expecting Equality: How Prenatal Screening Policy Harms People with Disabilities" by Athmeya Jayaram</p>	<p>Reflection 8 due on eLearning April 7 at 11:59 pm.</p>
<p>Week 13 Apr 15, 17</p>	<p>1.) "Twin Brothers: The Idiot and the Institution" by Licia Carlson</p> <p>2.) "Research Ethics and Intellectual Disability" by Kevin Mintz and David Wasserman</p>	<p>Reflection 9 due on eLearning April 14 at 11:59 pm.</p>
<p>Week 14 Apr 22, 24</p>	<p>1.) "At the Margins of Moral Personhood" by Eva Feder Kittay</p>	<p>Reflection 10 due on eLearning April 21 at 11:59 pm.</p>

	2.) "Disability Bioethics, Ashley X, and Disability Justice for People with Cognitive Impairments" by Christine Wiesler	
Week 15 Apr 29, May 1	1.) "Examining Carceral Medicine through Critical Phenomenology" by Andrea J. Pitts 2.) "Normalizing Medicine: Between 'Intersexuals' and Individuals with 'Disorders of Sex Development'" by Ellen K. Feder	Reflection 11 due on eLearning April 28 at 11:59 pm.
Week 16 Apr 6, 8	Essay Workshop	
Finals Week	Finish your essay!	Argumentative Essay 2 due on eLearning May 14 at 11:59 pm.