

PHL 375: Medical Ethics
Miami University, Spring 2020

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Office hours: Monday and Wednesday, 5h–6h PM EST, and by appointment

Course Description

In this course, we will discuss a cluster of ethical issues in medicine, with a view to clarifying the norms and values that should properly inform the doctor-patient relationship. Our investigation will be oriented to addressing six main questions. First, what justifies the practice of obtaining patients' informed consent for medical treatment, and are there any limits to this obligation? Second, are there ways of treating patients that would be morally wrong even with their consent? For example, is it permissible for a doctor to indulge a patient's request for voluntary amputation? Is it permissible for doctors to kill terminally ill patients with their consent or to assist them in suicide? Third, is it ever right to terminate the pregnancy of a patient carrying a healthy fetus, at her behest? Do fetuses have moral status that protects them from being killed? What about embryos? Fourth, is there anything morally objectionable about cloning human beings or manipulating their genetic code? Fifth, is it immoral to select against, or for, disability in newborns? Does a disability necessarily make its bearer worse off? Finally, to what extent are we justified in performing medical experiments on animals?

This is an advanced course in ethics, suitable for students who have some knowledge of philosophy. Because this is an advanced course, (1) we will proceed under the assumption that you are familiar with the activities central to practicing philosophy, e.g., reconstructing and critically analyzing arguments, in speech and in writing; (2) we will refine your ability to engage in these activities; and (3) we will delve more deeply into the topics that we study than in an introductory course.

Course Requirements and Grades

Every student is required (1) to participate thoughtfully and respectfully in discussions and other assigned activities; (2) to submit three papers; and (3) to complete all eight reading quizzes.

Here is how each component of your final grade is weighted:

- 15%: *Participation* (= weekly posts on discussion boards), due at the end of each week
- 25%: *Reading Quizzes*, due every other week
- 15%: *First Paper* (4–6 pages), due February 23
- 20%: *Second Paper* (5–7 pages), due April 8
- 25%: *Third Paper* (6–8 pages), due May 10

Except in special circumstances, to pass this course all written work must be submitted to the instructor. In addition to the above assignments, there will be occasional opportunities for extra credit.

- **Participation:** Participation is very important in this course—as reflected by the fact that your participation score accounts for a significant proportion of your final grade. Everyone is expected to contribute to class discussion. I especially encourage you to ask clarificatory questions about the material: if you are confused about some topic that we are studying in this course, it is *very* likely that other students are, too! This means that not only will you be penalized for failing to participate in course discussions, you will also lose out on an essential source of philosophical understanding: dialogue with others, the clash of differing points of view.

Miami University has announced a prohibition on face-to-face meetings the rest of the semester. The new policy does not change the importance of participation, just the mode of participation that is called for. Effectively immediately, each student will be required to create (a) two original posts in specified discussion boards on Canvas and (b) one response to another person's post.

Original posts and responses must consist in a substantive attempt to engage with the question/questions posed in that week's discussion boards. (You need not address all of them, however!) Original posts and responses should each be a short paragraph. Your contribution must be original in that it cannot merely repeat what someone else has said, although you may raise further questions or build on someone's objection; you should not simply express agreement.

Note: To obtain full credit for participation in a given week, you must create two original posts and one response, in addition to other activities that I may assign. Failure to do so is treated as equivalent to one or two unexcused absences for that week, along with the standard penalties.

The instructor has discretion over whether to excuse an absence. Yet, as a general rule, absences are excused in case of illness, mental health issues, death of a friend/family member, or job interview, among others. Here are the standard penalties for multiple *unexcused* absences:

- 0–6 absences = 0 points deducted from final score
- 7–10 absences = 2 points deducted from final score
- 11–14 absences = 3 points deducted from final score
- > 14 absences = failure of the course

The new participation requirements are *provisional*. In particular, after spring break I will be amenable to discussing alternatives—or supplements—to these blog-style online discussions.

- **Reading Quizzes:** You will complete eight quizzes, many of them on Canvas, over the course of the semester. The aim of these quizzes is to ensure that you are reading regularly by testing your comprehension of the material. You will generally have about a week to complete online quizzes, which (a) will be assigned every other week and which (b) will be due at the end of the week.
- **Papers:** You will write and submit three papers on topics that I will assign. These will be tightly structured argumentative essays with a substantial interpretive component. They will be graded

according to how well they exemplify the virtues of philosophical writing: clarity of expression, strength of argument, accuracy of interpretation, focus and efficiency of language, and charity. Your paper should be uploaded to Canvas unless it is late or you have received an extension.

Here is the grading scheme for the papers:

A+	100	B+	89	C+	79	D+	69
A+/A	98	B+/B	87	C+/C	77	D+/D	67
A	96	B	85	C	75	D	65
A-/A	94	B/B-	83	C/C-	73	D/D-	63
A-	92	B-	81	C-	71	D-	61
A-/B+	90	B-/C+	80	C-/D+	70	F	60

- **Extra Credit:** One aspect of face-to-face meetings that I am keen to preserve is their personal character. As part of this effort: one point of extra credit will be added to your final grade if you upload a photo of yourself, with your face clearly visible, as your profile picture on Canvas.

Please modify your profile pic to include a photo of yourself by 11h59 PM on Thursday, April 2.

Course Policies:

- **Respect:** Discussions in this course should be respectful, constructive, and inclusive. We will follow the NYU Guidelines for Respectful Philosophical Discussion, which can be found [here](#).
- **Lectures:** In-person lectures have been replaced by video lectures. Lectures for a given week will generally be posted to Canvas on Monday of that week. I advise you to listen to the lectures while looking at handouts pertaining to the lecture's content, which will be posted on the same day.
- **Plagiarism:** You are encouraged to discuss the material with your peers outside of class, but all work must contain your own thoughts, written in your own words. Feel free contact me if you would like clarification concerning what counts as plagiarism or what proper citation consists in.

Common forms of plagiarism in this course have included:

- borrowing wording from a handout (without quoting and citing it)
- borrowing wording from one of the readings (without quoting and citing it)
- borrowing wording from the essay prompt
- borrowing wording or ideas from an online source (without quoting and citing it)
- borrowing wording or ideas from another student's paper
- recycling material from work that you have completed in other courses

You can also find a definition of plagiarism, along with Miami University's plagiarism policy, [here](#)

- **Readings:** Required readings should be completed *before* the session for which they are assigned.

Some selections will be dense and difficult, so you may have to reread them once or twice.

- **Extensions:** Extensions for any valid reason will be granted *only if* they are requested at least one full day before the due date. Keep in mind that *extensions will not generally be granted on the third paper*.

Note: If you take an extension, you effectively waive your right to receive comments on time!

Note: If you take an extension, please send me your paper by email directly, at the above address.

- **Late Work:** It is important that you submit your work on time. Except in unusual circumstances, late work will be penalized 1/3 of a letter grade per day (e.g. from A to A-, etc.).

Note: If you submit work late, you effectively waive your right to receive comments on time!

Note: If you submit work late, please send me your paper by email directly, at the above address.

- **Drafts:** If you want me to look over a draft, send it to me *at least* four days before the due date.
- **Accommodations:** Students who require special accommodations for a documented disability should contact me immediately, so that necessary arrangements can be made in a timely manner. You may obtain the requisite documentation at the [Miller Center for Student Disability Services](#).

Note: Please contact me and Miller Center staff immediately regarding any concerns that you may have about your ability to participate productively in an online version of this course.

- **Office Hours:** Three important changes have been made to my office hours:
 - (1) My office hours are at a new time; please see above.
 - (2) Office hours will be conducted remotely. During the designated times, I will contact you through Hangouts; an invitation from me will appear in your Miami email account.
 - (3) Office hours must now be scheduled at <https://calendly.com/miami-tarassenko-struct>.

Note: Please message me to set up another meeting time if you cannot make my office hours.

- **E-mail:** I will strive to answer your e-mails within one business day, where this excludes weekends and holidays. If a day has gone by and you have not yet received a response, please remind me.

Schedule of Meetings and Assignments

1. Basics: Introduction to Key Distinctions in Ethics

January 27: [No Readings: Overview of Topics and Mechanics of Course]

January 29: Peter Singer, *Practical Ethics*, ch. 1 ("About Ethics")

January 31: Philippa Foot, "The Problem of Abortion and the Doctrine of the Double Effect"

2. Informed Consent and the Duties of Medical Practitioners

- February 3: Anne Fadiman, *The Spirit Catches You and You Fall Down*, chs. 3–5
Recommended: Onora O’Neill, ‘Between Consenting Adults’
- February 5: Tom Beauchamp and James Childress, *Principles of Biomedical Ethics*, ch. 3
(‘Respect for Autonomy’)
- February 7: Carl Elliott, ‘Amputees by Choice’
- February 10: [No Readings: Wrap-up of Theme]

3. Voluntary Euthanasia and Physician-Assisted Suicide

- February 12: [No Readings: Workshop on Philosophical Writing]
- February 14: Sacred Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, ‘Declaration on Euthanasia’
- February 17: Ronald Dworkin et al, ‘Assisted Suicide: The Philosophers’ Brief’
Recommended: Jonathan Glover, ‘The Sanctity of Life’
- February 19: James Rachels, ‘Active and Passive Euthanasia’
Bonnie Steinbock, ‘The Intentional Termination of Life’
Recommended: Helga Kuhse, ‘Why Killing is Not Always Worse – and
Sometimes Better – Than Letting Die’
- February 21: Frances Kamm, ‘A Right to Choose Death?’

Sunday, February 23: First Paper Due by 5 PM

- February 24: David Velleman, ‘A Right of Self-Termination?’
- February 26: Velleman, ‘A Right of Self-Termination?’, cont’d
Recommended: Frances Kamm, ‘Physician-Assisted Suicide, the Doctrine of
Double Effect, and the Ground of Value’
- February 28: [No Readings: Wrap-up of Theme]

4. Abortion

- March 2: Pope John Paul II, *Evangelium Vitae*, excerpt (‘The Unspeakable Crime of Abortion’)
Recommended: *Daily Nous*, ‘Philosophers on the Ethics and Politics of Abortion’
- March 4: Michael Tooley, ‘Abortion and Infanticide’
Recommended: Alison Reiheld, “‘The Event That Was Nothing’: Miscarriage as
Liminal Event’
- March 6: Don Marquis, ‘Why Abortion is Immoral’
- March 9: Judith Jarvis Thomson, ‘A Defense of Abortion’

March 11: Gina Schouten, 'Fetuses, Orphans, and a Famous Violinist'
March 13: [No Readings: Wrap-up of Theme]

5. Human Cloning, Genetic Manipulation, and the Status of Human Embryos

March 16–18: David King, 'Why We Should Not Permit Embryos to Be Selected as Tissue Donors'
Recommended: Evangelina Papadaki, 'What is Objectification?'
Jonathan Glover, 'Questions about Some Uses of Genetic Engineering'
Short video on PGD: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MQiITgbeXy8>

March 23–27: [No Classes: Spring Break!]

March 30–April 3: Nick Bostrom, 'In Defense of Posthuman Dignity'
Matthew Liao, 'Designing Humans: A Human Rights Approach'

Wednesday, April 8: Second Paper Due by 11h59 PM

6. Disability

April 6–10: Peter Singer, 'Shopping at the Genetic Supermarket'
Harriet McBryde Johnson, 'Unspeakable Conversations'
H-Dirksen L. Bauman, 'Designing Deaf Babies and the Question of Disability'
Recommended: Peter Singer, *Practical Ethics*, ch. 7 ('Taking Life: Humans'), 160–167

April 13–17: Jeff McMahan, 'The Morality of Screening for Disabilities'
Julian Savulescu and Guy Kahane, 'Disability: A Welfarist Approach'

April 20–24: Elizabeth Barnes, *The Minority Body*, ch. 2 ('Bad-Difference and Mere-Difference')
Immanuel Kant, *The Metaphysics of Morals*, excerpt
Jeremy Bentham, *Introduction to the Principles of Morals and Legislation*, excerpt

7. Medical Experimentation on Animals

April 27–May 1: Kristin Andrews and Susana Monsó, 'Rats Are Us'
R.G. Frey, 'Animals and Their Medical Use'
Gary Francione, 'The Use of Nonhuman Animals in Research and Experimentation'
Recommended: Elizabeth Anderson, 'Animal Rights and the Value of Nonhuman Life'

Sunday, May 10: Third Paper Due by 11h59 PM