BIOMEDICAL ETHICS (PHIL 6245)
Thursday 5:10-7:00 p.m., Smith Hall 115
Syllabus—Spring 2013

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Office Hours: Th 12-2 and by appointment

Intended for graduate students but occasionally open to undergraduates with the instructor’s prior permission, this course provides an in-depth introduction to the field of biomedical ethics. Following a brief review of ethical theory, the course proceeds to several central topics in biomedical ethics before ending with students’ presentations of their original research. Students are expected to keep pace with relatively heavy reading assignments while gradually developing their research projects in consultation with the instructor. The emphasis throughout the course will be on normative ethical reasoning with considerable attention to the empirical assumptions underlying particular ethical judgments and to policy dimensions of several of the central topics.

Learning Objectives
1. to comprehend several leading approaches to moral reasoning, their similarities and differences, and some of their chief strengths and weaknesses
2. to become familiar with a variety of central issues in biomedical ethics, the major positions taken with respect to them, their strengths and weaknesses, the empirical facts that bear on them, and—in the case of several of these issues—their policy dimensions
3. to become familiar with several contemporary readings on each of the central issues addressed in the class
4. to engage leading approaches to moral reasoning in analyzing and addressing these issues
5. to develop the ability to do the same (as in 4) in addressing an issue in biomedical ethics that is not covered in class: the term paper topic
6. to develop expertise on the term paper topic, as reflected in an independently researched, well-written term paper and an oral presentation on one’s findings

Texts
- Beauchamp and Childress, *Principles of Biomedical Ethics, 7th* ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013) [PBE]
- A few additional articles available on Blackboard or online
Structure of Course by Date, Topic, and Assignment

1/17: Review of Ethical Theory and Introduction to Biomedical Ethics
   • Reading: BE, Chapter 1

1/24: The Professional-Patient Relationship
   • Reading in PBE: Chapter 8

1/31: Contested Therapies and Cosmetic Surgery

2/7: Cosmetic Psychopharmacology, Neuroenhancement, and Moral Enhancement
   • Additional reading: Persson and Savulescu, “The Perils of Cognitive Enhancement and the Urgent Imperative to Enhance the Moral Character of Humanity”

2/14: The Definition and Determination of Death
   • Additional readings: CDD, chaps. 4 – 6; DeGrazia, “The Definition of Death”

2/21: Decisions regarding Life-Sustaining Treatment
   • Reading in PBE: pp. 158-174

2/28: Assisted Suicide and Active Euthanasia
• Reading in PBE: 174-186

3/7: Moral Status
• Reading in PBE: Chapter 3
• Additional reading: DeGrazia, “Moral Status as a Matter of Degree?”

3/21: Abortion
• Additional readings: Lee and George, “The Wrong of Abortion”; DeGrazia, “Must We Have Full Moral Status Throughout Our Existence?”

3/28: Abortion (cont.) and Embryonic Stem-Cell Research
• Additional reading: Harman, “Creation Ethics”

4/4: Social Justice and International Health-Care Models
• Reading in PBE: pp. 249-267

4/11: Reform Proposals for American Health Care

4/18: Genome Sequencing and Privacy
• Reading: PPWGS

4/25: Student Presentations of Research
Requirements and Grading

- Attendance of every class (missed classes counting heavily in your class contribution grade unless justified by documented medical illness; penalty can be avoided by notifying professor in advance and arranging for reading notes to be submitted prior to class)
- Quality, quantity, and constructiveness of contributions to class discussions (25%)
- Presentation (15%)
- Research progress as determined by discussions in two (or more) office visits and by quality of draft paper introduction, one-page outline, and bibliography (10%)
- Term paper of 20-25 pages due during finals week (50%)

Academic Integrity
The GW Code of Academic Integrity defines plagiarism as “intentionally representing the words, ideas, or sequence of ideas of another as one's own in any academic exercise; failure to attribute any of the following: quotations, paraphrases, or borrowed information,” (article I, sect. b). The penalty for plagiarism ranges from failure of the assignment to expulsion from the university. Please avoid this error and bring any questions about appropriate attribution to me.

Support of Students Outside the Classroom

- Disability Support Services (DSS). Any student who may need an accommodation based on the potential impact of a disability should contact the DSS office (Marvin Center 242) at 4-8250 to establish eligibility and coordinate reasonable accommodations. For further information refer to gwired.gwu.edu/dss/.
- University Counseling Center (UCC). The UCC (4-5300) offers assistance and referral to address students’ personal, social, and study skills problems. For further information refer to gwired.gwu.edu/counsel.

Security
In the case of an emergency, the class should shelter in place if at all possible.