

PHI 2635-01: Biomedical Ethics
Spring Semester 2003
TR 9:30 – 10:45 a.m., 310 Diffenbaugh

Instructor

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Course Supervisor

Michael Ruse

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Texts: *Moral Status* by Mary Anne Warren

Bioethics (Oxford Readings In Philosophy) edited by John Harris

Killing and Letting Die edited by B. Steinbock and A. Norcross

There will be a small course reader as well.

Purpose:

The purpose of this course is to introduce, consider, and evaluate prominent philosophical positions and arguments in the area of biomedical ethics. The main topics to be covered are: moral status, euthanasia, abortion, cloning, stem-cell research, justice in health care, and medical paternalism.

Course Objectives:

- To understand and evaluate some of the answers that have been given to the questions raised in the Course Topic Description,
- To hone one's skills in identifying and criticizing philosophical positions and arguments, and
- To improve one's ability to think and write clearly and critically.

Course Topic Description:

1. What is it for something to have moral status? In other words, when does one have a moral obligation to persons and other living things? A thorough review of the most common suggestions for a definition of moral status will be considered and evaluated.
2. To engage in euthanasia is to act (or to refuse to act) in such a way as to bring about the death of a person for his or her own good. Are there any circumstances under which it would be morally permissible for someone (e.g., a doctor or nurse) to engage in euthanasia? Are there any circumstances under which it would be morally permissible for the state to legalize euthanasia?
3. Abortion is the removal of a fetus from a mother's womb. Are there any circumstances under which it would be morally permissible for someone (e.g., a doctor) to abort a woman's pregnancy? Does a human fetus (at any or all stages of its development) have the right to not be killed and/or the right to use its mother's body? If so, does it follow that abortion is never

morally permissible? If abortion is morally permissible, does it follow that infanticide is morally permissible? Are there any circumstances under which it would be morally permissible for the state to criminalize abortions? Does a fetus's potential give it moral status?

4. Cloning is the process of asexual reproduction. Is cloning a natural process? Does it matter, morally, if cloning occurs naturally? How many kinds of cloning are there? Should humans engage in the process of cloning bacteria, larger animals, or even humans? Should cloning be an acceptable method of human procreation? Does the U. S. Constitution guarantee reproductive rights, and is cloning one of them? What is required for constructive dialogue in the cloning debate?

5. Stem Cells are the fully functioning foundation cells that have the ability to divide indefinitely and that give rise to specialized cells as well as new stem cells, which have the same potential as the prior stem cells. Medical cures using stem cells research vary from Lou Gherig's Disease (ALS) and Parkinson's Disease to spinal chord repairs. Is it morally permissible to use cord blood stem cells or the stem cells from aborted fetuses? If there is a difference morally between the two, then what is it? How is this distinction justified? Should government funding go to stem cell research?

6. It is a common belief that persons have a right to a "decent minimum" of health care throughout their lives. If there is such a right, what is its moral justification and what is its content? To what are persons who possess this right entitled? Would a society that did not recognize a right to health care be unjust?

7. To engage in paternalism is to intervene in another person's life for his/her own good when this intervention is either known to be, or not known not to be, contrary to the affected person's preferences. For example, a doctor who refuses to tell her depressed patient that he has cancer (without knowing whether he wants to be fully informed of his medical condition) for fear that he will commit suicide acts paternalistically. Are there any circumstances under which health professionals are morally permitted to engage in paternalism? How are the boundaries of morally permissible paternalistic intervention to be determined?

Assignments:

5 two to three page précis will be required. I will assign at least seven throughout the semester, but you may only write on 5. I will give specific assignments for which you will evaluate the reading for the day. All your précis must be emailed to all the other students in the class at least 17 hours before class: 5 pm the day before. This will be part of your participation grade.

3 précis commentary assignments. You will have to comment on and give a grade to three précis by other students. I will assign numbers and randomly decide the evaluation order. All précis comments should be sent to all the other students in the class as well. Commentators will be graded on how thorough, reflective, and philosophically relevant the comments are.

1 final 10-15 page paper. You will have to submit a one-page proposal, a six to seven-page rough draft, and a final version of the paper.

Grades:

10%	Participation
20%	Comments on Student Précis
30%	Précis
40%	Final Paper

Final grades will be assessed on the following scale:

100-93 A	86-83 B	76-73 C	66-63 D
92-90 A-	82-80 B-	72-70 C-	62-60 D-
89-87 B+	79-77 C+	69-67 D+	59-00 F

Attendance:

Regular attendance, having prepared all assigned work, is expected of each student. When the student must be absent, it is his or her responsibility to get notes from another student in class. This is a small class where class discussion and student interaction are essential. One's participation grade will suffer if regular attendance is not achieved.

Late Policy:

Late work will not be accepted unless accompanied by written documentation from a health care provider (or other appropriate source; further legitimate excuses may include religious and university obligations) explaining why the student was unable to complete the assignment on time. When possible, I should be informed *before* the assigned work is due. When these conditions are satisfied, appropriate accommodations will be made for the student to complete the missed assignment. If there are any concerns about late work, contact me to clear things up. It is better to let me know than to leave me wondering.

Honor Code:

Students must uphold the Academic Honor Code published in *The Florida State University Bulletin* and the *Student Handbook* or online at <http://www.fsu.edu/~union/honor.htm>. Violations of the honor code may result in an 'F' for the course or other disciplinary action.

Students with Disabilities:

Reasonable accommodations will be made for students with disability. Such students must (1) register with, and provide documentation to, the Student Disability Resource Center (SDRC), and (2) submit a letter from SDRC stating that such academic accommodations are needed. All relevant documentation should be submitted within the first two weeks of classes or as soon as a disability is identified.

Reading Schedule

Tuesday: 7 January 2003 Introduction to the Class and Biomedical Ethics

Moral Status

Thursday: 9 January 2003 *MS*: Chapter 1 Pages 3-23
Tuesday: 14 January 2003 *MS*: Chapter 2 Pages 24-49
Thursday: 16 January 2003 *MS*: Chapter 3 Pages 50-89
Tuesday: 21 January 2003 *MS*: Chapter 4 Pages 90-121
Thursday: 22 January 2003 *MS*: Chapter 5 Pages 122-147
Tuesday: 28 January 2003 *MS*: Chapter 6 Pages 148-178

Euthanasia

Thursday: 30 January 2003 *KLD*: Foot: "Killing and Letting Die" pages 280-290
Tuesday: 4 February 2003 *KLD*: Tooley: "An Irrelevant Consideration: *KLD*" pages 103-112
Thursday: 6 February 2003 *KLD*: Rachels: "Active and Passive Euthanasia" pages 112-119

Abortion

Tuesday: 11 February 2003 *KLD*: Foot: "The Problem of Abortion and the Doctrine of Double
Thursday: 13 February 2003 Effect" pages 266-279
Tuesday: 18 February 2003 *B*: Thomson: "A Defense of Abortion" pages 25-42
Thursday: 20 February 2003
Tuesday: 25 February 2003 *B*: Quinn: "Abortion: Identity and Loss" pages 62-89
Thursday: 27 February 2003
Tuesday: 4 March 2003 *KLD*: Murphy: "Is Killing the Innocent Absolutely Immoral?" p. 197
Thursday: 6 March 2003 *CR*: Jokic: "Why Potentiality Cannot Matter"
Tues & Thur: 11-13 March 2003 **Spring Break**

Cloning and Stem Cells

Tuesday: 18 March 2003 *CR*: Harmon: "Creation Ethics"
Thursday: 20 March 2003 *B*: McMahan: "Wrongful Life" p445-478
Tuesday: 25 March 2003
Thursday: 27 March 2003 *CR*: Leon Kass: "The Wisdom of Repugnance"
Tuesday: 1 April 2003 *CR*: Jane Maienschein: "The Language Really Matters"

Justice In Healthcare

Thursday: 3 April 2003 *B*: Daniels: "Health-Care Needs & Distributive Justice" p319-346
Tuesday: 8 April 2003 *B*: Parfit: "Equality or Priority?" p347-387
Thursday: 10 April 2003 *CR*: Buchanan, "The Right to a Decent Minimum of Health Care"
Tuesday: 15 April 2003 *CR*: Daniels: "Reply to Buchanan"

Medical Paternalism

Thursday: 17 April 2003 *B*: Beauchamp: "Principles & its Alleged Competitors" p. 479-493
Tuesday: 22 April 2003 *B*: Holm: "Not Just Autonomy" p. 494-506
Thursday: 24 April 2003 *B*: Gillion: "Telling the Truth, Confidentiality, Consent, and
Respect for Autonomy" p 507-528.
Tuesday: 29 April 2003 **Final Paper due in my office by noon.**

** The above schedule and procedures for this course are subject to change in the event of extenuating circumstances. **