**Phil 249: Bioethics**

Instructor: David Sorensen

Email: dss170@scarletmail.rutgers.edu
Virtual office hours: Tuesdays 11-12am (use email above), On campus, by appointment

Meeting place: Online







This course will be an introduction to the sub-branch of applied ethics known as bioethics. Bioethics deals with moral questions raised by advances in the biological and medical sciences, especially when it comes to issues surrounding the creation and termination of human life. Throughout the course, we will read and discuss a wide range of essays written by empirically informed philosophers and philosophically minded scientists. Specifically, we will deal with the following topics: natalism, abortion, euthanasia, genetic engineering, neuroethics, resource allocation, and pandemic ethics.

Here are just some of the questions that we will raise and try to answer:

* Is there a moral obligation to have children?
* Are fetuses persons? Is it morally permissible to have an abortion?
* When (if ever) is it morally okay to help someone die?
* Do all humans have a right to life?
* To what extent should we genetically modify humans?
* Are societal ills such as drug addiction and poverty causally determined by a person’s environment and brain? If so, what should be done and who (if anyone) should be blamed?
* Should alcoholics compete equally for liver transplantation?
* Under what circumstances are non-consensual medical interventions justified?

**Course Requirements**

**1.** Course readings:

**(a)** Textbook:

1) Bioethics: An anthology 3rd Edition | Helga Kuhse, Udo Schuklenk, and Peter Singer ISBN: 9781118941508

**(b)** Supplementary readings available on Canvas (go to “pages” and then “readings and homework”, or visit the “Files” section)

 **1)** You are expected to read the assigned articles and chapters **before** the class session the readings are scheduled for. However, I recommend doing the readings both before and after the class session, as the material may at times be difficult, or unclear the first time reading it. After lecture and in-class discussions, the material should be much easier to understand. The tests will assume that you have understood the readings. If you do not understand them, please send me an email or schedule an appointment with me during office hours.

**(c)** Powerpoints will be made available on Canvas (typically) the day before class. I recommend skimming the slides before class and carefully reviewing them before exams.

**2.** Course evaluation:

 **(a)** Exams: There will be one midterm comprised of multiple choice, true or false, short answer, and essay questions.

 **(b)** Weekly modules Canvas quizzes (based on lecture and readings), reading questions, short writing assignments, discussion posts

 **(c)** Writing: There will be two short essays (4 pages double-spaced) and one (6-8 page double spaced) paper due at the end of the semester. The paper will be an argumentative essay where you will defend and/or criticize a specific thesis that pertains to bioethics.

**Grade breakdown:**
Weekly modules: 30%
Blog posts (Two posts, 4 pgs. double-spaced): 20%
Argumentative Essay: 20%

Exams (Midterm and Final): 30%

**Expectations of students:**

Students are expected to carefully read the syllabus, regularly log into Canvas, carefully complete the readings, take notes, and complete all course assignments. Students should also regularly check your email (every day). If any problems arise, you should contact me ASAP.

**Unexplained absences and late work:**

If you are unable to make it to the midterm or final exam, you need to let me know in advance.

For example, if you do not show up for the midterm, and then email me two weeks later asking to make it up, I will probably not allow you to make it up. Similarly, a failure to submit the final paper on time, without contacting me, will likely result in an automatic “F” for that assignment.

**Detailed schedule of topics/readings (tentative)**

**C=**Reading uploaded to Canvas
All other readings will be from the textbook

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| Date | **Topics** | **Readings(s)** |
| Week 1 | Normative ethical theoriesMoral reasoning 101 |  |
|  | The ethics of procreation | Having children is not life affirming (C)*David Benatar* Is there a moral obligation to have children? (C) *Saul Smilansky* Quality of Life Assessments, Cognitive Reliability, and Procreative Responsibility (C) *Jason Marsh*<https://www.theatlantic.com/politics/archive/2017/12/pro-natalism/547493/> (C) |
| Week 2 | Abortion and Infanticide | **2** Abortion and Infanticide 23 *Michael Tooley***1** Abortion and Health Care Ethics 15*John Finnis***3** A Defense of Abortion 38*Judith Jarvis Thomson***4** Why Abortion Is Immoral 49*Don Marquis***5** Infanticide *Jeff McMahan*  |
|  | Scientific articles | Fetal awareness (C) Fetal pain: a systematic multidisciplinary review of the evidence (C) https://www.guttmacher.org/united-states/abortion |
| Week 3 |  | **23** The Morality of Killing: A Traditional View 243*Germain Grisez and Joseph M. Boyle, Jr.***24** Active and Passive Euthanasia 248*James Rachels*Severely Disabled Newborns 271**28** When Care Cannot Cure: Medical Problems in Seriously Ill Babies 273*Neil Campbell***34** Is the Sanctity of Life Ethic Terminally Ill? 321*Peter Singer***40** Trends in End of Life Practices Before and After the Enactment of the Euthanasia Law in the Netherlands from 1990 to 2010: A Repeated Cross Sectional Survey 366**41** Euthanasia in the Netherlands: What Lessons for Elsewhere? 377*Bernard Lo* |
| Week 4 | Genetic manipulation | Introduction 175**17** Questions about Some Uses of Genetic Engineering 177*Jonathan Glover***18** The Moral Significance of the Therapy–Enhancement Distinction in Human Genetics 189*David B. Resnik***19** Should We Undertake Genetic Research on Intelligence? 199*Ainsley Newson and Robert Williamson***20** In Defense of Posthuman Dignity 208*Nick Bostrom* |
|  | Recent articles | <https://www.wsj.com/articles/chinese-scientist-who-gene-edited-babies-is-sent-to-prison-11577703233> |
| Week 5 | Neuroethics | Introduction 731**84** Neuroethics: An Agenda for Neuroscience and Society 733*Jonathan D. Moreno***85** How Electrical Brain Stimulation Can Change the Way We Think 741*Sally Adee***86** Neuroethics: Ethics and the Sciences of the Mind 744*Neil Levy***88** Towards Responsible Use of Cognitive‐Enhancing Drugs by the Healthy 753*Henry Greely, Barbara Sahakian, John Harris, Ronald C. Kessler, Michael Gazzaniga,**Philip Campbell, and Martha J. Farah*Socioeconomic status andthe brain: prospects forneuroscience-informed policyC) *Martha J. Farah*WHO IS TO BLAME FOR ADDICTION?*Nathan Ahlgrim* |
| Week 6 | Resource Allocation and the Corona Virus | **43** Should Alcoholics Compete Equally for Liver Transplantation? 390*Alvin H. Moss and Mark Siegler***44** The Value of Life 397*John Harris***45** Bubbles under the Wallpaper: Healthcare Rationing and Discrimination 406*Nick Beckstead and Toby Ord*Pandemic Ethics: Infectious Pathogen Control Measures and Moral Philosophy (C)*Jonathan Pugh and Tom Douglas* |
| Final exam |  |  |

**Rutgers Academic Integrity Policy**: *Principles of academic integrity require that every Rutgers University student:*

* *properly acknowledge and cite all use of the ideas, results, or words of others*
* *properly acknowledge all contributors to a given piece of work*
* *make sure that all work submitted as his or her own in a course or other academic activity is produced without the aid of unsanctioned materials or unsanctioned collaboration*
* *obtain all data or results by ethical means and report them accurately without suppressing any results inconsistent with his or her interpretation or conclusions*
* *treat all other students in an ethical manner, respecting their integrity and right to pursue their educational goals without interference. This requires that a student neither facilitate academic dishonesty by others nor obstruct their academic progress*
* *uphold the canons of the ethical or professional code of the profession for which he or she is preparing.*

*Adherence to these principles is necessary in order to insure that:*

* *everyone is given proper credit for his or her ideas, words, results, and other scholarly accomplishments*
* *all student work is fairly evaluated and no student has an inappropriate advantage over others*
* *the academic and ethical development of all students is fostered*
* *the reputation of the University for integrity in its teaching, research, and scholarship is maintained and enhanced.*

*Failure to uphold these principles of academic integrity threatens both the reputation of the University and the value of the degrees awarded to its students. Every member of the University community therefore bears a responsibility for ensuring that the highest standards of academic integrity are upheld.*

**Disability services:** The Office of Disability Services works with students with a documented disability to determine the eligibility of reasonable accommodations, facilitates and coordinates those accommodations when applicable, and lastly engages with the Rutgers community at large to provide and connect students to appropriate resources (e-mail: https://ods.rutgers.edu/, phone: (848) 445-6800). Students with disabilities requesting accommodations must follow the procedures outlined at https://ods.rutgers.edu/students/applying-for-services. Please give your letter of accommodation to me as soon as possible, and we will coordinate the accommodations privately.