

Phil-97A Biomedical Ethics: The Humanity of the Ill

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CA OH Location: TBA

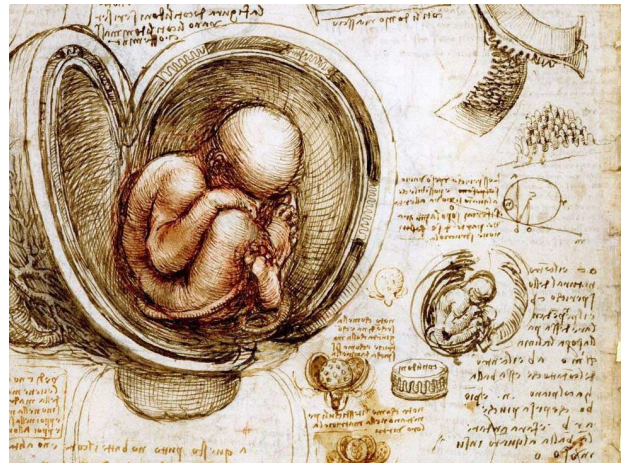
Course Dates: Jan. 10 – April 19, 2024

Course Time: M/W/TH 12:20 – 1:10

Course Location: Lown 002

Course Description

This course introduces and wrestles with some of the central themes, concepts and issues in biomedical ethics. Ethics is the study of “normativity” or “should,” and biomedical ethics takes on the challenge of thinking through the normative aspects of the fact that we are all biological beings who frequently require medical intervention to help us live and flourish. In a modern context, this medical intervention is highly structured by institution, economic, and legal background conditions, so, this class will also take on questions concerning the medical complex, social norms and assumptions around treatment, and the normative language of “cure.”



In this course, students will consider some of the ethical dilemmas that scientists, researchers, healthcare practitioners, policymakers, and individuals will face in the wake of the tremendous scientific and technological changes that have taken place in the medical world over the last few centuries. How ought we balance patient autonomy with the specialized knowledge of medical professionals? Should people be able to sell their organs or reproductive services? Should parents be allowed to choose their child’s genetic makeup? What is the relationship between social norms and personal healthcare? How should we think about disability? What are the consequences of the medicalization of gender? Along the way, we will read both works of academic bioethics as well as popular articles on salient contemporary issues.

The class will be divided into two units. The first will explore basic ethical principles in a medical context. After briefly introducing the three most dominant ethical theories in Western Bioethics (virtue ethics, utilitarianism, and deontology), we will discuss a series of cases that challenge many of our ethical assumptions around healthcare. We will also focus on the ethical guidelines that healthcare workers might employ in the difficult decisions that they make, sometimes daily, by digging more deeply into the ethics of care and “principlism.”

Our second unit will investigate a series of important case studies and broach the question of “Biopolitics,” or the political issues that arise at the intersection of existing power structures and bodily autonomy. We will focus on larger scale issues in the medical industry, including disability, mental health, prescription regulation, gender, and the role of medical technologies. This unit will involve a slower, more careful set of targeted readings from thinkers like Eli Clare, Jonathan Sterne, and Paul Preciado.

Course Objectives

You will develop your abilities to:

- craft responsible, considered, and well-structured arguments
- express yourself orally and converse thoughtfully about complex ideas.
- gain competence in the landscape of academic biomedical ethics, broadly construed.
- grow as a thinker, learner, reader, and communicator.

Instructional Format, Course Pedagogy, and Approach to Learning

This course will employ a mixed format. Though there will be regular interactive lectures, there will also be regular class discussions. I firmly believe that learning about philosophy involves both a change in the way we think and a strong conversational component. We learn from each other, not in isolation.

Books and Other Course Materials

All course materials will be available through the class Perusall site. You should refer to the reading schedule, which will be updated periodically, for weekly readings and assignments.

If you prefer physical copies, I recommend the following:

Beauchamp, Tom L., and James F. Childress. *Principles of Biomedical Ethics*. 8th ed. New York: Oxford University Press, 2019. ISBN-13: 978-0-19-064087-3.

Clare, Eli. *Brilliant Imperfection*. Duke University Press, 2017. ISBN-13: 978-0822362876

Preciado, Paul. *Testo Junkie*. New York: Feminist Press, 2013. ISBN-13: 978-1558618374

Sandel, Michael. *The Case Against Perfection*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2009. ISBN-13 978-0674036383

Additional Resources: Finding reliable information about philosophy online can be tricky. I highly recommend the following sites:

The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy: <https://plato.stanford.edu/>

The Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy: <https://www.iep.utm.edu/>

Assignments and Grading Criteria

In order to make the most out of Intro Ethics for you and your classmates, you will do a good deal of reading and writing, and you will engage in a variety of class activities. Specific course requirements are to:

- Regularly attend class and section, and participate in classroom discussions
- Complete regular reading check-ins and “rapid response” prompts (in class on an ad-hoc basis)
- Complete semi-weekly reflection assignments (roughly eight of these. You are allowed to skip one)
- Complete the midterm and final assignments

Grading and Evaluation

Your final grade will be calculated as follows:

Attendance & Participation (Section & Lecture)	15%
Reading Check-ins/Rapid-Response	15%
Regular Reflection Assignments	20%
Midterm	25%
Final	25%

Schedule of Topics

Please note that this schedule is liable to change depending on student interest and time constraints.

Unit 1: Introduction to Biomedical Theory

- Week 0: What is Medicine? What is Biomedical Ethics?
- Week 1: Moral Reasoning in Biomedical Ethics
- Week 2: Virtue Ethics & Medicine
- Week 3: Utility & the Greater Good
- Week 4: The Humanity of the Ill—Moral Duty & Healthcare
- Week 5: Principlism
- Week 6: February Break
- Week 7: Care Ethics

Unit 2: Biopolitics & Case Studies in Biomedical Ethics

- Week 8: Class, Feminism, & Surrogacy
- Week 9: Genetic Engineering
- Week 10: Life Extension & Euthanasia
- Week 11: Disability, Race, & Eugenics (*Brilliant Imperfection, Part 1*)
- Week 12: Mental Health, Diagnosis, and the DSM (*Brilliant Imperfection, Part 2*)
- Week 13: The Medicalization of Gender (*Testo Junkie, Part 1*)
- Week 14: Prescription Drugs (*Testo Junkie, Part 2*)

Participation and Attendance

Since this course involves a regular discussion component, your attendance and active participation are essential both to your own learning and to your classmates’ learning. Whenever possible, absences should be discussed with me or your CA prior to class time and makeup work may be assigned. That said, you are allowed three absences, no questions asked. Unexcused absences beyond three will incur a 10% penalty on your participation grade.

In order to participate appropriately, you will be expected to prepare for class by reading all of the assigned texts and thinking critically about their content. There should never be a situation where don't have at least something important to say about a text in class.

Participation means regular verbal engagement with the course material, in lecture, section, or in office hours. For most of you, this will mean paying attention in class and contributing to the conversation on a semi-regular basis. I know that this can be a hurdle for some students, but it is important that you try to develop public speaking skills as well as you are able. You may supplement class participation with regular office visits. Bare attendance will earn you a D in this category. Attendance and participation are worth 15% of your grade.

Office Hours

Please refer to the top of this syllabus for my office hours and location. Your CA will also be available for office hours. Also note that office hour participation counts towards your general participation grade and can be a great way to supplement your participation if you find speaking in class challenging.

Assignments and Exercises

Apart from reading check-ins/rapid responses, assignments will be submitted and returned through Latte. Unless otherwise noted, the assumed submission time is at the BEGINNING of the class period on the day that the assignment is due. There will roughly eight reflection assignments over the course of the semester, of which you will be able to skip one. Most assignments (apart from the exams) will be graded on a four-point scale (check, check plus, check minus, zero).

Reading check-ins and rapid responses will take place DURING CLASS and will be completed either on Perusall or on paper handed into your CA. These are graded on "good faith completion," and are either pass fail.

Late and Missed Assignments

Unless you make other arrangements with me in advance, graded assignments will be penalized by one-third of a letter grade for each day they are late. Please note too that we will regularly work with our exercises and drafts in class. If you are habitually late with your assignments, you will be unable to participate fully in the class.

Technology Policy

Computers, tablets, and similar devices will be generally permitted in this class. There will be a "zero tolerance" policy for anyone who abuses this privilege. If you are caught misusing technology in this class (checking social media, for example), you will no longer be able to use your device at all in the classroom. For your own sake and for the sake of your classmates, please use your technology responsibly.

Academic Integrity

In this class, we will discuss conventions for using and citing sources in academic papers. Cases of plagiarism will be handled in accordance with the disciplinary procedures described in the university's Academic Conduct Code. All students are subject to the code, which can be read online:

<https://www.brandeis.edu/student-rights-community-standards/academic-integrity/index.html>

Chosen Name and Gender Pronouns

This course aims to be an inclusive learning community that supports students of all gender expressions and identities. While class rosters are provided to instructors with students' legal names, please let me know if you would like to be addressed by a different name than the one listed on the university roster. You are also invited to tell me and your TF early in the semester which set of pronouns (she/her/hers, he/him/his, they/them/theirs, etc.) you feel best fits your identity. My pronouns are he/him/his. If you have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Student Accessibility Support

I assume that all of us learn in different ways. If there are circumstances that may affect your performance in this class, please talk to me as soon as possible so that we can work together to develop strategies for accommodations that will satisfy both your learning needs and the requirements of the course. Whether or not you have a documented accessibility need, Brandeis provides many support services that are available to all students. Here is their website: <https://www.brandeis.edu/academic-services/accessibility/index.html>

The Accessibility Support Office is responsible for assisting all students. If you have a disability that changes your learning condition your learning (whether visible or invisible, physical, emotional, or mental), you are encouraged to register with this office. The Accessibility Support Office will work with you to determine appropriate accommodations for your courses, such as additional time on tests, staggered homework assignments, or note-taking assistance. This office will give you a letter outlining the accommodations you need that you can share with your teachers; specific information about your disability will remain private. If you have any questions about accommodation, or what constitutes a disability, I invite you to speak with me or to the Accessibility Support Office.

Student Mental and Emotional Health

I recognize that being a college student can be an extraordinarily difficult and transformational experience, even in the best of times. Unfortunately, even before the COVID crisis, many students around the world were suffering from increased mental and emotional stresses, a pronounced sense of isolation and loneliness, and increased levels of depression, anxiety, and other serious mental health concerns. This situation has only been made worse in the last several years by the pandemic.

While there are limits on what I can do to help, I want aid in your learning in any way possible. Please reach out to me if you are struggling with course material, workload, or other internal or external pressures that are making it difficult to participate fully in this course. Communication is key—so long as you stay in touch with me, we can almost always work something out to help you thrive in this course and beyond.

You don't need to wait for a crisis to seek counseling. If you would like someone to talk to, please reach out to Brandeis Counseling Center here: <https://www.brandeis.edu/counseling/> Therapy can be helpful for just about everyone! If you do find yourself or one of your peers in crisis, their emergency consultation number is 781-736-3730 and their crisis number is 781-736-3333.

Course Schedule: Phil-97A Biomedical Ethics

This schedule is intended as a blueprint or roadmap and is subject to change based on the needs of the class. Any changes will be announced in class and will be posted on Perusall.

Date	Topic & Questions	Readings	Assignments
Unit 1: Introduction to Biomedical Theory			
<p>What is medicine? What are our aims in trying to heal? How should we think about the “normativity” of the medical context. In this unit we will explore basic ethical principles in a medical context. After briefly introducing the three most dominant ethical theories in Western Bioethics (virtue ethics, utilitarianism, and deontology), we will discuss a series of cases that challenge many of our ethical assumptions around healthcare.</p>			
What is Medicine? What is Biomedical Ethics?			
Week 0 (Jan 8)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - What is Biomedical Ethics? Why are we here? - Introduce course & define course goals. - Courseware (Perusall) 	<p>Required</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -The Syllabus & Course Handbook -Fassio, How to Read Philosophy - DeVries (2011), “The Uses & Abuses of Moral Theory in Bioethics <p>Recommended:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - “Getting to Know You” Exercise (Due Jan 15)
Week 1 (Jan 15) [No Class Mon. or Wed*]	-	<p>Required:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - DeVries (2011), “The Uses & Abuses of Moral Theory in Bioethics -Beauchamp & Childress (2019), “Moral Norms” <p>Recommended:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Rapid Response (in class)
Virtue Ethics in Medicine			
Week 2 (Jan 22)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Virtue Ethics & Medicine - Case Study: Sex Selection 	<p>Required:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Beauchamp & Childress (2019), “Moral Theory” - Beauchamp & Childress (2019), “Virtue Theory” - Gardiner (2003), “A Virtue Ethics Approach to Moral Dilemmas in Medicine” - Thomas, et al (2014), “Sex Selection for Non-Medical Reasons” <p>Recommended:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Aristotle, <i>Nicomachean Ethics</i>, Books I & II 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Reflection Exercise 1 (Due Jan. 28)
Utility & the Public Good			
Week 3 (Jan. 29)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Utilitarianism - Case Study: Covid 19 and Public Health 	<p>Required:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Beauchamp & Childress (2019), “Utilitarian Theory” - McGuire et al, “Ethical Challenges 	

		Arising from the COVID-19 Pandemic.” - Recommended: - Mill, <i>Utilitarianism</i>	
The Humanity of the Ill: Moral Duty & Healthcare			
Week 4 (Feb. 5)	- Duty Based Ethics (Deontology) - Case Study: Organ Sales	Required: - Beauchamp & Childress (2019), “Kantian Theory.” - Khan, “Clinicians Duty to Care” - Satz (2008), <i>The Moral Limits of Markets: The Case of Human Kidneys</i> Recommended: - Kant, <i>Groundwork for the Metaphysics of Morals</i>	- Reflection Exercise 2 (Due Feb. 11)
Principlism			
Week 5 (Feb 12)	- Principlism: Beneficence, Nonmaleficence, Autonomy - Case Study: Cultural Differences	Required: - Beauchamp & Childress (2019), “The Concept of Autonomy” - Beauchamp & Childress (2019), “The Concept of Nonmaleficence” - Beauchamp & Childress (2019), “The Concept of Beneficence” - Beauchamp & Childress (2019), “The Concept of Justice” Recommended: - <i>The Farewell</i> (film)	-
Week 6 (Feb 19) [No Class— February Break]	-	Recommended: - Catch up/get ahead on readings!!	
Care Ethics			
Week 7 (Feb 26)	- Care Ethics	Required: - Maio (2017), “Fundamentals of an Ethics of Care” - TBD	- Reflection Exercise 3 (Due March 3)
Unit 2: Biopolitics, Critical Perspectives, & Case Studies in Biomedical Ethics			
<p>Our second unit will investigate a series of important case studies and broach the question of “Biopolitics,” or the political issues that arise at the intersection of existing power structures and bodily autonomy. We will focus on larger scale issues in the medical industry, including disability, mental health, prescription regulation, gender, and the role of medical technologies. This unit will involve a slower, more careful set of targeted readings from thinkers like Eli Clare, Jonathan Sterne, and Paul Preciado</p>			
Surrogacy			
Week 8 (March 4)	- Class, Feminism, & Surrogacy	Required: - Turner, “Bioethics, Social Class, & the Social Imagination” - Sherwin, “Feminism & Bioethics” - Miller, “Outsourcing Childbirth” - Purdy, “Surrogate Mothering:	

		Exploitation or Empowerment” - Sachde 92018), Commercial Surrogacy in India Recommended: - Mello-Martin (2023), “Feminism & the Ethics of Reproductive Tech” - Anderson, “Is Women’s Labor a Commodity”	
Genetic Engineering			
Week 9 (March 11)	- The Ethics of Genetic Engineering	Required: - Sandel (2009), <i>The Case Against Perfection</i> , Ch TBD - Savulescu (2001), “Procreative Beneficence” - Parens (1993), “Disability Rights Critique of Prenatal Genetic Testing” - Harris (1993), Is Gene Therapy a Form of Eugenics - <i>Gattaca</i> , film Recommended:	- Midterm (Wed. March 13)
Life Extension & Euthanasia			
Week 10 (March 18)	- Is the ultimate goal of medicine to extend life indefinitely? How should we think about euthanasia?	Required: - Brock, “Voluntary Active Euthanasia” - Callahan, “When Self Determination Runs Amok” - O’Gara (2015), Healthy 24-year-old Granted the Right to Die - “Right to Die” (film from Vice) - Bacher (2021), Crisper and the Chance to Live Forever - Grinstein (2021), New Anti-Aging CRISPR Therapy Recommended:	- Reflection Exercise 4 (Due March 24)
Disability, Race, & Eugenics			
Week 11 (March 25)	- Ableism, Disability, and the Medical Industrial Complex	Required: - Clare (2017), <i>Brilliant Imperfection</i> , Intro, Ch. 1 – 4 - Russell (2016), Questions of Race in Bioethics Recommended: -	
Week 12 (April 1)	- Mental Health, diagnosis, and the DSM	Required: - Clare, <i>Brilliant Imperfection</i> , Ch. 5 - 9 Recommended: -	
The Medicalization of Gender: Queerness, Prescription Drugs, and Birth Control			
Week 13 (April 8)	- The Pharmacopornographic and the medicalization of gender	Required: - Preciado (2013), <i>Testo Junkie</i> (part 1) Recommended: -	
Week 14	Prescription Drugs	Required:	- Reflection Exercise 5 (Due

(April 15) -- Last Week of Classes		- Preciado (2013), <i>Testo Junkie</i> (part 2) - Galarneau, "Health Care as a Community Good" Recommended: -	April 19)
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