

PHIL 2408 – Bioethics

Instructor: Dr. Matt McLennan

Office Hours: Wednesday 3:00pm – 5:00pm, 329B Paterson Hall

Contact: Matthew.McLennan@carleton.ca

Class Time: Mondays and Wednesdays, 6:00pm – 9:00pm

Class Location: 4332 MacKenzie

Teaching Assistants: TBA

Required Text: Kuhse and Singer (eds.), *Bioethics: An Anthology*, second edition. The book is available at the university book store.

Course description:

Bioethics is a sub-discipline of moral philosophy which attempts to answer tough questions arising in and around health care and the applied life sciences. Bioethics concerns the moral dimensions of such controversial issues as abortion, euthanasia, genetic screening, cloning, medical resource allocation, patient autonomy / informed consent, animal experimentation, and the like.

The goals of this course are a) to familiarize you with a selection of major problems and problem areas in bioethics, and b) to help you to cultivate your ability to think critically and philosophically about bioethical issues.

No special knowledge of medicine or the life sciences is assumed at the outset, though the course assumes a basic familiarity with philosophy. The first day will introduce bioethics as a discipline and serve as a refresher on basic concepts and methods of philosophy.

The course is reading intensive. Each lecture is inspired by a number of articles that are listed for you below. Reading everything on the list is highly recommended, but the professor recognizes the practical limitations of condensed courses such as ours. Test questions etc. will therefore evaluate knowledge of main ideas and arguments, not nitpicking textual knowledge.

Evaluation: Students will be evaluated based on one midterm test, one essay assignment, and a final take-home exam.

The marks break down as follows:

- Test (May 22, first half of class): 25%
- Essay assignment (Due June 10): 35%
- Take-home exam: (Due June 26): 40%

Test: You will have 90 minutes to answer FIVE OUT OF SEVEN long answer questions, approximately two paragraphs per answer. You will be tested on your knowledge of concepts and arguments from days 1 – 4 of the course.

Essay: Choose ONE of the following topics and write an 8 – 10 page (1.5 spaced) philosophical essay. Any citation style is fine (e.g. Chicago, APA ...). You will not be penalized for *what* you argue; you can only lose marks for *how* you argue it. Be sure to support your conclusions with accurate factual claims and compelling arguments.

- a) Parents of a child with a chronic blood disease decide to have a second child, in the hopes that she will be a matched cord blood donor. Essentially, they are having a second child in the hopes of saving the first. *Explain the moral issues raised by their decision, and defend whether or not, in your view, their decision is ethical.*
- b) Prenatal screening has a variety of applications. One of these is sex selection; couples hoping to have a boy, for example, are able to identify female fetuses, subsequently terminate them, and try again for a boy. It is claimed that certain cultures are, on balance, more likely to screen for purposes of sex selection (usually favouring boys). *Should cultural profiling be done in the screening room? That is, should doctors and screening technicians be allowed to withhold the sex of the foetus if the couple comes from a certain cultural background? Defend your view.*
- c) Pre-Implantation Genetic Diagnosis (PGD) may be used for *negative* selection, e.g. to screen out embryos with deleterious traits such as the gene for Huntington's chorea. It may also be used for *positive* selection, e.g. to choose embryos with certain traits desirable to the parents. *Should positive use of PGD be allowed, and if so, what if any are the moral limits to what kind of traits can be selected?*
- d) Given the chronic shortage of human organs available for transplant, *what in your view is the best procurement scheme? Defend your view with reference to the moral issues raised by various schemes.*

Take-home exam: On Monday, June 17 I will post a selection of long-answer situational judgment questions on cuLearn. All questions will pertain to days 9 – 13 of the course. You will choose FOUR OUT OF SIX questions and write approximately two pages per question (1.5 spaced), justifying your responses with concepts and arguments discussed in the course. Drop off your answers to the philosophy administrator or the philosophy drop box, floor 3A Paterson Hall, no later than 4pm on Wednesday June 26.

Course Schedule: The following is a LOOSE lecture / reading schedule. We will adapt as needed. Slight changes may arise, and will be announced with reasonable advance notice in class and on the course web page. *Readings are listed by the number in which they appear in the course textbook.* As needed, additional readings may be posted on the course web page.

Day 1: Introduction to the course

Part 1: What is bioethics?

- Readings: Introduction (p.1-7)

Part 2: Life and death, philosophically considered

- Readings: 25, 35, 36

Day 2: New life and the concept of personhood

Part 1: Abortion and mother/fetus conflict

- Readings: 1 – 5

Part 2: Is infanticide ever defensible?

- Readings: 31 – 34

Day 3: Nonhuman persons? Reconsidering animal testing

Part 1: Classic arguments for animal welfare

- Readings: 62 – 64
- Film clip: *Koko: a Talking Gorilla*

Part 2: The Frey / Paton debate on animal vivisection

- Reading: 65

Day 4: Euthanasia:

Part 1: Killing and letting die: acts and omissions

- Readings: 28 – 30

Part 2: Choosing to die: Voluntary euthanasia and medically assisted suicide

- Readings: 39 – 42

Day 5: Human stem cell research and therapies

Part 1: **TEST**

Part 2: Human life as an instrumental value?

- Readings: 15, 16, 60, 61

Day 6: Newer issues surrounding reproductive choice

Part 1: Prenatal screening and sex selection

- Readings: 11 – 14

Part 2: Human cloning

- Reading: 17

Day 7: Organ procurement

Part 1: Basic issues surrounding organ procurement

- Readings: 50 – 52

Part 2: A thought experiment: John Harris's "survival lottery"

- Reading: 53

Day 8: Informed consent and patient autonomy

Part 1: The shift to consent-based healthcare

- Readings: 71, 73 – 75

Part 2: Apotemnophilia: a limit case?

- Reading: 72

ESSAY DUE

Day 9: Autonomy beyond reason? The problem of senile dementia

Part 1: Advance directives

- Readings: 37 and 38

Part 2: Alzheimer's disease from a patient's perspective

- Film screening: *You're Looking at me like I Live Here and I Don't*

Day 10: Micro-allocation and triage: Who gets priority?

Part 1: Who gets care (and on what basis)?

- Readings: 43 – 45

Part 2: Geriatric micro-allocation and the question of ageism

- Readings: 46 and 47

Day 11: Ethics of clinical trials involving human subjects

Part 1: Unethical trials and ethical standards

- Readings: 54 – 57

Part 2: Case study: A double standard for the global South?

- Readings: 58 and 59

Day 12: Topics in global health and humanitarian aid

Part 1: Case study: MSF and the Great Lakes refugee crisis

- Readings: TBA, cuLearn

Part 2: Case study: Infibulation of girls: Human rights, or harm reduction?

- Readings: TBA, cuLearn

EXAM QUESTIONS POSTED

Department of Philosophy and Carleton University Policies (Summer 2013)

Assignments:

Unless specifically told otherwise by their instructors, students:

- must not use a plastic or cardboard cover or paper clips
- must staple the paper (there is a stapler on the essay box)
- must include the following in the lower right corner of the cover sheet:
 - student name
 - student number
 - course number and section
 - instructor's name
- The Philosophy Department does not accept assignments by FAX. You may send them by courier, if necessary.
- No assignments will be accepted after the last day for handing in term work – see dates in next column.
- Assignments handed in through the essay box (just inside the glass doors, Paterson Hall, Floor 3A) must be dropped into the box by **4:15** on a regular business day in order to be date-stamped with that day's date. Assignments handed in after 4:15 or on a non-business day will be stamped as having been handed in on the next business day.
- Students are required to keep copies of their assignments. If your paper is lost at any point, you will be considered not to have submitted it if you cannot produce a copy immediately on request.

Deferrals for Term Work:

If you miss a final examination and/or fail to submit a final assignment by the due date because of circumstances beyond your control, you may apply for a deferral of examination/assignment. For deferred examinations, you must apply within 5 working days after the scheduled date of your exam. To apply for deferral of a final assignment, you must apply within 5 working days of the last scheduled day of classes. Visit the Registrar's Office for more information.

Plagiarism:

It is the responsibility of each student to understand the meaning of 'plagiarism' as defined in the Undergraduate or Graduate Calendars, and to avoid both committing plagiarism and aiding or abetting plagiarism by other students. (Undergraduate Calendar Academic Regulations, section 14.3, or <http://www4.carleton.ca/calendars//ugrad/current/regulations/acadre/gsuniv14.html#14.3>)

Academic Accommodation for Students with Disabilities:

The Paul Menton Centre for Students with Disabilities (PMC) provides services to students with Learning Disabilities (LD), psychiatric/mental health disabilities, Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD), chronic medical conditions, and impairments in mobility, hearing, and vision. If you have a disability requiring academic accommodations in this course, please contact PMC at 613-520-6608 or pmc@carleton.ca for a formal evaluation. If you are already registered with the PMC, contact your PMC coordinator to send me your Letter of Accommodation at the beginning of the term, and no later than two weeks before the first in-class scheduled test or exam requiring accommodation (if applicable). After requesting accommodation from PMC, meet with me to ensure accommodation arrangements are made. Please consult the PMC website for the deadline to request accommodations for the formally-scheduled exam (if applicable).

You can visit the Equity Services website to view the policies and to obtain more detailed information on academic accommodation at <http://carleton.ca/equity/accommodation>.

Important Dates:

May 6	Classes start.
May 13	Last day for registration and course changes for early summer courses.
May 17	Last day for registration and course changes for full summer courses.
May 20	Statutory holiday, university closed.
May 31	Last day for a full fee adjustment when withdrawing from early summer courses.
June 7	Last day to withdraw from full summer courses with a full fee adjustment.
June 18	Last day for early summer classes. Last day for handing in term work and the last day that can be specified by a course instructor as a due date for term work for courses that end on this day.
June 18	Last day for academic withdrawal from early summer courses.
June 21-26	Final examinations.
July 1	Statutory holiday, university closed.
July 3	Late summer courses begin and full summer courses resume.
July 9	Last day for registration and course changes for late summer courses.
July 19	Last day for entire fee adjustment when withdrawing from late summer courses.
Aug. 5	Statutory holiday, university closed
Aug. 15	Classes follow a Monday schedule. Last day for late and full summer term classes. Last day for handing in term work and the last day that can be specified by a course instructor as a due date for term work for courses that end on this day.
Aug. 15	Last day for academic withdrawal from late summer and full summer courses.
Aug. 17-22	Final examinations.

Addresses:

Department of Philosophy:	3A35 Paterson Hall www.carleton.ca/philosophy 520-2110
Registrar's Office:	300 Tory www.carleton.ca/registrar 520-3500
Student Academic Success Centre:	302 Tory www.carleton.ca/sasc 520-7850
Paul Menton Centre:	500 University Centre www.carleton.ca/pmc 520-6608
Writing Tutorial Service:	4 th Floor, Library www.carleton.ca/wts 520-6632
MacOdrum Library	http://www.library.carleton.ca/ 520-2735