

Bioethics – syllabus

Philosophy/Gerontology 2256, Fall 2009. Tuesdays and Thursdays 11.00-12.15, Clark 206

Instructor: Robert Northcott

Room 561, Lucas Building

Email: northcottr@umsl.edu (this is the most reliable way to get hold of me quickly)

Office hour: Tuesdays 2-3, or by appointment. Or just come up to me after class.

Textbook: Ronald Munson, *Intervention and Reflection: Basic Issues in Medical Ethics* (Thomson Wadsworth, 8th edition 2008)

Grading

Grading will be incremental (plus/minus). It will be based on three elements:

1) *Take-home quizzes – 35% of total.* These will appear on My Gateway frequently, roughly one quiz for each topic. The questions will be multiple-choice or true/false. You'll need to complete your answers online. I'll give further details.

2) *Midterm exam – 25% of total.* This will be in class, and feature short essay questions on the first half of the course. I'll give exact details nearer the time.

3) *Final exam – 40% of total.* This will be in class, and feature short essay questions on the second half of the course. I'll give exact details nearer the time.

Course outline

Almost all readings are from the textbook. The exceptions are noted explicitly below, and will be available on My Gateway. We will cover a number of topics. For each topic, ideally you should read all the early sections of the relevant chapter (i.e. the Briefing Sessions, Case Presentations, Social Contexts), as well as the specific articles mentioned below. N.B. all details are subject to change.

Fear of death (these readings are optional, and are on My Gateway)

Thu 27 Aug – Epicurus 'Letter to Menoeceus', Lucretius 'De Rerum Natura', Nagel 'Death'

Tue 1 Sep – Rosenbaum 'How to be dead and not care: a defense of Epicurus'

Part V, Foundations

Thu 3 Sep-Thu 10 Sep – pp739-790

Chp 1, Research Ethics

Tue 15 Sep – Hellman and Hellman 'Of Mice But Not Men', Passamani 'Clinical Trials'

Thu 17 Sep – Singer 'Animal Experimentation', Cohen 'The Case for the Use of Animals'

Chp 2, Autonomy

Tue 22 Sep – (Dax Cowart video)

Thu 24 Sep – Capron 'Punishing Mothers', Robertson & Schulman 'Pregnancy and Prenatal Harm'

Chp 5, Genetic Control

Tue 29 Sep – (The science)

Thu 1 Oct – (Genetic testing video)

Tue 6 Oct – President's Council 'Cloning and Stem Cells', Sandel 'The Moral Status of Human Embryos'

Thu 8 Oct – Savulescu 'Procreative Beneficence', Kass 'Implications of Prenatal Diagnosis'

(Tue 13 Oct – revision, no class)

Thu 15 Oct – midterm exam

Chp 6, Reproductive Control

Tue 20 Oct – Chp 6, pp365-83

Chp 4, Race in Medicine

Thu 22 Oct – Tuskegee syphilis study – Chp4, pp212-215

Tue 27 Oct – Social Context 'Race-based Medicine?', King 'The Dangers of Difference', Leroi

‘A Family Tree in Every Gene’

Thu 29 Oct – Diamond ‘Summary of *Guns, Germs and Steel*’ (from My Gateway)

Chp 7, Scarce Resources

Tue 3 Nov – Case Presentation ‘Selection Committee for Dialysis’, Cohen and Benjamin
‘Alcoholics and Liver Transplant’, Annas ‘The Prostitute, the Playboy, and the Poet’

Thu 5 Nov – Phadke and Anandh ‘Ethics of Paid Organ Donation’, Radcliffe-Richards et al
‘The Case for Allowing Kidney Sales’

Chp 9, Abortion

Tue 10 Nov – Thomson ‘A Defense of Abortion’

Thu 12 Nov – Noonan ‘An Almost Absolute Value in History’, Warren ‘On the Moral and Legal
Status of Abortion’

Tue 17 Nov – (Facts/statistics about abortion)

(Tue 24 Nov, Thu 26 Nov – Thanksgiving Break, no classes)

Chp 11, Euthanasia

Tue 1 Dec – (General about euthanasia)

Thu 3 Dec – Rachels ‘Active and Passive Euthanasia’, Nesbitt ‘Is Killing No Worse Than
Letting Die?’, Supreme Court of New Jersey ‘In the Matter of Karen Quinlan’

(Tue 8 Dec-Thu 10 Dec – revision week, no classes)

Exam week – final exam

Expectations

Make-up exams. Generally, you’ll need to give me a pretty good reason to miss any exam, or to miss the deadline for any of the take-home quizzes. *Warning: for the exams in particular, a ‘pretty good reason’ is likely to require both documentation and, wherever possible, advance notice.* The burden of proof here is on you. At the other extreme, just not showing up – without any prior communication why – is certainly *not* likely to make me view your case favorably afterwards.

Of course, unfortunate circumstances do arise occasionally. The golden rule in those cases is, if possible, to contact me about it in advance. It’s much easier sorting things out ahead of time.

Class Attendance. This is mandatory. I will circulate an attendance sheet each class. Over the course of the semester, each student is entitled to three ‘free’ absences. Any further absences on top of that will start counting against you. Attendance record will be used as a tie-breaker for grading in borderline cases. And serious lack of attendance will negatively impact your grade not just in borderline cases.

Occasionally, unfortunate circumstances may arise that cause a prolonged absence from class. Again, in such circumstances the golden rule is, if possible, to contact me about it in advance.

You are responsible for obtaining information from any missed classes. I do not lend out my own notes under any circumstances.

Academic Honesty. Official philosophy department statement:

‘In all cases of academic dishonesty, for example cheating, plagiarism, or sabotage, the instructor shall make an academic judgment about the student's grade on the work involved. Since this judgment is often a grade of zero, its assignment may result in a failing grade for the course. The complete campus policy on academic dishonesty may be found under “Student Conduct Code” in the Student Planner or at

http://www.umsl.edu/studentlife/dsa/student_planner/policies/conductcode.htm’

Examples of unacceptable conduct also include:

- getting someone else to do your take-home quizzes, or doing them *for* someone else
- plagiarizing (i.e. copying) someone else’s work in your exam essay answers
- getting someone else to sign in your name on the class attendance sheet, or doing that for someone else

The university treats all such cases very seriously. If you are caught, the sanctions are ultimately almost unlimited, including expulsion from the university.