

# Medical Ethics (Phil 164.3)

Tu. and Th., 11:00-12:15

SYLLABUS UPDATED MARCH 11

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Office Hours: Tu., 2:00-3:00 in Bartlett 358

## 1. COURSE DESCRIPTION

Recent medical developments that enable us to save, terminate, and design human lives in ways unheard of only a couple of decades ago are currently prompting a transition in our attitude to the sanctity of human life. This course provides an introduction to *bioethics*, i.e., the discipline concerned with thinking clearly about the confusions and divisions coming out of such transitions, not necessarily for the purpose of yielding universal answers, but in order to learn how to reason about pressing moral concerns that affect us all, often on a very personal level. The course starts out by looking at issues regarding abortion, euthanasia, and the sanctity of life, raising questions such as: What makes something a living being and is it ever morally permissible to terminate a pregnancy? What constitutes a life worth living and can it ever be right to take someone's life? Next, we turn to moral questions arising out of our ability to choose children, in light of new reproductive technologies. What are the moral boundaries of exercising such choices? Is it morally wrong or benevolent to select children without disabilities, and what constitutes a disability anyway?

## 2. LITERATURE

We'll be reading two books and selected articles, most of which are from an anthology:

- Peter Singer, *Rethinking Life and Death: The Collapse of Our Traditional Ethics* (St. Martin's Griffin, 1996); abbreviated **PS** below.
- Jonathan Glover, *Choosing Children: Genes, Disability, and Design* (Oxford University Press, 2006); abbreviated **JG** below.
- Helga Kuhse and Peter Singer, *Bioethics: An Anthology* (Blackwell Publishing, 2006); abbreviated **KS** below.

You can get the books at Amherst Books (8 Main Street, Phone: 413-256-1547). I've been told by the Textbook Annex on campus that they will have a couple of copies available too.

## 3. REQUIREMENTS

You'll be expected to attend all class meetings. In addition, there will be four take-home assignments, weighted as follows with respect to your final grade for the course:

- 1<sup>st</sup> take-home: 25%
- 2<sup>nd</sup> take-home: 25%
- 3<sup>rd</sup> take-home: 25%
- 4<sup>th</sup> take-home: 25%

#### 4. SCHEDULE OF READINGS AND ASSIGNMENTS

Every week we'll have read a chapter or an article from the literature. Since the class is capped at thirty students, there'll be room for discussion in class. Consequently, you're expected to have done the reading beforehand and bring thoughts and questions to the class meeting.

<b>Date</b>	<b>Topic and Readings</b>	<b>Other Assignments</b>
Tu., 1/27	<i>Introduction</i> : No reading	
Th., 1/29	<i>Brain Death I</i> : PS chapter 1	
Tu., 2/3	<i>Brain Death II</i> : PS chapter 2	
Th., 2/5	<i>Sanctity of Life I</i> : PS chapter 3	
Tu., 2/10	<i>Sanctity of Life II</i> : PS chapter 4	
Th., 2/12	<i>Sanctity of Life III</i> : KS chapter 25	1 <sup>st</sup> take-home assigned
Tu., 2/17	<i>Abortion I</i> : PS chapters 5	1 <sup>st</sup> take-home due in class
Th., 2/19	<i>Abortion II</i> : KS chapter 3	
Tu., 2/24	<i>Abortion III</i> : KS chapter 4	
Th., 2/26	<i>Infanticide I</i> : PS chapter 6	
Tu., 3/3	<i>Infanticide II</i> : KS chapter 33	
Th., 3/5	<i>Infanticide III</i> : KS chapter 10	2 <sup>nd</sup> take-home assigned
Tu., 3/10	<i>Euthanasia I</i> : PS chapter 7	2 <sup>nd</sup> take-home due in class
Th., 3/12	CLASS CANCELLED	
Tu., 3/17	NO CLASS (Spring Break)	
Th., 3/19	NO CLASS (Spring Break)	
Tu., 3/24	<i>Euthanasia II</i> : KS chapter 28	
Th., 3/26	<i>Euthanasia III</i> : KS chapter 42	
Tu., 3/31	<i>A New Ethic</i> : PS Chapter 9	
Th., 4/2	<i>Genetic Choices I</i> : JG chapter 1	
Tu., 4/7	<i>Genetic Choices II</i> : KS chapter 11	
Th., 4/9	<i>Genetic Choices III</i> : KS chapter 13	3 <sup>rd</sup> take-home assigned
Tu., 4/14	<i>Reproductive Liberty I</i> : JG chapter 2	3 <sup>rd</sup> take-home due in class
Th., 4/16	<i>Reproductive Liberty II</i> : KS chapter 15	
Tu., 4/21	NO CLASS	
Th., 4/23	<i>Reproductive Liberty III</i> : KS chapter 24	
Tu., 4/28	<i>Genetic Enhancement I</i> : JG chapter 3	
Th., 4/30	<i>Genetic Enhancement II</i> : KS chapter 20	
Tu., 5/5	<i>Genetic Enhancement III</i> : KS chapter 21	
Th., 5/7	<i>Recap/Make-up Lecture</i>	4 <sup>th</sup> take-home assigned
Tu., 5/12	<i>Concluding Remarks</i> : No reading	4 <sup>th</sup> take-home due

#### 5. ACADEMIC HONESTY

The University policy on academic honesty will be enforced. It is posted at:

[http://www.umass.edu/dean\\_students/codeofconduct/acadhonesty/](http://www.umass.edu/dean_students/codeofconduct/acadhonesty/)

If you have any questions about it, please ask. If anyone should violate the Academic Honesty Policy in this class, I will recommend to the University Ombudsperson that the appropriate penalty is to receive a grade of F for the course.