

**PHIL 164: MEDICAL ETHICS  
Fall 2016**

**Instructor:**

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Office Hours: Mon, 1-2pm or by appt

Classmate's Name	Email

**TAs:**

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**COURSE OVERVIEW**

Medical treatment is most familiarly used to prolong life and treat disease. This course will look at two broad themes, centering on times when medicine departs from its usual job. First: when should medicine be used not to avoid death, but to bring it about? We will examine two sub-questions on this first theme, surrounding the moral permissibility of abortion and euthanasia. Second: when should medicine be used to change our condition, in *non-disease* contexts? On this second theme, we will examine the nature of disability and enhancement, and in particular, questions surrounding whether we may permissibly cause someone to be disabled or enhanced. Most readings will be drawn from contemporary philosophy, but we will also regularly look to sources outside of philosophy to help understand the context and relevance of these issues.

The aim of this course is to familiarize you with prominent questions, arguments, and views in medical ethics, and to gain a more in-depth understanding of one topic (which will be the focus of an independent project). Students will also develop skills in critical thinking, reading, and writing.

**ASSIGNMENTS**

We will have **five short writing assignments** in this class. All are to be turned in on Moodle. The first two assignments will summarize an argument; the third will be summarizing an argument and an objection; the fourth will be an argument, objection, and reply; the fifth will be a full paper including an introduction and conclusion. Instructions are provided on a separate sheet.

Students will also complete a **group project** at the end of the semester, in groups of 3-4. This will involve finding a contemporary question in medical ethics, compiling some empirical background on the issue (e.g. the history or current legal status of the question), and surveying some of the relevant philosophical literature. Group members will then prepare a 10-minute presentation on the topic explaining the question and analyzing one compelling argument on each side. All groups will present during the last two weeks of discussion section. During the last week of class, some groups will present their research to the whole class.

## GRADING

Short Essay 1	5%
Short Essay 2	10%
Short Essay 3	15%
Short Essay 4	20%
Short Essay 5	25%
Group Presentation	15%
Attendance & Participation	10%

Grading rubrics for writing assignments and group projects are provided on a separate sheet.

Your **attendance and participation** grade will start off at an A+, but can be negatively affected if you miss more than three discussion sections without a documented excuse, if you regularly violate the 20<sup>th</sup> Century Policy (see below) or if you are disruptive in lecture or section (wearing headphones, regularly coming in late, etc.).

## CLASS EXPECTATIONS

\* Students should do the reading assigned for each class meeting *before* that class meeting. All reading is available on the course website. There is no required textbook. Please print out the articles we read so that you can bring them to lecture and section.

\* **Late work** (without an extension) will be graded down 1/3 of a grade (e.g. from a B+ to a B) for every day that it is late. Consult your TAs regarding extensions.

\* **20<sup>th</sup> Century Policy:** This classroom exists in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Therefore, we will not be using any technology in class that was invented after 1999. No cell phones smaller than a brick; no laptops smaller than a dictionary. However: if you have a learning disability or other condition that requires you to use more modern technology in class, please let me know. If a student makes a serious request along these lines, the policy will be lifted for everyone.

\* This course covers difficult and sensitive questions. Many of your classmates have struggled with these questions in their own lives. Please be aware and respectful during class discussion, and keep an open mind.

## SCHEDULE

### **Week 1      Sept 7-9**

W: Introduction and overview.

### **Week 2      Sept 12-16      Moral relativism**

M: No assigned reading, but complete the Relativism Quiz in advance.

W: Mary Midgley [1981] "Trying Out One's New Sword".

**Week 3 Sept 19-23 Abortion**

M, W: Judith Jarvis Thomson [1971] "A Defense of Abortion," *Philosophy and Public Affairs*.

**\*\*\* Short Essay 1 Due Friday, Sept. 23**

**Week 4 Sept 26-30 Abortion**

M: Michael Tooley, [1972] "Abortion and Infanticide," *Philosophy and Public Affairs*.

W: Don Marquis, [1989] "Why Abortion is Immoral" *Journal of Philosophy*. Vol. 86, No. 4

**\*\*\* Form your groups of 3-4 by Friday, Sept. 30**

**Week 5 Oct 3-7 Abortion**

M: Margaret Little [2005]. "The Moral Permissibility of Abortion". *Contemporary Debates in Applied Ethics*. Ed. Christopher Wellman. : Blackwell Press.

W: Elizabeth Harman [1999] "Creation Ethics: The Moral Status of Early Fetuses and the Ethics of Abortion". *Philosophy and Public Affairs*.

**\*\*\* Short Essay 2 Due Friday, Oct. 7**

**\*\*\* Choose a topic for group projects by Friday, Oct. 7.**

**Week 6 Oct 10-14 Euthanasia**

*\*\*Oct 10 is a holiday; we will have class Tues Oct 11*

M: Joan Didion, "The Case of Theresa Schiavo", *The New York Review of Books*, June 9, 2005, pp. 60-69.

Rachel Aviv, "The Death Treatment". *The New Yorker*, June 22, 2015.

W: James Rachels, "Active and Passive Euthanasia". *The New England Journal of Medicine*. 1975.

Thomas Sullivan, "Active and Passive Euthanasia: An Impertinent Distinction?" *Human Life Review*. 1977.

**Week 7      Oct 17-21      Euthanasia**

M: John Rawls, Judith Jarvis Thomson, Robert Nozick, Ronald Dworkin, T. M. Scanlon, Thomas Nagel. "Assisted Suicide: The Philosophers' Brief" *New York Review of Books* Volume 44, Number 5, March 27, 1997.

David Velleman, "A Right of Self-Termination?" *Ethics* 109 (1999).

W: Velleman, continued

**Week 8      Oct 24-28      Disability**

M: M. Spriggs, "Lesbian couple create a child who is deaf like them." *Journal of Medical Ethics* 2002 28: 283.

N. Levy, "Deafness, culture, and choice." *Journal of Medical Ethics* 2002 28:284-285

K. W. Anstey, "Are attempts to have impaired children justifiable?" *Journal of Medical Ethics* 2002 28: 286-288

W: Julian Savulescu and Guy Kahane. "A Welfarist Approach to Disability". In K. Brownlee & A. Cureton (eds.), *Disability and Disadvantage*. OUP 14--53 (2009)

**\*\*\* Short Essay 3 due Friday, Oct. 28**

**Week 9      Oct 31-Nov 4 Disability**

M: Goering, Sara. "Rethinking Disability: The Social Model of Disability and Chronic Disease."

*Also listen to at least one of the following podcasts (links on Moodle):*  
Act 1 of This American Life, # 490: "Trends with Benefits". 2013.  
Invisibilia: "How to Become Batman". January 23, 2015.

W: Susan Wendell [1996]. *The Rejected Body*. Ch. 1 and 2.

**Week 10      Nov 7-11      Disability**

**\*\*No section Nov 11 for Veterans Day**

M: Elizabeth Barnes, "Disability, Minority, and Difference" *Journal of Applied Philosophy*. 2009.

W: Brown, Jeffrey. "Is Disability a Neutral Condition?" *Journal of Social Philosophy*, 2016.

**Week 11      Nov 14      Disability**

**\*\*Section on Wednesday this week. TAs may hold optional office hours on Friday during section time so that you can drop in and discuss group projects.**

M: Harman, Elizabeth. "'I'll Be Glad I Did It' Reasoning and the Significance of Future Desires". *Philosophical Perspectives*, 23, Ethics, 2009.

**\*\*\*Short Essay 4 Due Fri, Nov 18.**

**\*\*No class Nov 20-25; Thanksgiving Break**

**Week 12      Nov 28-Dec 2 Enhancement**

M: Malcolm Gladwell, "Man and Superman." *The New Yorker*. September 9, 2013.

Julian Savulescu, B. Foddy and M. Clayton, "Why We Should Allow Performance Enhancing Drugs in Sport" *British Journal of Sports Medicine* 2004; 38:666-670

W: Margaret Talbot, "Brain Gain". *The New Yorker*. April 27, 2009.

Nick Bostrom and Rebecca Roache, "Smart Policy: Cognitive Enhancement and the Public Interest". 2009

**\*\*\*Group projects due Friday, Dec 2**

**\*\*\*Group presentations in section Friday, Dec. 2**

**Week 13      Dec 5-9      Enhancement**

M: Michael Sandel, "The Case Against Perfection". *The Atlantic*. 2004.

W: Frances Kamm. "Is There a Problem with Enhancement?" *American Journal of Bioethics* 5.3, 2005, pp. 5-15

**\*\*\*Group presentations in section Friday, Dec. 9**

**Week 14      Dec 12-14**

M: Group project presentations

W: Wrap-up

**\*\*\*Short paper due Monday, Dec 19**