

**PHIL 164: MEDICAL ETHICS**  
**Fall 2018**

**INSTRUCTOR:**

Sophie Horowitz  
South College E325  
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Office Hours: Monday, 2-3pm or by appt

Classmate's Name	Email

**TAs:**

Sam Schechter  
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AC, AF (11:15; 2:30)

Wally Wirchnianski  
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AA, AB (9:05, 10:10)

Elham Faghanimehr  
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AD, AE (12:20, 1:25)

**COURSE DESCRIPTION**

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 physical condition, in *non*-disease contexts? On this second theme, we will examine the nature of disability, as well as questions surrounding whether and when we may permissibly cause or remove disability.

It is not surprising that these questions are at the center of public controversies, and provoke strong feelings for many people. Whether or not you go on in medicine, it is likely that you will face these questions in your own life in some form or another. In this class we have an opportunity to think hard about these questions, and what sorts of reasoning might lead us to different answers.

**COURSE GOALS**

The aim of this course is to familiarize you with some prominent questions, arguments, and views in medical ethics, and to gain a more in-depth understanding of one other topic (which will be the focus of an independent project). This course will also introduce you to philosophical methodology, focusing on reasoning and arguments that could support various positions in medical ethics. By the end of this course, you will be able to clearly articulate arguments for different views on controversial questions, analyze and assess those lines of reasoning, and give reasoned support for your own views.

**ASSIGNMENTS**

Students will complete **short responses** of various types throughout the semester. Some of these are reading questions, some are open-ended invitations for thoughts on a topic,

and some are connected to the in-class writing workshops. Collectively, these are worth 15% of your grade. They will be graded pass/fail. Complete and submit your responses on Moodle.

\* Reading questions marked with a due date should be turned in before lecture on the date they are due.

\* In class assignments should be completed in class (we will set aside time). If you must miss class on that day, contact your TA. TAs have the power to give substitute assignments or extensions when reasonable.

\* If you do not follow directions (respond to the wrong article, do not answer the question, etc.) you will not get credit. Chances to resubmit due to misunderstanding are at the TAs' discretion.

We will also have **four short writing assignments** in this class. All are to be turned in on Moodle. These will start with the basics and build up so that by the end of the semester, you will be able to write a short paper of the type we are reading in class. The first and second papers will summarize an argument and an objection; the third and fourth will be a full paper including an introduction and conclusion. Prompts and instructions are provided separately and are available on Moodle.

Finally, students will complete a **group project** at the end of the semester, in groups of 3-4. This is your opportunity to look into questions in medical ethics that we have not covered in class. For this project, you and your team will find a question in medical ethics, compile 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.

## GRADING

Short responses	15%
Group Project	10%
Attendance & Participation	10%
Paper 1	5%
Paper 2	15%
Paper 3	20%
Paper 4	25%

Grading rubrics for all written work and group projects are provided on Moodle.

To make best use of our time this semester, it is important that students are present and engaged, both in lecture and in section. Short responses will often be done in class. Your showing up and being attentive and engaged in both lecture and section will be reflected in your **attendance and participation** grade. This grade will start off at an A+, but can be negatively affected by unexcused absences from lecture (we will periodically take

attendance) or discussion sections, if you regularly violate the 20<sup>th</sup> Century Policy (see below), if you are disruptive in lecture or section (wearing headphones, regularly coming in late, doing homework for other classes, etc.), or if you significantly hinder your group's progress on the group project.

### 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, for a maximum deduction of 2 full letter grades. Late papers will not be accepted after the due date of the next paper. The last paper will not be accepted after the final day of exams. **Consult your TAs regarding extensions.**

\* **20<sup>th</sup> Century Policy:** Unless we are using laptops/etc. for a specific purpose, this classroom exists in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Laptop use in classrooms is distracting to yourself and to others, and has been shown to lower grades.<sup>1</sup> I will make slides available after lecture. However: if you need a 21<sup>st</sup> century device for any reason, please come see me to request an exception.

\* 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.

\* This syllabus is subject to change. Any changes will be announced in class and on the course Moodle page.

### ACCESSIBILITY

I am committed to making this class accessible and welcoming for all students. Please come talk to me if there is anything I can do to make the class work better for you. Students with documented disabilities are encouraged to contact Disability Services in 161 Whitmore, or at <http://www.umass.edu/disability> to register and request any accommodations you might need. If you anticipate receiving accommodations from Disability Services, but are still waiting on paperwork, please come tell me and your TA as soon as you can anyway so that we can put necessary accommodations in place.

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<sup>1</sup> The evidence is pretty strong. Check out this slideshow for an overview of the research: <https://docs.google.com/presentation/d/1vmQ548UJ0WnoSwkfREU3iR-m2Co1xTWzGkhcv6bFbY8> (Created by Andrew Mills, Otterbein University)

## SCHEDULE

(All due dates are marked with an asterisk. Fridays are listed only when there is something special to do in section, or a due date. Ordinarily in section you will discuss whatever we have read or worked on during the week.)

### **Week 1      Sept 5, 7**

**W**      Introduction and overview.

### **Week 2      Sept 10, 12, 14      Abortion**

**M**      Class discussion: formulating arguments for and against abortion.

**W**      Pope John Paul II [1995] “The Unspeakable Crime of Abortion”, excerpt from his papal encyclical *Evangelium Vitae* (March 25, 1995).  
**\*SR due on Moodle**

### **Week 3      Sept 17, 19, 21      Abortion**

**M**      Judith Jarvis Thomson [1971] “A Defense of Abortion,” *Philosophy and Public Affairs*.  
**\*SR due on Moodle**

**W**      Thomson, “A Defense of Abortion,” *continued*.

**F**      **\* Paper 1 due 9/21**  
In section: form groups for your group project, exchange contact info.

### **Week 4      Sept 24, 26, 28      Abortion**

**M**      Don Marquis, [1989] “Why Abortion is Immoral” *Journal of Philosophy*. Vol. 86, No. 4  
**\*SR due on Moodle**

**W**      Wrap up discussion.  
**\*SR in class; bring your laptop**

### **Week 5      Oct 1, 3, 5      Writing week**

**M**      In-class writing discussion. In preparation, please read Mary Midgley, [1981] “Trying Out One’s New Sword”, from *Heart and Mind*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

Also read the two example papers posted on Moodle, and grade them according to the rubric (recording your grades and rationale in the

questionnaire on Moodle). All of these materials are in their own folder, under “Readings” on Moodle.

**\*SR due on Moodle**

**\*SR in class; bring your laptop**

**W In-class writing workshop. Bring your draft of paper 2 to class.**

**\*SR in class; bring your laptop**

**F** In section: meet with your group to brainstorm topics and/or look up resources.

**\*SR in section; bring your laptop**

**Week 6 Oct 9, 10, 12 (T/W/F this week) Disability and prenatal testing**

**T** Peter Singer, [2003]. “Shopping at the Genetic Supermarket” In S. Y. Song, Y. M. Koo & D. R. J. Macer (eds.), *Asian Bioethics in the 21st Century*, Tsukuba, pp. 143-156. Available at: <https://www.utilitarian.net/singer/by/2003----.htm>

Harriet McBryde Johnson, [2003] “Unspeakable Conversations”. *New York Times* February 16, 2003.

**\*SR due on Moodle**

**W** Adrienne Asch, [2003]. “Disability Equality and Prenatal Testing: Contradictory or Compatible?” *Fla State Univ Law Rev.* Winter; 30(2):315-42.

**F \*Paper 2 due**

**Week 7 Oct 15, 17, 19 Disability and prenatal testing**

**M MAP in class** (pending TEFD scheduling)  
Jeff McMahan, [2004]. “The morality of screening for disabilities”. *Reproductive BioMedicine Online*, Vol 10. Supp 1. 2005 129-132  
**\*SR due on Moodle**

**W** Finish Asch/McMahan; wrap up discussion of prenatal testing  
**\*SR in class; bring your laptop**

**Week 8 Oct 22, 24, 26 Selecting for deafness**

**M** Liza Mundy, “A World of Their Own”, *Washington Post*, March 31, 2002. A Q&A with the author of that article can be found [here](#).  
**\*SR due on Moodle**

- W N. Levy, [2001]. "Deafness, culture, and choice." *Journal of Medical Ethics* 28:284-285
- Week 9 Oct 29, 31, Nov 2 The concept of disability**
- M Goering, Sara. [2015] "Rethinking Disability: The Social Model of Disability and Chronic Disease." *Current Reviews in Musculoskeletal Medicine*, 8(2), 134–138. <http://doi.org/10.1007/s12178-015-9273-z>
- H-Dirksen L. Bauman, [2005] "Designing Deaf Babies and the Question of Disability" *The Journal of Deaf Studies and Deaf Education*, Volume 10, Issue 3. pp. 311–315.
- \*SR due on Moodle (on the Goering article)**
- W Elizabeth Barnes [2015] "Bad Difference and Mere Difference", ch. 2 of *The Minority Body*, Oxford University Press.
- Week 10 Nov 5, 7, 9 Writing; physician assisted death**
- M **Writing workshop. Bring your draft of paper 3 to class.**
- W Wicker, Christine. "Burn Victim Survived Hell, Still Insists on Right to Die." *Dallas Morning News*, May 29, 1989.
- Rachel Aviv, "The Death Treatment". *The New Yorker*, June 22, 2015.
- \*SR in class; bring your laptop**
- F **\*Paper 3 due**  
In section: group meeting time.  
**\*SR in section; bring your laptop**
- Week 11 Nov 14, 16 (no class Monday) Physician-assisted death**
- W James Rachels, [1975] "Active and Passive Euthanasia". *The New England Journal of Medicine*. 1975.
- Winston Nesbitt, [1995]. "Is Killing No Worse Than Letting Die?" *Journal of Applied Philosophy*, 12(1), 101-106.
- \*SR due on Moodle (on both articles)**
- Week 12 Nov 26, 28, 30 Physician-assisted death**
- M Rachels, Nesbitt again

- W Thomas Sullivan, [1977]. "Active and Passive Euthanasia: An Impertinent Distinction?" *Human Life Review*.
- F \* **Group projects due for all groups**  
In section: group presentations.
- Week 13 Dec 3, 5, 7 Physician-assisted death**
- 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.  
**\*SR due on Moodle**
- W David Velleman, [1999]. "A Right of Self-Termination?" *Ethics* 109.
- F In section: group presentations.
- Week 14: Dec 10, 12 Writing week and SRTIs**
- M \* **In-class paper workshop; bring your draft of paper 4.**
- W SRTI for first half. More time for questions with TAs during second half.

**Paper 4 due Monday Dec. 17**