**BIOETHICS**

PHIL 324 / Spring 2018 / TR 1-2:15pm

Professor: Dr. Aaron Simmons

Email: asimmons@marywood.edu

Office: IMMAC 110A

Office hours: MTWR 3-4:30pm (or by appointment)

**Course Summary**

In this course we will study a variety of ethical issues that arise in the practice of medicine. In doing so, we will examine different perspectives on each issue and the arguments that have been made for and against these perspectives. Among the central issues we will study are the following:

* Refusal of Treatment – Is it wrong to administer life-sustaining medical treatment to patients who refuse it on personal or religious grounds?
* Euthanasia and Assisted Suicide – Is it ethical for doctors to actively kill patients who wish to die or to assist them in committing suicide?
* Incompetent Patients – How should we make medical decisions for patients who lack decision-making competence? Should people be allowed to use “living wills” to refuse certain treatments in the event that they become incompetent?
* Disorders of Consciousness – Should we discontinue treatment for patients who have lost critical brain functions and are unlikely to ever be conscious again? What standard should we use to determine when a patient is “dead?”
* Disabled Infants – Is it ever ethical to let severely disabled infants die rather than trying to sustain their lives? Should we allow euthanasia for disabled infants who are unlikely to live good lives?
* Abortion – Is it ethical to abort a human fetus? When during development does human life acquire a moral right to life? Does a woman’s right to control over her body override the rights of a fetus?

**Course Goals**

1. To learn about important issues in bioethics and the perspectives that philosophers have had on those issues
2. To enhance your critical thinking skills, including the ability to evaluate arguments for holding certain beliefs, to construct good arguments for your beliefs, and to reach rational, well thought-out solutions to ethical problems
3. To enhance your ability to communicate complex ideas and arguments clearly

**Grading**

Papers

During the semester, you will be expected to write two formal philosophy papers: a midterm paper and a final paper. Papers should be approximately 1200-1800 words long (roughly 4-6 pages double-spaced). In your papers you are expected to analyze and evaluate readings from the course and construct an argument for some view you hold on an issue we’ve studied. We will spend time in class discussing how to write a philosophy paper. The best paper of your two papers will count for 40% of your final grade. The other paper will count for 20% of your grade.

Group Project

During the second half of the semester, you will be given a group project assignment. Students will organize into groups of four students and choose an ethical case study from a list that I will provide. Each group will be responsible for (1) writing a 4-5-page paper analyzing its case study and (2) making a presentation to the rest of the class. The overall group project will be worth 20% of your final grade. I will provide further details on this assignment after the halfway point of the semester.

Attendance, Participation, Preparation, and Effort (APPE)

Your attendance, participation, preparation, and effort in this class count for 20% of your grade. To earn an A for this portion of your grade, you must have good attendance, *regularly volunteer to participate in class discussions* (on average, at least once per week), come to each class period having done the reading assignments, & demonstrate good effort in the class. The following behaviors will count against your APPE grade: texting in class, using your computer in class for non-class purposes, sleeping in class, and frequently coming to class late or leaving class early. If you are not comfortable participating in classroom discussions, you can also earn participation credit by typing up a short paragraph in which you comment on (or raise questions about) the readings and/or the classroom discussion. Written participation should be submitted to me on paper no more than one week after we have discussed a particular reading or topic in class. It can be typed or handwritten.

Grade Breakdown

1. Paper #1 (best paper) 40%
2. Paper #2 20%
3. Group project 20%
4. APPE 20%

**Classroom Etiquette**

Philosophy, by its nature, involves debate and disagreement on questions that are controversial and sometimes personal. As we examine philosophical questions in this class, we will sometimes disagree with each other. Class time will include discussions in which students’ beliefs may be questioned, challenged, and debated by other students or the professor. That being said, everyone in the class is expected to follow basic rules of respect for one another. Criticism and disagreement with one another’s opinions should be expressed in a respectful manner. Personal attacks are not acceptable. Additionally, I ask that students raise their hands to speak and try to avoid interrupting one another.

**Plagiarism**

Plagiarism on paper assignments will not be tolerated in this class. Plagiarism consists of passing off another author’s words or ideas as your own without giving the author proper credit. Before your first paper assignment, we will discuss plagiarism in greater detail and the proper way to cite authors. Students who are caught plagiarizing will be punished accordingly. Punishments may include failing the assignment, failing the entire course, and/or being reported to the University.

**Accommodations for Students with Documented Disabilities**

Marywood University complies with Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 as amended by the ADA Amendments Act of 2008. Students with disabilities who need special accommodations must submit documentation of the disability to the Office of Disability Services, Learning Commons 166, in order for reasonable accommodations to be granted. The Office of Disability Services will partner with students to determine the appropriate accommodations and, in cooperation with the instructor, will work to ensure that all students have a fair opportunity to perform in this class. Students are encouraged to notify instructors and the Office of Disability Services as soon as they determine accommodations are necessary; however, documentation will be reviewed at any point in the semester upon receipt. Specific details of the disability will remain confidential between the student and the Office of Disability Services unless the student chooses to disclose or there is legitimate academic need for disclosure on a case-by-case basis. For assistance, please contact Diane Webber, Associate Director of Disability Services, at 570.348.6211 x2335 or [dtwebber@marywood.edu](mailto:dtwebber@marywood.edu).

**Course Texts**

1. *Biomedical Ethics* 7th edition, edited by DeGrazia, Mappes, and Brand-Ballard
2. Electronic readings available on Google Drive: <https://goo.gl/s5MWn6> (E)

**TENTATIVE SCHEDULE**

This schedule of readings and assignments is subject to change based on my discretion and how quickly we work our way through the readings. Any changes in the schedule will be announced in class.

Week One

1/18

*Introduction*

Week Two

1/23 – 1/25

*Moral Theory*

Pierce and Randels, “Bioethics: An Introduction to the Discipline” (E)

*Moral Theory*

No new readings

Week Three

1/30 – 2/1

*Truth-Telling*

Cullen and Klein, “Respect for Patients, Physicians, and the Truth” (E)

*Refusal of Treatment*

Bouvia v. Superior Court (E)

Optional: President’s Commission, “The Values Underlying Informed Consent” pp. 120-125

Week Four

2/6 – 2/8

*Refusal of Treatment*

Powell and Lowenstein, “Refusing Life-Sustaining Treatment after Catastrophic Injury” pp. 343-347

Michel, “Suicide by Persons with Disabilities Disguised as the Refusal of Life-Sustaining Treatment” pp. 348-353

*Physician-Assisted Dying*

Brock, “Voluntary Active Euthanasia” (E)

Optional: Gill, “A Moral Defense of Oregon’s Physician-Assisted Suicide Law” (E)

Week Five

2/13 – 2/15

*Physician-Assisted Dying*

Kass, “Death with Dignity and the Sanctity of Life” (E)

Finnis, excerpt from “A Philosophical Case against Euthanasia” (E)

New York State Task Force, “The Distinction between Refusing Medical Treatment and Suicide” (E)

*Physician-Assisted Dying*

Arras, “Physician-Assisted Suicide: A Tragic View” (E)

Week Six

2/20 – 2/22

*Physician-Assisted Dying*

Video and Discussion: 60 Minutes interview with Dr. Kevorkian

**Discuss Midterm Paper Assignment**

*Incompetent Patients*

“In the Matter of Claire C. Conroy” (E)

Optional: Arras, “The Severely Demented, Minimally Functional Patient” (E)

Week Seven

2/27 – 3/1

*Incompetent Patients*

Dresser and Robertson, “Quality of Life and Non-Treatment Decisions for Incompetent Patients” (E)

Dworkin, “Life Past Reason” (E)

*Incompetent Patients*

Menzel and Steinbock, “Advance Directives, Dementia, and Physician-Assisted Death” (E)

Week Eight

3/6 – 3/8

*Disorders of Consciousness*

Bernat, “The Whole-Brain Concept of Death Remains Optimal Public Policy” pp. 322-330

*Disorders of Consciousness*

Veatch, “The Impending Collapse of the Whole-Brain Definition of Death” (E)

Optional: Laureys, “Death, Unconsciousness, and the Brain” (E)

**Midterm Paper due – Sunday, March 11th**

Week Nine

3/13 – 3/15

**SPRING BREAK – NO CLASS**

Week Ten

3/20 – 3/22

*Disorders of Consciousness*

Veatch, “The Conscience Clause” (E)

*Disorders of Consciousness*

Hawkins, “What is Good for Them? Best Interests and Severe Disorders of Consciousness” (E)

Optional: Braddock, “Should We Treat Vegetative and Minimally Conscious Patients as Persons?” (E)

Week Eleven

3/27 – 3/29

*Organ Transplantation*

Truog and Miller, “The Dead Donor Rule and Organ Transplantation” pp. 338-340

**No class (Holy Thursday)**

Week Twelve

4/3 – 4/5

**Group Project Discussion**

**Group Project Discussion**

Week Thirteen

4/10– 4/12

*Disabled Infants*

Robertson, “Extreme Prematurity and Parental Rights after Baby Doe” (E)

Optional: American Academy of Pediatrics, “Forgoing Medically Provided Nutrition and Hydration in Children” (E)

*Disabled Infants*

Verhagen and Sauer, “The Groningen Protocol—Euthanasia in Severely Ill Newborns” pp. 446-449

Kon, “We Cannot Accurately Predict the Extent of an Infant’s Future Suffering: The Groningen Protocol Is Too Dangerous to Support” pp. 450-452

Week Fourteen

4/17 – 4/19

*Abortion*

Warren, “On the Moral and Legal Status of Abortion” pp. 468-474

Optional: Tooley, “In Defense of Abortion and Infanticide” (E)

*Abortion*

Marquis, “Why Abortion Is Immoral” pp 475-479

Week Fifteen

4/24 – 4/26

Group Presentations (3 groups)

Group Presentations (3 groups)

Week Sixteen

5/1 – 5/3

Group Presentations (3 groups)

Semester wrap-up and evaluations

**Final Paper due – Sunday, May 6th**