

BIE 510: Biomedical Ethics

Instructor: Abraham P. Schwab

Union Graduate College-Mt. Sinai School of Medicine

Fall 2015

Course Goals

CONTENT:

Sketch the historical context of medical ethics

Identify the role of technology in the rise of medical ethics as an area of inquiry and in the recent challenges to defining life and death

Introduce the sordid history of medical research

Investigate two potentially fruitful strategies for thinking about difficult cases in the clinical context

SKILLS:

Improve the ability of each student to write clearly and succinctly

Improve each student's ability to read a text, identify and discuss major themes

Required Texts

The Basics of Bioethics, 3rd Edition, Robert M. Veatch, Pearson, ISBN-13: 978-0-205-76562-9

Medical Ethics: Accounts of Ground-Breaking Cases, 7th Edition, Gregory E. Pence, McGraw-Hill, ISBN-13: 978-0-07-803845-7

PDFs on Joule

Course Schedule and Readings

WEEK 1 — A Little History: Oaths and Codes

1847 AMA Code (PDF on Joule)

Veatch — Chapter 2: The Hippocratic Oath and Its Challengers

Baker — The Medical Ethics of Gentlemanly Honor (PDF on Joule)

WEEK 2 — A Little History: The Current Landscape

Pellegrino—Metamorphosis of Medical Ethics (PDF on Joule)

Pence — Chapter 1: Ethical Reasoning, Moral Theories, Principles, and Bioethics

Veatch — Chapter 1: A Map of the Terrain of Ethics

Optional: Jonsen — Birth of Bioethics, Ch. 10: Bioethics as Discipline (PDF on Joule)

Optional: Buchanan — Trust in Managed Care Organizations (PDF on Joule)

Due September 23: First Column (Oaths and Codes/The Current Landscape)

Draft Due: September 19

WEEK 3 — Disruptions: Nazis and Technology

Wikler and Barondess — Bioethics and Anti-Bioethics (PDF on Joule)

Jonsen — The God Squad (PDF on Joule)

Pence — Chapter 12: Just Distribution of Organs: God Committee and Personal Responsibility

Optional: Pence — Chapter 8: The Ethics of Treating Impaired Babies

WEEK 4 — Disruptions: From Paternalism to Autonomy

Wolpe—The Triumph of Autonomy in American Bioethics (PDF on Joule)

Veatch — Chapter 5: The Ethics of Respect for Persons . . .

Pence — Chapter 2: Requests to Die: Non-Terminal Patients

Annas — Informed Consent, Cancer, and Truth in Prognosis (PDF on Joule)

Due October 7: Second Column (Technological Disruptions and Ethics)

Draft Due: September 30

WEEK 5 — The Trouble with Defining Life and Death (1 of 2 weeks)

Pence — Chapter 4: Comas: Karen Quinlan, Nancy Cruzan, and Terri Schiavo

Veatch — Chapter 6: The Principle of Avoiding Killing

WEEK 6 — The Trouble with Defining Life and Death (2 of 2 weeks)

Pence — Chapter 5: Abortion: The Trial of Kenneth Edelin

Pence — Chapter 7: Embryos, Stem Cells, and Cloning

Veatch — Chapter 3: Defining Death, Abortion, Stem Cells, and Animal Welfare . . .

Due October 21: Third Column (Difficulty Defining Life and Death)

Draft Due: October 14

WEEK 7 — Research Ethics (1 of 2 weeks)

Nuremberg Code

Pence — Chapter 10: Medical Research on Vulnerable Human Subjects

Beecher — Clinical Ethics (PDF on Joule)

WEEK 8 — Research Ethics (2 of 2 weeks)

Readings

Rothman — Tuskegee and Willowbrook Studies in Nature (PDF on Joule)

Applebaum et al — Therapeutic Misconception (PDF on Joule)

Pence — Chapter 11: Surgeons' Desire for Fame: Ethics of the First Transplants

Macklin — 'Due' and 'Undue' Inducements (PDF of Joule)

Due November 4: Fourth Column (Research Ethics)

Draft Due: October 28

WEEK 9 — Approaching the Clinical Case: Casuistry

Williams — The Use of Force (PDF on Joule)

Jonsen — Casuistry as Methodology in Clinical Ethics (PDF on Joule)

Jonsen — Casuistry: An Alternative or Complement to Principles? (PDF on Joule)

WEEK 10 — Approaching the Clinical Case: Virtue Ethics

Pellegrino — Toward a Virtue-Based Normative Ethics for the Health Professions (PDF on Joule)

Due November 18: Fifth Column (Approaching Clinical Cases)
Draft Due: November 11

Course Grading

Discussion Board Activity (4% per week/40% of final grade)

At least two new Forums will be opened each week. Students have three responsibilities for each forum.

- 1) Students are required to provide an initial or original response in each forum.
- 2) Students are also required to be involved in at least one conversation/interaction with other class members.
- 3) Students are required to answer, as best they can, questions asked of them in response to their initial or original response.

These responses and interactions require more than simple “Yes”, “No”, “I agree”, “I disagree” responses. Explanations, justifications, and also needed. “Yes, because . . .”, “No, because . . .”, etc.

Initial posting and responses will be graded based upon the degree of engagement with course material (e.g., answering questions or addressing issues that are raised), degree of engagement with other student’s and my ideas and questions (e.g., answering questions and addressing issues that are raised), and clarity.

Three columns (10% each/30% of final grade)

For each two week section of the course, there will be an opportunity to write a column/possible blog post drawing on the material of the course from those two weeks.

By column, I’m referring to a 500-1000 word column like those found on UGC blog. These can be informative, prescriptive, or provocative. They should draw on the material from the course, but are not required to focus exclusively on course material. That is, the column should clearly draw on course material, but could use that material to illuminate some other issue or topic.

In discussing the material from the course, one of the challenges for students will be to attempt to explicate the content of the course for a general audience. Take the complex concepts we’re discussing in the class and make them understandable for a general audience.

The due dates for the columns are listed in the course schedule. I encourage you to select three due dates now. Depending on the columns you choose, will determine the course content you should connect the column to. If you select the first column, the column should tie to the course content on Oaths and Codes or the Current Landscape. The second column should connect to course content on Technological Disruptions and Ethics. And so on.

I will plan to provide feedback on one draft for each column. To receive feedback in time, get me the draft by the draft due date listed in the course schedule above.

The columns can focus on any bioethics topic you’re interested in.

Columns will be graded primarily on four criteria: 1) use of course material, 2) accuracy and clarity of discussion of course material, 3) relevance of course material to broader topic of the column, and 4) grammar, syntax, spelling, etc.

Two Content Tests (15% each/30% of final grade)

There will be two tests that evaluate the increase in your knowledge base.

The first test will open around October 9 and remain open until the afternoon of October 14.

The second test will open around November 18 and remain open until the afternoon of November 23.

The point of those tests is to assess the student's retention of key aspects of bioethics covered in the course. As a result, the tests will ask students to demonstrate a grasp of basic concepts and cases and how they relate to the discipline of bioethics. The point is to ensure students have retained facts that will help them deliberate well about clinical ethics, research ethics, and bioethics more generally. Accordingly, these tests will be timed—the aim of the test is not determine a student's ability to look up information, but to recall that information.