

Bioethics

Summer 2016



Description

This course is an introduction to bioethics. We start with a survey of moral theory. What is morality, and what does morality require of us? Should our priority be promoting happiness, respecting autonomy, cultivating virtues, or something else? Also, what, if anything, do we morally owe to fetuses, animals, plants, species, and ecosystems? We then apply these ideas to particular topics in bioethics, including the nature and value of mental and physical health and wellbeing; autonomy, paternalism, and trust; abortion, euthanasia, and physician assisted suicide; human and nonhuman subjects research; genetic modification of human and nonhuman animals; distribution of scarce medical resources in society; and public health impacts of food, war, and other such industries.

General Information

- Time: M/T/R 3:15-5:50
- Place: Caldwell #208
- Instructor: Jeff Sebo
- Email: jeffsebo@unc.edu
- Office: Caldwell #207B
- Office hours: by appointment
- Course website: jeffsebo.net/teaching/

Readings

There are no required books for this course. All readings will be posted on Sakai and/or distributed by email.

Grading

Your grades will be determined as follows:

- **Papers (65%):** You will write two papers for this course and submit them by email. For each paper, you can either create your own prompt (provided that you clear it with me in advance) or select from prompts that I create. The first paper (30%) will be six pages long and will be due at 6pm on 5/29; the second (35%) will be eight pages long and will be due at 6pm on 6/16.
- **Presentation (15%):** You will give one 10-15 minute presentations. For your presentation, you will find a case study related to the topic of discussion for that day (fictional or nonfictional), summarize the case study, and then raise questions or comments about that case study.
- **Daily Reactions (10%):** Prior to each session, you will send me an email that, for each reading, (a) summarizes one of the main claims in that reading and (b) presents a question or comment about that claim. Your subject heading should be DR, Last Name, Date (e.g. DR Jones 5/12). Your DR can be brief, but it must demonstrate that you did the reading carefully and critically. This assignment is due no later than 1pm on the day of class. DRs will be graded Pass/Fail.
- **Participation (10%):** I expect regular attendance and thoughtful participation from all students. You can participate by speaking in class, attending office hours, distributing articles to the class, and more. My assessment of the quality of your performance on these items will account for 10% of your grade.

Policies

- **Laptops/Cell Phones:** Laptops are allowed, but only for taking notes. Cell phones must be on silent.
- **Special Accommodations:** If you need special accommodations, please let me know so that I can properly assist you.
- **Academic Integrity:** Plagiarism and other forms of academic dishonesty will not be tolerated. See the UNC Writing Center Handout on Plagiarism, available online, for more information.
- **Late Papers/Extensions/Incompletes:** Late papers will be accepted, but will lose 1/3 letter grade for each day late. Extensions and incompletes will be granted only in exceptional circumstances. If you would like to request either, please do so well before the due date.

Schedule

- **5/12 - Introduction**
No reading
- **5/16 - Moral Theory**
Peter Singer, “Famine, affluence, and morality”
Robert Solomon, “Morality and theories of morality”
- **5/17 - Moral Status - 1**
Dale Jamieson, “Humans and other animals”
Dale Jamieson, “The value of nature”
- **5/19 - Moral Status - 2**
Bonnie Steinbock, “Moral status, moral value, and human embryos”
Jeff McMahan, “Death, brain death, and persistent vegetative state”
- **5/23 - Health and Wellbeing**
Dominic Murphy, “Concepts of disease and health”
Roger Crisp, “Wellbeing”
- **5/24 - Disability and Mental Illness**
Anita Silvers, “People with disabilities”
Christian Perring, “Mental illness”
- **5/26 - Autonomy and Paternalism**
Tom Beauchamp and James Childress, “Autonomy”
Tom Beauchamp and James Childress, “Beneficence”
- **5/31 - Abortion and Infanticide**
Bonnie Steinbock, “Mother-fetus conflict”
Gregory Pence, “The ethics of treating impaired babies”
- **6/2 - Euthanasia and Suicide**
Margaret Battin, “Euthanasia and physician-assisted suicide”
John Hardwig, “Is there a duty to die?”
- **6/6 - Selection and Enhancement**
Laura Purdy, “Assisted reproduction, prenatal testing, and sex selection”
Julian Savulescu, “Genetic interventions and enhancement of human beings”
- **6/7 - Human and Nonhuman Research**
Florencia Luna and Ruth Macklin, “Research involving human beings”
Lori Gruen, “Experimenting with animals”
- **6/9 - Resource Allocation**
John Harris, “Deciding between patients”
Janet Richards, “A world of transferrable parts”
- **6/13 - Public Health**
Jeffrey Kahn and Anna Mastroianni, “The implications of public health for bioethics”
Ruth Macklin, “Global health”
- **6/16 - Optional Session**
No reading