

Morality and Medicine (HPS 0613)

Spring 2023

Tuesday 6PM-8:30PM

114 Victoria Building

Instructor: Dana Matthiessen

dam228@pitt.edu

Office hours: Online by Zoom, Mondays, 12PM-2PM

Claim a 15 minute slot using “Find Appointments” on Canvas calendar

Or drop in (you may to wait), or email for alternate time

Office hours will be held using Zoom: <https://pitt.zoom.us/j/7784657942>

Ethical dilemmas in the practice of health care continue to proliferate and receive increasing attention from members of the health care profession, ethicists, policy makers, and the general public as health care consumers. In this course we will examine a number of ethical issues that arise in the context of contemporary medical practice and research by analyzing articles and decision scenarios. Topics to be covered typically include the physician-patient relationship; informed consent; medical experimentation; termination of treatment; genetics; reproductive technologies; euthanasia; resource allocation; and health care reform.

Objectives: Students who successfully complete this course will be able to...

- Identify and analyze different philosophical approaches to selected issues in medical ethics.
- Read and critically interpret philosophical arguments.
- Use newly developed skills to think clearly about ethical questions as future or current health care providers, policy makers, and consumers.

This course is part of a core sequence leading to certification in the Conceptual Foundations of Medicine Certificate Program and is a companion course to HPS 0612 (Mind and Medicine) but may be taken independently. The course is of particular interest to pre-medical and pre-health care students.

Readings

All course readings will be made available on Canvas or from links in this syllabus.

Please note that this is a reading-focused course. Students will be expected to arrive at class having digested the assigned readings enough that they can contribute to possible discussion and ask informed questions. Do not despair! Do your best to grasp the gist of the texts, bring your notes and readings to class, and we will work together in class to clarify the material for that week. You are strongly encouraged to consult some of the guides on reading philosophy available online, such as...

David Concepción, “How to Read Philosophy” http://joelvelasco.net/teaching/3334/concepcion04-how_to_read_appendix.pdf

Hugh Wilder, “How to Read Philosophy” myweb.facstaff.wvu.edu/wasserr/114/how_to_read.pdf

Russo, “Reading a philosophical text” sophia-project.org/uploads/1/3/9/5/13955288/russo_reading.pdf

Email policy

When submitting assignments, please begin the subject line with the day of the week we have class. If you have questions I should see before a due date, please make this obvious in the subject line.

Writing center

I encourage all of you to take advantage of the Writing Center, located at 317B O'Hara Student Center. For information about the center, visit: www.writingcenter.pitt.edu
You can easily make an appointment with a writing consultant online.

A note on classroom discussion

All students are encouraged to ask questions, raise points of concern, and contribute their own knowledge and reflections whenever they can. We will be surveying a wide range of material, much of which I am not an expert in, and I expect there is a great deal we can learn by hearing from one another. Ample space will be given for discussions of this sort.

It is paramount that everyone maintains a respectful attitude toward one another during these discussions. It may be that certain topics will grip you and generate enthusiasm that can lead to heightened emotions and even intellectual controversy, but this is absolutely no excuse to disparage, dismiss, talk over, or otherwise disrespect your fellow classmates. Any abusive, bigoted, or harassing behavior or language will not be tolerated. Any students who are experiencing behavior that is affecting their ability to concentrate and learn or otherwise have concerns about social dynamics of the class are strongly encouraged to contact me privately, and we will figure out how to best resolve the issue.

NOTE: Because this course deals with topics in the field of medicine, there is a possibility that your peers will disclose information related to their personal medical history during class discussion. For that reason, everyone attending this class will be asked to take a vow swearing that any such information discussed within the classroom is *not* discussed outside of it without the explicit

permission of the relevant individual(s). Students who fail to uphold this standard may be asked to leave the class.

ALSO: This class meets late in the day, which could negatively affect the energy and focus of everyone in the room. *Let's all do what we can to combat this!* Whether that means taking a nap before class, loading up on energy drinks, or bringing a (quiet, non-smelly) snack, please keep tabs on your stamina and plan accordingly.

Grading and assignment schedule (more info in "Files → Assignments" folder on Canvas)

- **Week three assignments—movie and active reading: 10% (submit by the beginning of class 1/24)**
 - o For the third week of class, students are required to either print the reading assignment by Rachels and bring in notes taken while actively reading the text, or submit photographs or a digital version of notes via the assignment page on Canvas (4%).
 - Note-taking should strive to identify and label the main thesis of the paper, identify components of the argument supporting this thesis—supporting claims for the thesis and the primary lines of evidence/argumentation meant to back them up—and record any points of confusion or critical comments the student has in response to specific points or terminology in the paper (e.g., written in the margins).
 - The note-taking may be on the reading assignment itself (encouraged), or on a separate piece of paper, which properly identifies the parts of the paper each note refers to.
 - o In addition, students will be required to complete a brief written assignment in response to the documentary, *How to Die in Oregon* (6%)
- **Reading responses: 30% (posted every week, starting with week 2; 10 total due)**
 - o Starting the second week of class, I will ask students to prepare and submit (via email) a brief *reading response* each week. I will present several prompts for your choosing, answer one of them and provide supporting reasons for your answer based on reflection on course material. *Consult the hand-out for this assignment for further guidance.*
 - Except for special circumstances, students are required to **submit these before class via email or bring them in paper to class.**
 - These will be given a grade of either 3 (complete, good effort), 2 (complete, low effort), 1 (incomplete, extremely low effort) or 0 (no submission). **Ten responses will be required.** Students can hand in more if they like for extra participation credit. If fewer than ten are submitted, the remainder will be given a score of 0.
- **Course participation: 20% (continuous)**
 - o Discursive reasoning is a basic skill for reflecting on the issues we will encounter in class. With that in mind, I have arranged the course to emphasize discussion. While I will provide some framing and moderation, my aim is for a good portion of the class content to be generated by the questions and interests that come from student participants, either through in-class discussion or through use of the course's online discussion board.
 - o 20 participation points will be given in 1-point increments based on substantive contributions to in-person or online discussion, attendance of office hours, and other

clear signs of engagement with the content of the course. *Note: to enhance discussion it may be useful to have a way to access the papers during class time.*

- To enable online discussion, I will create a new topic for each reading assignment every week in the “Discussions” section of the course Canvas page. Students are encouraged to respond to the article by posting comments, questions, or criticisms, or by responding to other students’ posts.
 - A substantive contribution is on topic, does not simply repeat previous remarks or your reading response, and is something that gives some supporting reasons or context, rather than a single sentence or utterance. A few more guidelines will be provided in a pinned post on the discussion board.
 - If these forms of participation are difficult for you, please contact me and we can work out an alternative way to earn credit, including the following:
 - Additional reading response assignments or expanded versions of them that include additional criticisms or raise a “big picture” question or comment with respect to the reading.
 - Sending me an email with an article that is relevant to our weekly reading, along with your thoughts on its contents.
 - Directly emailing me with questions or comments regarding the ideas and debates discussed in class.
 - Something else.
- **Unit quizzes: 12% (complete online by 11:59PM on the day before each new unit)**
- For units 2-5; these will be multiple-choice questions based on the major points covered in readings or in class lectures. Each quiz is worth 3 points.
 - Tests will be made available in the “Quizzes” section on Canvas after the last class of each unit. Tests will be open book, but time constrained, so some prep is important.
- **Second video response: 8% (submit by the beginning of class 4/11)**
- Students are required to submit a written assignment in response to the documentary, *Care: Care Workers, Their Clients, and a Coming Crisis*.
- **Final short paper: 20% (email by the end of 4/28)**
- Every student will be required to submit an 800-1000 word essay at the end of term.
 - The topic will be of their own design, but should engage with some of the issues, literature, and/or ethical frameworks covered during the course.
 - We will take steps to plan these papers prior to the end of term.

NOTE: If you find yourself struggling with the course material or are concerned about your grade, please act sooner than later. Come to office hours and we will work to identify the source of your difficulties and improve your understanding of tricky subjects.

Course schedule

Note: readings for each day are marked with a bullet point. Readings marked *Recommended* are not required, but help round out a topic if you have time for them. All readings without links are available Canvas. If there are multiple assignments, I've chosen them so they do not take up more reading time than a single long one. In general, journalism articles do not need to be read as closely.

Tuesday 1/10: Introduction to Ethics

Unit One: Personal Moral Reasoning and Health-Related Decision-making

Tuesday 1/17: Basics of argument analysis; Controversial choices and morality during the pandemic

- The Hippocratic Oath
- Julian Savulescu, "Autonomy, the Good Life, and Controversial Choices"
- Alison Hills, "'Can I sunbathe in the park?' is now a deep moral question"
(<https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2020/apr/10/sunbathing-park-deep-moral-questions-philosophers-coronavirus-individual>)
- Keisha Ray, "Going Back to School During a Global Pandemic: A Case Study"
- Yascha Mounk, "Four theories for why people are still out partying"

Unit Two: Medicine at the End and Beginning of Life

Tuesday 1/24: Death and euthanasia in the era of life-sustaining medicine

- Watch over weekend and complete video response assignment: *How to Die in Oregon*
(<https://tubitv.com/movies/310499/how-to-die-in-oregon>)
- James Rachels, "Active and Passive Euthanasia" (Read and do active reading assignment)
- Daniel Callahan, "When Self-Determination Runs Amok"
- Rachel Aviv, "What Does it Mean to Die?"
- *Recommended:* Maria Cheng, "Experts troubled by Canada's euthanasia laws"

Tuesday 1/31: Abortion and birthing ethics

- Don Marquis, "Why Abortion is Immoral"
- Judith Thomson, "A Defense of Abortion"
- *At least skim:* Jennifer Torres and Raymond De Vries, "Birthing Ethics"
- *Recommended:* Jia Tolentino, "Interview With a Woman Who Recently Had an Abortion at 32 Weeks"
(<https://jezebel.com/interview-with-a-woman-who-recently-had-an-abortion-at-1781972395>)
- *Recommended:* The Ezra Klein Show, "The Ethics of Abortion"
(<https://podcasts.apple.com/us/podcast/the-ethics-of-abortion/id1548604447?i=1000562784585>)

Tuesday 2/7: Abortion, disability, and quality of life

- Elizabeth Barnes, "Valuing Disability, Causing Disability"
- Adrienne Asch, "Prenatal Diagnosis and Selective Abortion: A Challenge to Practice and Policy"
- Timothy Murphy, "Deaf Culture and Babies"
- *Recommended:* Quill Kukla, "The Ethics and Cultural Politics of Reproductive Risk Warnings"

Unit Three: Biotechnology, AI, and Data Ethics (complete unit two quiz by 2/13!)

Tuesday 2/14: Enhancement technologies

- Timothy Murphy, “Designer Children?”
- Carl Elliott, “What’s Wrong with Enhancement Technologies?”
- Nicholas Agar, “There is a Legitimate Place for Human Genetic Enhancement”
- Andy Clark, *Natural-Born Cyborgs*, Chapter One: “Cyborgs Unplugged”
- *Recommended:* Arthur Caplan, Carolyn Plunkett, et al., “Ethical challenges created by CRISPR”

Tuesday 2/21: Biomedical data

- Brent Mittelstadt and Luciano Floridi, “The Ethics of Big Data: Current and Foreseeable Issues in Biomedical Contexts”
- Sebastian Mann, Julian Savulescu, and Barbara Sahakian, “Facilitating the ethical use of health data for the benefit of society”
- Charles Seife, “23andMe Is Terrifying, but Not for the Reasons the FDA Thinks”
(<https://www.scientificamerican.com/article/23andme-is-terrifying-but-not-for-the-reasons-the-fda-thinks/>)
- *Recommended:* danah boyd and Kate Crawford, “Critical questions for big data: Provocations for a cultural, technological, and scholarly phenomenon”
- *Recommended:* Jeffrey Reiman, “Driving to the Panopticon: A Philosophical Exploration of the Risks to Privacy Posed by the Highway Technology of the Future”

Tuesday 2/28: AI and algorithms

- Moritz Hardt, “How big data is unfair”
- Sina Fazelpour and David Danks, “Algorithmic bias: Senses, sources, solutions”
- Robert Sparrow, “Robots in aged care: a dystopian future?”
- Darshali Vyas, Leo Eisenstein, and David Jones, “Hidden in Plain Sight—Reconsidering the Use of Race Correction in Clinical Algorithms”

NO CLASS TUESDAY 3/7 - SPRING BREAK

Unit Four: Health Care Disparities and Race (complete unit three quiz by 3/13!)

Tuesday 3/14: The ethics of race-conscious medicine

- David Wasserman, “Is Racial Profiling More Benign in Medicine Than in Law?”
- Jessica Cerdeña, Marie V. Plaisime, Jennifer Tsai, “From race-based to race-conscious medicine”
- Richard Garcia, “The Misuse of Race in Medial Diagnosis”
- *At least read highlights:* Center for Reproductive Rights, “Racial and Gender Discrimination in U.S. Healthcare”
- *Recommended:* Merlin Chowkwanyun and Adolph Reed Jr., “Racial Health Disparities and Covid-19—Caution and Context”

Tuesday 3/21: Understanding racial disparities: policy and social determinants of health

- Onora O'Neill, "Public Health or Clinical Ethics: Thinking beyond Borders"
- Dorothy Roberts, "Debating the Cause of Health Disparities: Implications for Bioethics and Racial Equality"
- Linda Villarosa, "Pollution is Killing Black Americans. This Community Fought Back."
- *Recommended:* David Williams, Jourdyn Lawrence, and Brigette Davis, "Racism and Health: Evidence and Needed Research"

Unit Five: Research, Resources and Political/Economic Dimensions of Healthcare

Tuesday 3/28: Research ethics, failures and precautions

- James Jones, "The Tuskegee Syphilis Experiment"
- Oonagh Corrigan, "Empty ethics: the problem with informed consent"
- Samuel Hellman and Deborah Hellman, "Of Mice But Not Men: Problems of the Randomized Control Trial"
- *Recommended:* Michael Keane, "CoViD-19: Time to rethink the RCT and consider more efficient and ethical approaches to clinical knowledge acquisition"

Tuesday 4/4: Resource allocation and health policy: The case of Covid-19 (Unit 4 + 3/28 quiz by 4/3!)

- Ezekiel Emanuel et al., "Fair Allocation of Scarce Medical Resources in the Time of Covid-19"
- H. Orri Stefánsson, "Three Mistakes in the Moral Reasoning About the Covid-19 Pandemic"
- Harald Schmidt, "The Way We Ration Ventilators is Biased"
- Kathleen Moore, "My Husband Would Not Survive a Triage Decision"
- *Recommended:* Emily Bazelon et al., "Restarting America Means People Will Die. So When Do We Do It?"

Tuesday 4/11: Healthcare as an industry

- Watch over weekend and complete video response: *Care: Care Workers, Their Clients, and a Coming Crisis* (<https://pitt.kanopy.com/video/care>)
- Leigh Phillips, "The Political Economy of Ebola" (<https://www.jacobinmag.com/2014/08/the-political-economy-of-ebola/>)
- Arthur Gale, "Drug Company Compensated Physicians' Role in Causing America's Deadly Opioid Epidemic: When Will We Learn?"
- Katie Thomas and Jessica Silver-Greenberg, "How a Hospital Chain Used a Poor Neighborhood to Turn Huge Profits"
- Silver-Greenberg and Thomas, "They Were Entitled to Free Care. Hospitals Hounded Them to Pay"

Tuesday 4/18: Debating universal healthcare

- John Geyman, "The United States of America Should Adopt Universal Healthcare"
- Glen Whitman, "The United States of America Should Not Adopt Universal Healthcare"
- Sarah Kliff and Josh Katz, "Hospitals and Insurers Didn't Want You to See These Prices. Here's Why."
- Sarah Kliff, "An ER visit, a \$12,000 bill—and a health insurer that wouldn't pay"
- Sarah Kliff, "He went to an in-network emergency room. He still ended up with a \$7,924 bill"

Complete unit five quiz by end of 4/25!