

Bioethics

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Office Hours: TBA

TAs:

Overview

Health policy has a significant impact on different aspects of our lives: our well-being, our finances, our life goals, how we relate to ourselves and others, and so on. What makes health policies desirable? And how should we decide which health policy to adopt?

This course approaches these questions from an ethical perspective. It aims to develop your ability to identify morally relevant factors and make ethical judgements on health care issues. It will begin with an overview of a few ethical theories as applied to various health care issues, and will then move on to in-depth discussions of drug legalization, euthanasia, and abortion. There will also be plenty of case study discussions throughout the term. These are great opportunities for you to apply what you learn to analyze problems.

Learning Objectives

At the end of the course, successful students will be able to:

- (1) explain, compare, and apply various ethical theories to analyze and evaluate health care issues;
- (2) present arguments, raise objections, and reply to objections in a clear and logical manner;
- (3) explain the relevance of ethics to health care policy in terms of the topics covered in this course.

Attendance & Participation

Attendance is crucial to success in this course because in-class participation (e.g. discussions) is an essential part of the learning process. **Self-study is important, but you can't learn everything on your own. I therefore strongly encourage you to attend the lectures.**

Although assessment is not based on attendance, it is your responsibility to attend lectures where lots of important information will be given. If you miss any lectures, please ask your classmates for what you have missed. I will give priority to enquiries that have not already been addressed in lectures.

Respectful Classroom Policy

Students are expected to respect other participants in the online platform. Public messages during online tutorials are reserved for questions and issues that require immediate attention.

For other questions and comments, please use the raise-hand function. Disruption, disrespectful comments, lack of due participation, and other inappropriate behaviours, if repeated, will result in mark deductions and other disciplinary action.

Reading

You do not need to buy any textbooks for this course. Most of the reading materials can be found on the library website in electronic form. Other reading materials can be downloaded from **Canvas** or will be distributed under the fair use provisions.

Please read the assigned reading before coming to class. Doing the assigned reading and familiarizing yourself with the topic can facilitate the learning process.

Schedule

Wk	Reading	Note
1	Introduction	
2	Moral Theories & Coronavirus Pandemic	
3	Resource Allocation & Coronavirus Pandemic: Fleck, Leonard. "Just Caring: In Defense of Limited Age-Based Healthcare Rationing" (sections 1 ["the beginning of Age-based..."], 2, 5, 6 only)	
	Drug Legalization	
4	Nutt, David. "How Can We Measure The Harms Done by Drugs?" (Skim; emphasis on p.32-35 & p.38-44) Husak, Douglas. "Reasons to Criminalize Drug Use" (p.41-53; p71-82)	
5	De Marneffe, Peter. "An Argument for Drug Prohibition" (p.109-122; p.177-185) Husak, Douglas. "Reasons to Criminalize Drug Use" (p53-64)	
	Euthanasia	
6	Rachels, James. "The Sanctity of Life."	
7	Brock, Dan. "Voluntary Active Euthanasia." [From Brock, Dan. 1993. Life and Death.]	
8	Case Study Discussion	
	Abortion (<i>Guest Lecture in March; TBA</i>)	
9	Marquis, Don. "Why Abortion Is Immoral."	
10	Thomson, Judith. "A Defense of Abortion." (Optional) Boonin, David. "The Duty to Save the Violinist Objection."; "The Tacit Consent Objection." (emphasis on p.148-150 & 156-164)	

	[From Boonin, David. 2003. A Defense of Abortion.]	
11	Sumner, Wayne. "A Third Way."	
12	TBA	
13	Summary	

Readings:

Fleck, Leonard. Just Caring: In Defense of Limited Age-Based Healthcare Rationing. (sections 1 ["the beginning of Age-based..."], 2, 5, 6 only)

Nutt "How Can We Measure The Harms Done by Drugs?" (Skim; emphasis on p.32-35 & p.38-44)

Husak, Douglas "Reasons to Criminalize Drug Use" (p.41-53; p71-82) [From Husak & De Marneffe. The Legalization of Drugs.]

De Marneffe, "An Argument for Drug Prohibition" (p.109-122; p.177-185) [From Husak & De Marneffe. The Legalization of Drugs.]

Husak, "Reasons to Criminalize Drug Use" (p53-63) [From Husak & De Marneffe. The Legalization of Drugs.]

Rachels, James. The Sanctity of Life. (<http://jamesrachels.org/EOL2.pdf>)

Brock, Dan. "Voluntary Active Euthanasia." [From Brock, Dan. 1993. Life and Death.]

Marquis, Don. "Why Abortion Is Immoral."

Thomson, Judith. "A Defense of Abortion."

Boonin, David. "The Duty to Save the Violinist Objection." & "The Tacit Consent Objection." (emphasis on p.148-150 & 156-164) [From Boonin, David. 2003. A Defense of Abortion.]

Sumner, Wayne. "A Third Way."

Assessment

(1) Online Participation (10%)

(2) Writing Assignments (2 + 38 + 40%)

(1) Online Participation

You will need to regularly participate in online discussions. In each discussion, you need to post your answer to a question and comment on at least one answer posted by another person. You may miss one (1) discussion without any mark penalties. (Note: participation in online tutorials is not assessed.)

(2) Writing Assignments

(This assessment is the most complex part of this course; please read the following explanations more than once and make sure you understand the assessment.)

There are two short writing assignments. **More than one submission is allowed.**

(2.1) Writing Assignment 1 (2+38%)

- (i) You first need to submit a 3-sentence outline, very succinctly summarizing the arguments that you want to discuss. This outline counts for 2% and you will receive some feedback.
- (ii) You then expand your outline to an essay based on your outline and the feedback. This first submission will be marked and more detailed feedback will be given.
- (iii) You then have the option to revise your essay based on the feedback and submit a second draft—I strongly encourage you to do so.

(2.2) Writing Assignment 2 (40%)

Writing Assignment 2 is almost the same except

- (i) There is no outline. Your first submission will be your full essay.
- (ii) You will choose one out of two topics (euthanasia and abortion)

Notes:

- (i) Your grade for each writing assignment will be the higher grade of the two submissions.
- (ii) Due to the multi-submission policy, please make sure to submit on time.
- (iii) Your essays will be assessed based on a 7-criterion rubric. To receive a specific grade (e.g. B), an essay must receive at least that grade on each of the 7 criteria. (The 7 criteria are argument development, argument engagement, clarity, strength and originality, background understanding, writing and mechanics, and citations).

“I have never seen any assignment like these. Why do you design the assignments like that?”

This assessment system is informed by pedagogical research and my own teaching experience (See, for instance, Benjamin Bloom 1968; Fred Keller 1968; Linda Nilson 2015). Research has shown that students learn more effectively, achieve higher performance, and are more motivated if:

- (i) they receive formative feedback and are given opportunities to improve,

The multi-submission policy gives you multiple opportunities to learn from formative feedback and make improvements.

- (ii) they know clearly what are they expected to do and how to achieve their goals,

The criteria for achieving each grade on an assignment are clearly stated.

- (iii) they have a choice on what they want to learn and achieve,

Given the clearly stated criteria, you can choose which grade you want to aim at.

- (iv) they are held to high expectations.

Late Submission Policy

If you cannot submit your assignments on time and require academic accommodations, you are

welcome to come and talk to me about your situation, but please do so as early as possible. Extensions may be given depending on your circumstances. However, late assignments without a legitimate excuse will be subject to penalties (writing assignments: 10% per day; discussion forum: 50% per day).

Course Website

Our course website is **Canvas**. You can find the syllabus, lecture slides, and other reading materials there.

Interim Course Evaluation

A short and informal survey will be posted on **Canvas** in **Week 5**. This is to let me know your thoughts and comments on the course materials, the lectures, the assignments, etc., and help me to improve the course. I encourage you to do the survey.

Plagiarism

Plagiarism is a serious academic misconduct. It will not and should not be treated lightly. Please cite properly if you take any text from someone else. For details on UBC's plagiarism policy and tips on avoiding plagiarism, please see

<http://www.calendar.ubc.ca/Vancouver/index.cfm?tree=3,54,111,959> and

<http://learningcommons.ubc.ca/resource-guides/avoiding-plagiarism/>

Diversity and Inclusivity

No one is born to be good/bad at philosophy (or anything). You are here to learn new things and improve your thinking and argument skills over the course of 13 weeks. I encourage you to take this opportunity to learn as much as you can and make improvements, and I will do my best to design the course and arrange the lectures in ways that give everyone a fair chance to do so. If you have any thoughts or comments on the course arrangements, you are always welcome to come talk to me in person or send me an email.

The University provides academic accommodations for students with disabilities. You can find more details on academic accommodations by contacting Accessibility Services or go to <http://students.ubc.ca/success/student-supports/academic-accommodations#registerad>.

I understand that institutions may sometimes seem unapproachable. **You are always very welcome to come and talk to me** if you have any concerns, e.g. assignment deadlines, missing classes, etc.

A Note on Sensitive Topics in this Course

The following passage is written by the UBC administration.

During this pandemic, the shift to online learning has greatly altered teaching and

studying at UBC, including changes to health and safety considerations. Keep in mind that some UBC courses might cover topics that are censored or considered illegal by non-Canadian governments. This may include, but is not limited to, **human rights, representative government**, defamation, obscenity, gender or sexuality, and **historical or current geopolitical controversies**. If you are a student living abroad, you will be subject to the laws of your local jurisdiction, and your local authorities might limit your access to course material or take punitive action against you. UBC is strongly committed to academic freedom, but has no control over foreign authorities (please visit <http://www.calendar.ubc.ca/vancouver/index.cfm?tree=3,33,86,0> for an articulation of the values of the University conveyed in the Senate Statement on Academic Freedom). Thus, we recognize that students will have legitimate reason to exercise caution in studying certain subjects. If you have concerns regarding your personal situation, consider postponing taking a course with manifest risks, until you are back on campus or reach out to your academic advisor to find substitute courses. For further information and support, please visit: <http://academic.ubc.ca/support-resources/freedom-expression>