Philosophy 333A - Introduction to Bio-Medical Ethics

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About this course. This course is an exploration of several of the ethical problems, dilemmas, and controversies that arise in connection to the medical profession and public health. The topics that will be covered may include abortion, normative ethics, the use of AI in medicine, the philosophy of disability, euthanasia, informed consent, paternalism, and the regulation of drugs. The aim of this course is to develop the skill of thinking about these topics from a *philosophical* perspective. This means that special weight will be placed on foundational ethical theories and the analysis of arguments. We will also explore the connections between issues in medical ethics and other issues of broader philosophical interest. No previous experience in philosophy or medicine is required for this course.

(*Note.* This syllabus is subject to change by the start of the term.)

Course Requirements.
(1) The four-stage writing assignment. (See the description below) - 50%
(2) Participation - 10%
(3) Final exam - 40%

The four-stage writing assignment. One of the primary aims of this course is to develop the skills for writing philosophical essays. We will be breaking down the writing process into four stages, each of which has its own separate deadline and will receive its own grade.

Stage 1 - Reconstruct an argument; identify the premises and conclusion (<150 words) - 5%
Stage 2 - Write an exposition (~400 words) - 5%
Stage 3 - Write an exposition *and* response (<1000 words) - 10%
Stage 4 - Full-length essay (~1500 words) - 30%

(The percentages listed are for your overall grade.) The point of this assignment is to build an essay incrementally. You may write on any of the topics that we cover in this course. *You are permitted to write on the same topic for all four stages. You are also permitted to change your topic from one stage to the next.* The choice is yours as to whether you would like to continue building your essay on the same topic.

The advantage of sticking with the same topic from one stage to the next is that you get to re-use previously written material and incorporate feedback from the instructor. On the other

hand, if you find a new topic more interesting, or would prefer to start again from scratch, then you're also welcome to do so.

Participation. As part of their participation grade, each student will be required to email me questions about the course readings before the start of the lecture at least five times throughout the semester.

Final Exam. There will be a take-home exam. The window for the exam will be 48 hours. It will consist of several short answer questions requiring you to explain some of the key concepts from the course and evaluate arguments.

Course Outline

Class	Topic	Sub-topics & key concepts
1. May 17	Introduction to bioethics and critical thinking	- Arguments - Propositions - Deduction & Induction - Soundness & Validity
2. May 19	Abortion I	- The 'future like ours' account of the wrongness of killing - Personal identity - The biological account of personal identity
3. May 24	Abortion II	- Two kinds of pro-choice response - The violinist argument
4. May 26	Normative ethics	- Metaethics - Normative ethics - Applied ethics - Utilitarianism - Higher and lower pleasures - Deontology - The Categorical Imperative
5. May 31	Artificial Intelligence in Medicine	- Top-down approaches - Bottom-up approaches - Generalism vs. particularism - Ideal Observer Theory - Black box algorithms
6. June 2	The philosophy of disability I	- Biological accounts of disability - Social constructivism

7. June 7	The philosophy of disability II	- The non-identity problem - The 'mere difference' view of disability
8. June 9	End of life decisions and informed consent	- Active vs. passive euthenasia - Killing vs. letting die - Informed consent
9. June 14	Drug laws	- Legalization vs decriminalization - Paternalism
10. June 16	Student's choice Choices include: animal testing, vaccine mandates, gene editing, issues in the pharmacological treatment of emotions, etc.	
11. June 21	Student's choice	