

## **Bioethics**

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Office Hours: By appointment

## **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.

## Lecture Policy

Students are expected to respect other participants during the lecture. Please refrain from using computers and other electronic devices for purposes not related to the lectures, e.g. messaging, watching videos, playing games, online shopping, etc. Such behaviours are both disruptive and disrespectful. Students are also expected to take part in in-class learning activities and discussions. Improper use of electronic devices, disruptive and disrespectful behaviour, lack of due participation, and other inappropriate behaviour, if repeated, will result in disciplinary actions.

## 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

### Module Reading

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| 1 | Introduction  |
| 2 | Moral Theories & Coronavirus Pandemic<br>Resource Allocation & Coronavirus Pandemic:  |
| 3 | Fleck, Leonard. "Just Caring: In Defense of Limited Age-Based Healthcare Rationing" (sections 1 ["the beginning of Age-based..."], 2, 5, 6 only)<br><b>Drug Legalization</b><br><b>Nutt, David et al. "Drug harms in the UK: a multicriteria decision analysis". <i>The Lancet</i>, 2010.</b> |
| 4 | Husak, Douglas. "Reasons to Criminalize Drug Use" (p.41-53; p71-82)<br>De Marneffe, Peter. "An Argument for Drug Prohibition" (p.109-122; p.177-185)  |
| 5 | Husak, Douglas. "Reasons to Criminalize Drug Use" (p53-64)<br><b>Euthanasia</b>   |
| 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**
- 9 Marquis, Don. "Why Abortion Is Immoral."  
Thomson, Judith. "A Defense of Abortion."
- 10 (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

**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, David et al. "Drug harms in the UK: a multicriteria decision analysis". The Lancet, 2010.

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> (Links to an external site.))

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

There are three short writing assignments. (10 + 45 + 45%)

(These assignments are quite complex; please read the following explanations more than once and make sure you understand the assessment.)

### (1) Writing Assignment 1—Trial Run (10%)

The first writing assignment aims to give you an opportunity to practice giving clear, succinct arguments that support or oppose a stand. It consists of two and only two sentences of reasonable length (yes).

### (2) Writing Assignments 2 & 3 (45% + 45%)

**Both Writing Assignments 2 and 3 allow two submissions.**

On each assignment,

(i) You write and submit a first submission. It will be marked and feedback will be given.

(ii) You then have the option to revise your essay based on the feedback and submit a second submission—I strongly encourage you to do so.

Notes:

(i) For each of these two assignments, your grade 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 5+2-criterion rubric. To receive a specific grade (e.g. B), an essay must receive at least that grade on each of the 5+2 criteria. (The 5+2 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; Thomas Guskey 2007; 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 assignment 1: 10% per day; writing assignments 2 & 3: **1% final grade** 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 <https://students.ubc.ca/about-student-services/centre-for-accessibility>

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.