

Bioethics

2023W2

Lecturer: Irwin Chan

Email: irwin.chan@ubc.ca

Meeting time:

Monday: 1700-1735

Wednesday: 1700-1750

Fri: No Meeting

(No meetings will be recorded)

TA:

Overview

Health policy has a profound impact on different aspects of our lives, such as our well-being, finances, life goals, and how we relate to ourselves and others. What makes health policies desirable? And how should we decide which health policy to adopt? This course approaches these questions from an ethical perspective and aims to develop your ability to identify morally relevant factors and make ethical judgements on healthcare issues.

This course begins with an introduction to various ethical theories applied to various health care issues. It delves into in-depth discussions of topics such as drug legalization, euthanasia, and abortion. Throughout the term, there will be plenty of case study discussions, enabling you to apply your knowledge and thinking skills to analyze problems.

Some of the topics discussed in this course may be emotionally challenging (e.g. addiction, suicide, and mental illness). Remember to be gentle with yourself and others. Do not hesitate to seek support if you need it. There are plenty of resources available (e.g. <https://students.ubc.ca/health>).

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) make ethical judgements based on relevant and reliable information, realistic understanding of the situation, and sound reasoning;
- (4) explain the relevance of ethics to healthcare policy in terms of the topics covered in this course.

Course Alignment with University Goals

The design of this course is aligned with the themes and goals set out in the University Strategic Plan 2018 - 2028 (<https://strategicplan.ubc.ca/>). In particular:

Theme 1: Inclusion--Strategy 4: Inclusive Excellence:

This course is committed to promoting inclusivity and addressing historical marginalization and exclusion. It aims to enable and encourage all those who have historically excluded to actively participate, contribute, and thrive in this course. Several core elements of this course that contribute to this goal:

- The blended learning model combines online and face-to-face learning, accommodating different learning preferences and accessibility needs.
- Multiple avenues of learning, including individual and collaborative, synchronous and asynchronous, and verbal and written methods, ensure diverse learning styles are accommodated.
- Assignment assessment policies, such as multiple attempts and anonymous marking, create equitable opportunities for all students.
- Thoughtful selection of reading materials ensures access.
- The submission and extension policy considers individual circumstances, providing flexibility for all participants to engage and succeed in the course.

Theme Two: Collaboration--Strategy 14: Interdisciplinary Education

Collaborative learning is a fundamental pillar of this course, fostering an environment where students from diverse disciplines come together to engage in meaningful and interactive learning. By combining their unique perspectives, insights, and expertise, students actively participate in a collaborative learning process that enriches their educational experience.

Theme Three: Innovation--Strategy 11: Education Renewal

This course incorporates evidence-informed and innovative pedagogies, such as blended learning, multiple assignment attempts, and collaborative learning, to create an engaging and effective learning environment.

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 meetings. 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	Topic	Readings
1	Introduction	
	Euthanasia	
2	Against Euthanasia: The Sanctity of Life	Rachels
3	For Euthanasia: Self-determination & Well-being	Brock
4	Euthanasia & Disabilities + Case Studies	Stainton
5	Writing Workshop 1	
	Drug Legalization	
6	For Legalization	Nutt; Husak (1)
7	Against Legalization	De Marneffe; Husak (2)
	Abortion	
8	Against Abortion: Grave Loss	Marquis
9	For Abortion: The Violinist Analogy	Thomson
10	The Personhood Question	Sumner
11	The Personhood Question (cont)	
12	Writing Workshop 2/Peer Review	

Readings:

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

Husak, Douglas (1). "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, Douglas (2). "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.]

Stainton, Tim. "Disability and Assisted Suicide: Elucidating Some Key Concerns."

(<https://bioethics.org.uk/media/xwwnctsp/disability-and-assisted-suicide-elucidating-some-key-concerns-prof-tim-stainton.pdf>)

Marquis, Don. "Why Abortion Is Immoral."

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.]

Sumner, L. Wayne., "A Third Way", in Feinberg, Joel, ed., The Problem of Abortion (Belmont, CA: Wadsworth, 1984)

Assessment

Writing Assignments (60 + 40%)

There are two short writing assignments.

- (i) Each one accepts up to two attempts; only the one with the higher grade counts.
- (ii) You can submit a 2nd attempt only if you have submitted a 1st attempt.
- (iii) Between the two assignments (first and second assignments, not first and second attempts), the assignment with the higher grade counts for 60% towards your final grade. The one with the lower grade counts for 40%.

Topics and due dates will be announced later in the term.

Non-essay formats (e.g. film, play, or story) may be accepted upon consultation. Please reach out to me in advance to discuss your proposal.

Retry Policy

Both assignments allow multiple attempts.

On each assignment,

- (i) You write and submit a first attempt. It will be marked and feedback will be given.
- (ii) You then have the option to revise your assignment based on the feedback and submit another attempt—I strongly encourage you to do so. Both assignments allow up to two attempts.
- (iii) Your grade will be the higher grade of the two attempts.
- (iv) Due to the multi-submission policy, please make sure to submit your assignments on time.

“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. They are also further clarified by the feedback.

Assignment Deadline and Marking Policy

(i) The deadline for an assignment will be at least 14 days after the posting of the full instructions for the assignment.

(ii) If an assignment allows a second attempt, the deadline for the second attempt will be at least 7 days after the release of the grades and feedback of the first attempt.

(iii) All assignment deadlines will be automatically adjusted according to (i) and (ii). If you see a deadline that is contrary to (i) and (ii), it has not been adjusted but will be adjusted.

(iv) We aim to finish the marking of each assignment in 14 days.

Late Submission and Extension 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 will be given depending on your circumstances. However, late assignments without a legitimate excuse will be subject to penalties (**1% final grade per day**).

Please note that any submission that is more than 14 days (winter term)/7 days (summer term) late will not be accepted (unless you have received an extension or can provide legitimate reasons).

Course Website

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

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.

The following are some UBC campus-wide policies:

Statement of UBC values and policies:

UBC provides resources to support student learning and to maintain healthy lifestyles but recognizes that sometimes crises arise and so there are additional resources to access including those for survivors of sexual violence. UBC values respect for the person and ideas of all members of the academic community. Harassment and discrimination are not tolerated, nor is suppression of academic freedom. UBC provides appropriate accommodation for students with disabilities and for religious and cultural observances. UBC values academic honesty and students are expected to acknowledge the ideas generated by others and to uphold the highest academic standards in all of their actions. Details of the policies and how to access support are available here: <https://senate.ubc.ca/policies-resources-support-student-success/>.

Academic Concession

[UBC's academic concession policy](#) "articulates the University's commitment to support students in their academic pursuits through the application of academic concessions in the event that students experience unanticipated events or circumstances that interfere with their ability to accomplish academic work." An academic concession may be granted for a student when an unexpected situation or circumstance prevents them from completing graded work or exams. Students may request an academic concession for the following three reasons:

- Unanticipated changes in personal responsibilities that create a conflict
- Medical circumstances

- Compassionate grounds

If students have a disability or ongoing medical condition that affects their studies for more than one term, they may request an [academic accommodation](#).

Requests should be made as early as reasonably possible. Depending on the situation, either the academic advising office or course instructor will manage student's request.

Academic Integrity

The academic enterprise is founded on honesty, civility, and integrity. As members of this enterprise, all students are expected to know, understand, and follow the codes of conduct regarding academic integrity. At the most basic level, this means submitting only original work done by you and acknowledging all sources of information or ideas and attributing them to others as required. This also means you should not cheat, copy, or mislead others about what is your work. Violations of academic integrity (i.e., misconduct) lead to the breakdown of the academic enterprise, and therefore serious consequences arise and harsh sanctions are imposed. For example, incidences of plagiarism or cheating may result in a mark of zero on the assignment or exam and more serious consequences may apply if the matter is referred to the President's Advisory Committee on Student Discipline. Careful records are kept in order to monitor and prevent recurrences. A more detailed description of academic integrity, including the University's policies and procedures, may be found under [Discipline for Academic Misconduct](#) in the Academic Calendar.

Resources to Support Student Success

UBC provides resources to support student learning and to maintain healthy lifestyles but recognizes that sometimes crises arise and so there are additional resources to access including those for survivors of sexual violence. UBC values respect for the person and ideas of all members of the academic community. Harassment and discrimination are not tolerated nor is suppression of academic freedom. UBC provides appropriate accommodation for students with disabilities and for religious observances. UBC values academic honesty and students are expected to acknowledge the ideas generated by others and to uphold the highest academic standards in all of their actions.

Details of the policies and how to access support are available on the UBC Senate website: <https://senate.ubc.ca/policies-resources-support-student-success>