

## PHILOS 333: Biomedical Ethics

Instructor: Eric Wilkinson  
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Lectures: Mondays, Wednesdays, Fridays, 11:00 – 12:00  
Office Hours: Mondays, 10:00

### Course Description:

To what extent should the wishes of patients be respected? When is euthanasia morally acceptable? Should we genetically enhance our children? Under what circumstances, if any, is abortion morally wrong? Can medical research on human subjects be ethical? These kinds of questions are examined in biomedical ethics. This course will explore several of these subjects central to biomedical ethics. In particular, we will examine debates over patient autonomy, abortion, physician-assisted dying, reproductive technologies, human enhancement, and the definitions of health, disease, and illness. These topics are introduced using the writings of some of the most influential bioethicists working in the field, with a range of positions on each issue being represented. Upon completing this course, students will have an understanding of the debates, and will have had an opportunity to form their own opinions and to acquire ethical insights that they can apply to professional medical contexts.

### Assessment & Grading:

<i>Assignment:</i>	<i>Due Date:</i>	<i>Weight:</i>	<i>Description:</i>
Participation	Ongoing	10%	Contributing to in-class discussion groups.
Reading Responses	Weekly	20%	A weekly, written reading response.
Quizzes	See Schedule	30%	Six short-answer quizzes, written in class.
Final Exam	TBD	40%	An exam of short and long-answer questions.

**Communication Policy:** Before emailing, please consult the syllabus for an answer to your query. When emailing, use your university email address and allow at least 48 hours to receive a response.

**Late Policy & Extensions:** The penalty for late assignment submission is five percent (5%) a day. Extensions will be assessed individually and granted mainly for medical reasons or bereavement.

**Disability Accommodations:** Those who require disability accommodations must register with UBC's Centre for Accessibility. The Centre will assist students in determining their needs and will help to communicate the accommodations that registered students require to the course instructor.

**Academic Integrity:** The University of British Columbia values academic integrity. Thus, students should understand the consequences of cheating, plagiarism, AI use, and other academic offences.

Date:	Lecture Topic:	Primary Readings:	Secondary Readings:
January 5 <sup>th</sup>	Introduction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “The Challenge of Cultural Relativism” (James Rachels)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Utilitarianism</i> [excerpts] (John Stuart Mill)</li> </ul>
January 7 <sup>th</sup>			
January 9 <sup>th</sup>	Discussion Session		
January 12 <sup>th</sup>	Ethical Theories	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “An Ethics of Caring” (Nel Noddings)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “A Simplified Version of Kant’s Ethics” (Onora O’Neill)</li> </ul>
January 14 <sup>th</sup>			
January 16 <sup>th</sup>	Quiz #1		
January 19 <sup>th</sup>	Patient Autonomy & Informed Consent	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “Autonomy and Informed Consent” (Gerald Dworkin)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “Paternalism and Partial Autonomy” (Onora O’Neill)</li> </ul>
January 21 <sup>st</sup>			
January 23 <sup>rd</sup>	Discussion Session		
January 26 <sup>th</sup>	Autonomy & Paternalism	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “Autonomy: The Emperor’s New Clothes” (Onora O’Neill)</li> <li>• “Against Autonomy” (Sarah Conolly)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “Conscientious Autonomy: Displacing Decisions in Health Care” (Rebecca Kukla)</li> </ul>
January 28 <sup>th</sup>			
January 30 <sup>th</sup>	Quiz #2		
February 2 <sup>nd</sup>	The Abortion Debate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “A Defence of Abortion” (Judith Jarvis Thomson)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “Why Abortion is Immoral” (Don Marquis)</li> </ul>
February 4 <sup>th</sup>			
February 6 <sup>th</sup>	Discussion Session		
February 9 <sup>th</sup>	The Abortion Debate (Continued)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “Abortion and the Concept of a Person” (Jane English)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “The Future of Pro-Choice Discourse in Canada” (Gordon &amp; Saurette)</li> </ul>
February 11 <sup>th</sup>			
February 13 <sup>th</sup>	Quiz #3		

February 16 <sup>th</sup>	Reading Break – No Class	• No Readings	• No Readings
February 18 <sup>th</sup>			
February 20 <sup>th</sup>			
February 23 <sup>rd</sup>	Health, Disease, and Illness	• “On the Distinction Between Illness and Disease” (Christopher Boorse)	• “Defining ‘Health’ and ‘Disease’” (Marc Ereshefsky)
February 25 <sup>th</sup>			
February 27 <sup>th</sup>	Discussion Session		
March 2 <sup>nd</sup>	Euthanasia & Physician-Assisted Dying	• <i>Physician-Assisted Death</i> [excerpts] (Wayne Sumner)	• “Physician Assisted Suicide: A New Look at the Arguments” (J.M. Dieterle)
March 4 <sup>th</sup>			
March 6 <sup>th</sup>	Discussion Session		
March 9 <sup>th</sup>	Euthanasia & Physician-Assisted Dying (Continued)	• “Euthanasia and Assisted Dying” (Collier & Haliburton)	• “Against the Right to Die” (J. David Velleman)
March 11 <sup>th</sup>			
March 13 <sup>th</sup>	Quiz #4		
March 16 <sup>th</sup>	Human Research	• “Of Mice but not Men: Problems of the Randomized Clinical Trial” (Hellman & Hellman)	• “A Response to a Purported Ethical Difficulty with Randomized Clinical Trials Involving Cancer Patients” (Benjamin Freedman)
March 18 <sup>th</sup>			
March 20 <sup>th</sup>	Discussion Session		
March 23 <sup>rd</sup>	Reproductive and Genetic Technologies	• “Genetic Dilemmas and the Child’s Right to an Open Future” (Dena Davids)	• “Cloning Human Beings” (Dan Brock)
March 25 <sup>th</sup>			
March 27 <sup>th</sup>	Quiz #5		

March 30 <sup>th</sup>	Transhumanism & Human Enhancement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “The Ethics of Human Enhancement” (Giubilini &amp; Sanyal)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “Genetic Enhancement” (Julian Savulescu)</li> </ul>
April 1 <sup>st</sup>			
April 3 <sup>rd</sup>	Discussion Session		
April 6 <sup>th</sup>	The New Eugenics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “A Not-So-New Eugenics” (Robert Sparrow)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “Procreative Beneficence: Why We Should Select the Best Children” (Julian Savulescu)</li> </ul>
April 8 <sup>th</sup>			
April 10 <sup>th</sup>	Quiz #6		

### Participation:

On alternating weeks of class there are discussion sessions (marked in the schedule) where students will participate in group conversations on the lecture topic for that week. The attendance and active participation of students in discussion sessions is recorded and constitutes their participation grade.

### Reading Responses:

Every week of class during the course, students must write down a reading response in the reading response booklet and hand the booklet in at the end of the week. The response should take the form of comments or questions on the readings, and need not be longer than a single paragraph in length. The instructor will respond to these comments and questions and return the booklets the next week.

### Quizzes:

Over the course of the semester, there will be six quizzes (marked on the schedule) that will consist of short-answer questions. The quizzes will be graded and returned to students the following week. Each quiz is worth 5% of the grade for the course, and together they equal 30% of the course grade.