

Syllabus: PY329: Topics in Ethics: Bioethics

U.S. Military Academy at West Point

Winter 2020

Instructor:

Name: Prof. Jeremy Davis

Email: jeremy.davis@westpoint.edu (for emergencies: jeremydavisphilosophy@gmail.com)

Office: LH313

Course Details:

This course is an introductory survey of the philosophical approach to issues in and around the field of medicine. (Bioethics is sometimes also called ‘biomedical ethics’ or just ‘medical ethics’.)

We will focus on the methods that philosophers and bioethicists use to explore these issues. And we will wrestle with some of the biggest issues in the field. Among the most significant questions we can ask are the following: What is autonomy, and why does it matter? What is the point of medicine or medical interventions? What are the ethical issues at the margins of life—e.g., abortion and euthanasia? How should we understand the concept of ‘disability’, and how does the idea of enhancement play a role in this discussion? Since we are at West Point, we will end the term by looking at a few issues that are central to military medical ethics.

Course Expectations

This course assumes a basic understanding of moral theory, which you have all received through PY201. If those concepts are not fresh for you, I invite you to revisit them before the term begins.

Our class will focus heavily on discussion, so you are expected to come to class prepared by having carefully done the readings. I will do my best to indicate when readings are likely to be harder or require more time, so that you can prepare accordingly.

This class will grapple with difficult questions that may spark emotions of offense or discomfort. All students are required to maintain a standard of respect in our classroom discussions, but all topics will be explored fully, which may lead us to challenging places. If you expect that this will be too much for you to bear, please let me know ahead of time and we can make alternative arrangements for you for that lesson.

Course Texts

- Principles of Biomedical Ethics, by Tom Beauchamp and James Childress (most recent edition, though older ones will likely suffice)
- The remaining course readings will be posted on Blackboard.

Course Requirements and Grading Distribution

<u>Assignment</u>	<u>Length</u>	<u>Points</u>	<u>Due Date</u>
Peer Edit		50	NLT Feb 3
First Essay	3-5 pages	100	February 8
First Essay Revisions	TBD	100	February 22
WPR		200	March 19

In-Class Presentation		200	April 14, 16, 21, 24
Peer Assessment of Presentations		50	During Presentations
Class Discussion Leader		50	TBD
Final Essay	5-7 pages	250	May 8
Total		1000	

First Essay

Your first essay will have three components: the peer edit (50 pts), the essay (100 pts), and revisions (100 pts).

For the peer edit, you will be paired with another cadet in the class to give feedback on their essay (and they will do the same for yours). You will send a full, good faith, first draft of your essay to your peer-editor by the assigned date—i.e., 5 days before the deadline for the essay. You will read and comment on the essay according to the guidelines provided. You will be graded according to your good faith effort in identifying and critiquing the ideas of your partner. Less helpful comments will be given less credit; more in-depth and helpful comments will be given more. Students who do not have a full, good faith, first draft of their essay by the date of in-class peer-editing will receive a 0 on the peer-edit assignment and forfeit the opportunity to receive peer feedback.

The essay itself will require that you articulate and defend a thesis on one of a set of prompts I will provide. Students are encouraged to check with me to ensure their thesis and general approach is on target. This essay will not require (nor will it encourage) consulting outside sources. The goal is to grapple with the topics we've discussed in class.

After the essay, I will grade it and give extensive comments. You will have a week to revise the essay accordingly and resubmit it. The resubmission is worth 100 points, but it will be graded as though it were a fresh essay. (That is, if you got a C on the first submission, and then made significant revisions, your resubmission might receive a B. This does not change the initial C grade; it only means that you receive a B on the resubmission.) Students are invited to resist the temptation to see revisions as a checklist of things to do. Often, revisions require making significant changes.

WPR

The WPR on March 19th will be an in-class short essay on one of a number of topics related to the recent readings. Students will not be allowed to consult notes during the WPR.

In-Class Presentation

Each student will give a roughly 10 minute presentation in which they explore the ethical questions at the heart of a contemporary bioethical issue. Possible topics will be circulated, but students are invited to find and explore topics they find interesting. (In this case, though, students ought to clear their topic with me first.) After the presentations, the other students in the class will offer feedback via a written form. These will be confidential, and they will form part of the assessment of the presentation. The feedback process itself is also worth 50 points.

Class Discussion Leader

Each student will be assigned to a class to present the readings and lead the discussion. The expectation is that you will offer a brief summary of the readings at the beginning of class, and invite us to consider some questions that you take to be at the heart of the topic. You are then expected to serve as the discussion leader for that class, which means if the conversation slows or confusions arise, you are expected to guide us out.

Final Essay

This essay will build upon the skills of the previous written assignment, focusing more on your argumentative skills. Students who excel on the first essay are invited to propose their own topics for the final essay.

Essay Submission, Late Penalty, Plagiarism

All essays must be submitted before midnight on the due date via Blackboard. (Details will be provided closer to the deadline.) Late papers will incur a 10% deduction per day and a negative COR.

All work must be cited in accordance with the DAW. It is your responsibility to understand what plagiarism is and to avoid it. All instances of suspected plagiarism will be reported and are taken very seriously. (If you have any concerns or questions, this is certainly a case where it is better to ask questions ahead of time rather than to try to ask for forgiveness after the fact.)

Lesson	Topic	Required Reading (Before Class)
Jan 9	What Is Bioethics?	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Steven Pinker, “The Moral Imperative for Bioethics,” <i>Boston Globe</i>• Susan Dwyer, “The Moral Naivete of Ethics By Numbers,” <i>Al Jazeera</i>
Jan 13	Principles of Bioethics	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Beauchamp and Childress, Chapters 1 & 3
Jan 16	Autonomy & Consent	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Gerald Dworkin, “Autonomy and Informed Consent”
Jan 21	Autonomy & Consent	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Rebecca Kukla, “Conscientious Autonomy: Displacing Decisions in Health Care”• Cheryl Misak, “Patient Autonomy and ICU Psychosis”
Jan 24	Advance Directives	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• “What to Do When a Patient Has a ‘Do Not Resuscitate’ Tattoo,” from <i>The Atlantic</i>• Jim Stone, “Advance Directives, Autonomy and Unintended Death,” <i>Bioethics</i>
Jan 28	Physicians’ Duties	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• J. Jackson, “Telling the Truth,”• Mappes and Zembaty, “Patient Choices, Family Interests, and Physician Obligations”
Jan 30	Patient’s Duties/Rights	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• H.M. Evans, “Do Patients Have Duties?”• John Hardwig, “What About the Family?”
Feb 4	Goals of Medicine	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Edmund Pellegrino, “The Goals and Ends of Medicine: How Are They to be Defined?”
Feb 6	Abortion	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Judith Thomson, “A Defence of Abortion”
Feb 10	Abortion	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Don Marquis, “Why Abortion is Immoral”
Feb 14	Pre-Natal Selecting/Screening	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• M Spriggs, “Lesbian couple create a child who is deaf like them,” <i>Journal of Medical Ethics</i>• Neil Levy, “Deafness, Culture, and Choice,” <i>Journal of Medical Ethics</i>• Julian Quinones and Arijeta Lajka, “What Kind of Country Do You Want to Live In? Inside the Country

		Where Down Syndrome is Disappearing,” <i>CBS News</i>
Feb 19	Euthanasia	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> James Rachels, “Active and Passive Euthanasia,” <i>New England Journal of Medicine</i> John Rawls, Judith Jarvis Thomson, Robert Nozick, Ronald Dworkin, T.M. Scanlon, Thomas Nagel. “Assisted Suicide: The Philosophers’ Brief,” <i>New York Review of Books</i>
Feb 21	Euthanasia	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> David Velleman, “A Right of Self-Termination?,” <i>Ethics</i>
Feb 25	Euthanasia	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Rachel Aviv, “The Death Treatment,” <i>The New Yorker</i> Franklin Miller, “Should a Legal Option of Physician-Assisted Death Include Those Who Are ‘Tired of Life?’”
Feb 27	Disability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Elizabeth Barnes, “Disability, Minority, and Difference,” <i>Journal of Applied Philosophy</i>
Mar 3	Disability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> H. McBryde-Johnson, “The Case for My Life,” <i>NY Times</i> Julian Savulescu and Guy Kahane, “Disability: A Welfarist Approach”
Mar 5	Enhancement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Michael Sandel, “The Case Against Perfection” Frances Kamm, “Is There a Problem with Enhancement?,” <i>American Journal of Bioethics</i>
Mar 17	Enhancement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> “Update: CRISPR,” <i>Radiolab</i> (podcast) Dmitri Perrin and Gaetan Burgio, “China’s failed gene-edited baby experiment proves we’re not ready for human embryo modification,” <i>The Conversation</i> Mildred Solomon, “Gene Edited Humans: It’s Not Just about Safety,” <i>Scientific American</i>
Mar 19	WPR	
Mar 24	Vaccinations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Jason Brennan, “A Libertarian Case for Mandatory Vaccination,” <i>Journal of Medical Ethics</i> Steve Clarke, et. al. “Conscientious Objection to Vaccination,” <i>Bioethics</i>
Mar 26	Resource Allocation and Justice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Peter Singer, “Why We Must Ration Health Care,” <i>New York Times</i> Gopal Sreenivasan, “Health Care and Equality of Opportunity”
Mar 30	Resource Allocation and Justice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> James Callahan, “Allocating Resources to the Elderly,” John Hardwig, “Is There a Duty to Die?”
	TRIP SECTION We will be visiting Fishkill Correctional Facility to conduct a joint seminar with incarcerated students in the Bard Prison Initiative.	
Apr 3	COURSE DROP (Accompanying Ethics Debate team to the Bioethics Bowl in Boston, MA) <i>Students should utilize this day to begin preparations for their upcoming presentations.</i>	
Apr 7	Military Medical Ethics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Michael Gross, “Bioethics and Armed Conflict: Mapping the Moral Dimensions of Medicine and War,” <i>American</i>

		<p><i>Journal of Bioethics</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fritz Allhoff, "Physicians at War: The Dual-Loyalties Challenge," in <i>Physicians at War</i>
	<p><i>Special guest:</i> MAJ Elizabeth Lazzeri: MAJ Lazzeri will visit our class to speak about her time in the medical service corps.</p>	
Apr 10	Military Medical Ethics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Patrick Lin, "More Than Human? The Ethics of Biologically Enhancing Soldiers," <i>The Atlantic</i>
Apr 14	Student Presentations	
Apr 16	Student Presentations	
Apr 21	Student Presentations	
Apr 24	Student Presentations	
May 5	Student Presentations	