

RELIGION 460: MEDICAL ETHICS

Tuesdays 2 – 4:50 p.m., Location THH203

Spring 2011

Instructor: Shlomo Sher, Ph.D.

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** Keep a hardcopy of this syllabus in order to keep up with your reading and writing assignments throughout the semester. You can also download a copy at any time from this courses' Blackboard site.*

COURSE DESCRIPTION AND OBJECTIVES:

This course will examine some of the ethical issues faced by parents and medical professionals with regards to reproductive choices, note how various ethical decisions we make as a society affect medical practice, and highlight the fundamental moral principles and ethical values that underlie our view of the place of medical practices in one of the most deeply personal spheres of our lives.

Few things mean as much to us as the capacity to have children and raise them as we see fit. Yet, our reproductive choices also have profound real world consequences. We see this most evidently in our nation's heated public debates about abortion and embryonic stem-cells research. Far less attention is given to a cluster of issues of growing importance driven by new genetic and reproductive technologies that are *revolutionizing* the choices available to parents by giving them unprecedented control over the reproductive process and the genetic make-up of their children. These choices offer the potential for radical social change. They can mark lives deeply and they can sometimes end them.

Course Organization:

This is an issue-centered seminar that, more or less, will address a different issue every week or two. While the issues are all distinct, they do contain similar ethical themes regarding the responsibilities of parents, the medical system, and society to children and the unborn. Each issue also gives us the opportunity to practice applying an ethical decision-making process to a morally difficult medical case. Our class time will typically divided 2/3 lecture/discussion and 1/3 student case presentations. Given our aims, you will not be assigned a cumulative midterm or final exam/paper, but instead be asked to prepare or present something on the particular issue under discussion almost every week. (see Course Requirements and Assignments, as well as the Course Topics and Readings below, for further details)

Since this is a seminar, rather than a lecture, most of our time will be spend in class discussions. Consequently, you will be expected to come well prepared for active mutual exploration of our discussion topics. Although I will usually lecture for a part of class in order to help lay out our discussion and to clarify some of the more difficult philosophical concepts involved, the majority of our time will be spent in discussion about the issues that you and your classmates believe warrant our attention most and have something to say about. These discussions will be the heart

and soul of our class. Preparing for them by completing the assigned reading and writing assignments before class is an absolutely key requirement of a class participants. Along with an open mind, these will help you bring your best to our conversations.

Course Objectives

While this course aims to familiarize you with some of the most pressing and interesting problems facing us today in one reproductive ethics, keep in mind that this is merely an introduction to one aspect of medical ethics. Moreover, there are many ethical problems in reproduction-oriented health services you will no doubt encounter down the road as professionals, voters, policy makers, and patients that we will not have covered in this class because, as a society, we do not yet see them as issues demanding reflection. For this reason, a central aim of this course will be to provide you with the theoretical skills that will help you continue to explore ethical issues and to tackle new problems effectively on your own.

That said, we will be guided in our course by 3 central objectives:

- (1) To familiarize you with some of the ways medicine engages our choices and responsibilities, our understanding of ourselves as beings with moral value, and our vision of what constitutes human progress.
- (2) To help you differentiate between ethical (normative) and factual (descriptive) questions, facts, and points of disagreement in the debates we examine.
- (3) To provide you theoretical tools with which to identify ethical considerations, summarize ethically difficult situations, analyze these situations, and present well-supported written arguments for their resolution.

About the Place of Religion in this Course

Although this course is being taught in the Religion department, my own expertise is in secular ethics and it will be taught as a course in philosophical and practical ethics, rather than as a religion course. We will not directly consider themes that are of practical interest solely to a type of religious practitioner, nor entertain arguments that rely on any strictly religious premises. That said, the course touches on many personal issues that to many have profound spiritual significance, including those of life and death, social justice, and the future direction of humanity.

REQUIRED MATERIALS: (AVAILABLE AT BOOKSTORE)

Intervention and Reflection: Basic Issues in Medical Ethics, 8th Edition (2008) by Ronald Munson

Genetic Dilemmas: Reproductive Technology, Parental Choices, and Children's Futures, 2nd Edition (2009) by Dena Davis

COURSE REQUIREMENTS AND ASSIGNMENTS

This course is graded on a pass/fail basis. In order to pass, you will need to do all of the following:

1. Attend class and participate in class discussions

Part of coming to grips with the topics in this course crucially involves you being able to both articulate your views and to respond to the comments and criticisms of others. This is something you can not do if you're not there, or if you are unprepared. You will be expected to arrive in class ready to discuss the material that we have covered in class for the week.

ATTENDANCE FOR THIS CLASS IS **MANDATORY**. A STUDENT MAY HAVE ONE EXCUSED ABSENCE FOR GOOD CAUSE. MORE THAN ONE ABSENCE WILL BE GROUNDS FOR NOT PASSING THE COURSE.

2. Help prepare and present two *group* case analysis presentations

3. Prepare 5 position papers on topics you are not presenting as a part of a group. (3 – 4 pages, double-spaced)

The papers will respond to ethically challenging cases by summarizing the ethical considerations relevant to the case, weighing the (ethical) strengths and weaknesses of the available courses of action, proposing a course of action, and defending it against at least one serious objection.

The cases you discuss can be taken from the week's list available on Blackboard or from other sources, as long as they relate to the topic the class is currently discussing.

Your papers should:

1. Include a summary introduction that briefly describes what is at stake and your position on the issue
2. Describe the case you are writing about
3. Discuss the various ethical considerations it raises
4. Weigh the (ethical) strengths and weaknesses of the available courses of action
5. Argue for a course of action
6. Defend that argument against at least one serious objection
7. Engage arguments or contextual information from your readings.

4. Prepare 1 position papers responding to recent medical ethics articles on topics you are not presenting as a part of a group. (4 – 5 pages, double-spaced)

While taking this class, you will find it interesting to browse through some of the latest articles published on issues in medical ethics. You can easily find such articles through our Medical Ethics Newsfeed at <http://college.usc.edu/medical-ethics-newsfeeds/>. These position papers will be identical in form to those you will write on topics covered by your book, but will discuss an issue presented by a recent article on a matter of medical ethics.

5. **Meet with me at least once during office hours to discuss how it is that you are applying the process for ethical decision-making discussed in the course, suggested for your papers, and required for your presentations.**

Please come prepared to demonstrate to me how it is that you apply the process to your upcoming presentation or paper. The purpose of this meeting is to reinforce your awareness of the specific elements of the ethical decision-making process.

MEASURES OF SUCCESS

In each assignment, performance is considered in light of these key activities:

Comprehension of the material: Your understanding of the concepts and facts presented in the readings and lectures.

Analysis of the material: The display of your understanding of the structure and relationship between the parts of a text or between texts.

Application of the material: Your ability to apply the concepts and frameworks discussed in the readings and the class to new cases or situations.

Synthesis of the material: Your ability to create new ideas or note interesting new conditions from the materials cover by the class.

Clarity of communication: Having good ideas is not particularly useful if you cannot also articulate these ideas clearly. Moreover, I can only credit you for work that I can comprehend directly from your written assignments. For these reasons, not only is it expected that all written assignments will be free from errors of spelling, punctuation, and syntax when they are handed-in, but you are also expected to present your ideas in a clear and coherent fashion. Presenting complex ideas in a coherent manner can be quite difficult to do and should not be taken for granted – especially if you have never written this type of paper before. I will supply you with some materials that can help you towards that end and urge you to see me or the folks at the Writing Center for questions on how to tackle this challenge.

I will use the following point scheme when scoring your response papers:

- 3 Very good comprehension, analysis, and application of material.
- 2 Good comprehension of most of the material, thoughtful analysis, clear application.
- 1 Little comprehension of material, analysis and application.
- 0 Assignment is incomplete or misses the whole point of the lecture.

PROVISIONAL SCHEDULE OF TOPICS AND READINGS

<i>WEEK</i>	<i>DATE</i>	<i>THEME</i>	<i>READINGS</i>
<i>1</i>	1/11	Introduction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Syllabus
<i>2</i>	1/18	Approaches to Ethics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Munson, pgs. 739-763
<i>3</i>	1/25	Guiding Principles and Ethical Decision-Making	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Munson, pgs. 769-791
<i>4</i>	2/1	Pregnancy and Autonomy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Briefing Session: 101 – 107 • Social Context: Autonomy and Pregnancy, 120-125 • Alex Capron: Punishing Mothers , 143-147 • John A. Robertson and Joseph D. Schulman: Pregnancy and Prenatal Harm to Offspring, 147-152 • Julian Savulescus, Future People, Involuntary Medical Treatment in Pregnancy and the Duty of Easy Rescue (Blackboard)
<i>5</i>	2/8	Savior Siblings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Case Presentation Savior Siblings, 389-390 • David King: Why We Should Not Permit Embryos to Be Selected as Tissue Donors, 414-416 • S. Sheldon and S. Wilkinson: Should selecting savior siblings be banned?, 416-423 <p style="text-align: center;"><i>Watch: My sister's keeper</i></p>
<i>6</i>	2/15	Commercialization in Assisted Reproduction: Sperm and Egg Sales	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shopping for Mr. Good sperm, Munson 365-367 • Briefing Session: 367-382

			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sheila Weller, Is this egg worth \$50,000? • Aaron Levine, Self-regulation, Compensation, and the Ethical Recruitment of Oocyte Donors • ASRM Ethics Committee Report on Financial compensation of oocyte donors • David Resnik, Regulating the Market for Human Eggs (Blackboard)
7	2/22	Commercialization in Assisted Reproduction: Surrogate Mothers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Baby M and Mary Beth Whitehead: Surrogate Pregnancy in Court, 394-395 • The Calvert Case: A Gestational Surrogate Changes Her Mind, 395-396 • Bonnie Steinbock: Surrogate Motherhood as Prenatal Adoption, 423-429 • Elizabeth Anderson: Is Women's Labor a Commodity?, pg. 430-436 • Pregnancy without Borders: Reproductive Tourism's Global Reach (Blackboard) • Preventing the Next Fertility Clinic Scandal (Blackboard)
8	3/1	Reproductive possibilities and Parental Decisions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dena Davis Introduction and Chapter 1: Making Genetic Choices • The Genetics & Public Policy Center, "Reproductive Genetic Testing: What American Thinks" (Blackboard)
9	3/8	Interests and Harms	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dena Davis, Chapter 2: A Short Discussion of Harm • Laura M. Purdy Genetics and Reproductive Risk: Can Having Children be Immoral?, 346-352

			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cynthia B. Cohen: "Give Me Children of I Shall Die!" New Reproductive Technologies and Harm to Children 395-405
<i>SPRING BREAK</i>			
10	3/22	Genetic Screening and Testing (of Children)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Dena Davis Chapter 4: Childhood Testing for Genetic Traits Social Context: Genetic Testing: Too Much Prevention?, pg. 300-303 Case Presentation: Huntington's Disease: Genetic Testing and Ethical Dilemmas, pg. 303-306 Erik Kodish, Testing children for cancer genes: the rule of earliest onset (Blackboard)
11	3/29	Screening against and for disability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Leon Kass, Implications of Prenatal Diagnosis for the Human Rights to Life, pg. 326-333 Jeff McMahan, The Morality of Screening for Disability, pg. 333-337 Dena Davis Chapter 3
12	4/5	Selecting for sex and sexual orientation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Davis Chapter 5: Sex Selection Oh, No, It's a Girl! South Asians Flock to Sex-Selection Clinics in U.S. (Blackboard) Gendercide: The worldwide war on baby girls (Blackboard) The Science of Gaydar (Blackboard)
13	4/12	Cloning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Dena Davis, Chapter 6: Cloning and Other Enhancements Leon Kass, The Wisdom of Repugnance, 438-443 John Robertson, Liberty, Identity, and Human Cloning (pgs. 1-63)

14	4/19	Genetic Enhancements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Glover, “Questions about Some Uses of Genetic Engineering” (Blackboard) • David Resnick, “The Moral Significance of the Therapy-Enhancement Distinction in Human Genetics” (Blackboard) • Julian Savulescu, The Moral Obligation to Create Children with the Best Chance of the Best Life (Blackboard) • I. Persson & J. Savulescu, The Perils of Cognitive Enhancement and the Urgent Imperative to Enhance the Moral Character of Humanity (Blackboard)
15	4/26	The parent-child-doctor-society relationship	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Struggling to Control Fertility Tourism (Blackboard) • G12 Country Regulations of Assisted Reproductive Technologies (Blackboard) <p style="text-align: center;"><i>Video chat with Prof. Dena Davis!</i></p>
<i>No final exam or midterms will be given for this course</i>			

POSITION PAPER INSTRUCTIONS:

Your paper will respond to an ethically challenging case by summarizing the ethical considerations relevant to the case, weighing the (ethical) strengths and weaknesses of the available courses of action, proposing a course of action, and defending it against at least one serious objection.

Your papers should:

8. Include a summary introduction that briefly describes what is at stake and your position on the issue
9. Describe the case you are writing about
10. Discuss the various ethical considerations it raises
11. Weigh the (ethical) strengths and weaknesses of the available courses of action
12. Argue for a course of action
13. Defend that argument against at least one serious objection

14. Engage arguments or contextual information from your readings.

ASSIGNMENTS AND FORMAT:

- Paper assignments will be turned in electronically through the appropriately marked assignment on Blackboard. They are due by the beginning of class on the paper's due date.
- Any assignment you turn in should include your name, the course (Religion 360), and the assignment title.
- Formatting: Assignments must be double-spaced with 1.25 inch margins in Times New Roman 12 point font. There should be no extra spaces between paragraphs.
- All pages should be numbered in the bottom right-hand corner.
- All students are expected to keep a copy of their work and be able to produce it upon request.

COURSE POLICIES & POTENTIAL PITFALLS:

Religion 360 is, on many levels, a challenging course. You will need to put forth quite a bit of effort to reach your goals in the class, so I would suggest steering clear of some easily avoidable problems:

- (i) *Attendance* – As a pass/fail course, the single most important thing required of you is participation. You cannot participate if you are not there. For this reason, attendance is mandatory.
- (ii) *Late Work* – Turn your work in on-time. Procrastination is not a legitimate excuse for late work, neither is carelessness (e.g. “I left my paper at home”, “I left my paper at my friend’s house”, or “I left it in the computer lab.”), nor are tangential tragedies have no relevance to your own coursework (i.e. “my roommate was sick this morning” will not count as an excuse).

Be particularly prepared to avoid technological difficulties. Excuses based on technological problems will not be accepted (e.g. “My printer wasn’t working / ran out of ink”, “My computer hard drive crashed”, or “My disk has fatal errors and the file won’t open”). Prepare for such difficulties by completing your assignments well advance of their due date, making back-ups of your work, and *always* having a printer card available so that you can print your papers at any of the many computer labs on campus.

- (iii) *Plagiarism* – Do not turn in anything which is not the original product of your own creative mind or whose origin you do not explicitly cite within your work. USC has NO TOLERANCE for plagiarism of any kind, and I have extensive experience identifying and proving academic dishonesty. Plagiarized assignments will receive an F, and the student or students in question will immediately be turned over to the Office of Student Conduct for punishment and possibly expulsion.

PLAGIARISM:

Each student is expected to know the University policy on plagiarism as it is stated in SCampus (<http://www.usc.edu/dept/publications/SCAMPUS/gov/behavior.html>). Students caught plagiarizing on a paper, exam, or any assignment, will be reported to the Office of Student Judicial Affairs and will be failed for the course. Proper citations are an easy way of avoiding this problem. If you are unsure about how to cite in your paper, please see me.

YOUR LEARNING ENVIRONMENT:

At this point in our academic careers, we should be working to establish a fun but professional learning environment. I expect considerate behavior from each of you in order to make the most of your time in class. Most situations that would fall into this discussion are simple common sense; below, though, are a few of the more prevalent distractions:

- Feel free to snack in class, as long as your “meal” will not cause a significant distraction. For example, yogurt or a Snickers bar would be fine, but Doritos (which tend to be VERY noisy) or a large salad (which would take up your entire desk space and much of your attention) are a bit extreme.
- Do not read non-class materials during class time (novels, the newspaper, textbooks for other classes, etc.)
- Please turn off cellular phones, pagers, or any other noisy/distracting device. Anything that might happen during class will be waiting for you when class is over.
- Participation is a central component of the course, but keep in mind that you should be considerate of other students when you are participating.

THE WRITING CENTER

The Writing Center is a valuable resource for students from all disciplines, backgrounds, and skill levels. The trained staff can help you in any stage of your process. You can call the Writing Center at 213-740-2691 for more information or to schedule an appointment. They also accept walk-ins.

DISABILITY ACCOMMODATIONS:

Any student requesting academic accommodations based on a disability is required to register with Disability Services and Programs (DSP) each semester. A letter of verification for approved accommodations can be obtained from DSP. Please be sure the letter is delivered to me as early in the semester as possible. DSP is located in STU 301 and is open 8:30am-5pm Monday through Friday. The telephone number for DSP is 213-740-0776.

*Syllabus subject to revision