



BISC 350: BIOETHICS

4 units

Monday & Friday 10:00am – 11:50am

Instructor: Nancy Castro, PhD

Office: ZHS 256

Office Hours: TBD

Contact Info: ncastro@usc.edu

Course Description

This is a 300-level course taught in an active learning format. The primary purpose of this course is to introduce students to bioethics as an interdisciplinary subject through readings, critical thinking, writing, and discussing contemporary issues. The topic of Bioethics is a cross disciplinary subject that examines the social and moral values associated with health issues. This course is designed to provide systematic strategies for analyzing bioethical dilemmas and frameworks for applying this knowledge. These goals will be met through the examination of bioethical concerns such as: cloning, stem cell research, euthanasia, biotechnology, reproductive technology, human enhancement, and animal genetics. These, and other bioethics issues will be analyzed against a background of classical and contemporary readings in moral reasoning.

Required Texts

Vaughn, Lewis. *Bioethics: Principles, Issues, and Cases*. 5TH Edition. 2022.

Learning Objectives

1. Develop a basic understanding of the methods and theories inherent to ethical reasoning.
2. Recognize, compare, and contrast the general "ways of thinking" of science (biology) and of philosophy (ethics).
3. Students will be able to demonstrate knowledge of the various points of view presented in the required readings through essays assigned in class.
4. Examine bioethical case studies, through oral and written communication, both individually and in groups.

5. Acquire and separate factual knowledge from opinion in the areas of science and philosophy.
6. Students are expected to be able to defend points of view in a logical fashion.
7. Students are expected to refer to the readings in their discussions.
8. Demonstrate good critical thinking in bioethics through oral and written communication.

Prerequisite(s): BIO 220/221 course. Students are expected to have some basic knowledge of molecular biology, biochemistry, and biotechnology techniques.

Course Notes

Lectures:

The lecture slides will be posted on the course Brightspace internet site prior to each class. It is also recommended to read the corresponding section of the textbook in preparation for class discussions. It is important to attend or watch video recordings of all of the lectures during the course and to take good notes in preparation for assignments.

Email Communication:

To ensure privacy, only student's USC email accounts may be used for email communications. Students are responsible for understanding the content of email messages that the instructor sends to their USC accounts. Therefore, each student must check their USC email regularly and make sure their account is not over quota, so that new messages can be received.

Description and Assessment of Assignments

There will be assignments due throughout the term that will assess your overall understanding of the course objectives. Some may be given during class and some may be assigned as out-of-class work. Many of these are written into the course schedule, but additional assignments may arise, and due dates may be adjusted throughout the semester. Unless otherwise noted in the course schedule, all assignments are due at the beginning of class. Any assignment handed in late will be docked 10% and will not be accepted after two days late without special permission from the instructor.

Participation

Participation in this class will be graded based on being an active participant within the class. Being an active participant requires attendance as well as contributing to classroom discussions in a thoughtful manner. Additionally, participation will be based off asking questions when we have guest speakers and answering questions. Attendance is expected at all class sessions. Unexcused absences will result in a lower participation grade.

Grading Breakdown

Assessment Tool (assignments)	Pts Each	Number	Total	% of Grade
Class Participation	5	10	50	7
Pop Reading Check-ins	15	10	150	21.5
Essays	100	2	200	28.5
Exams	100	2	200	28.5
Research Presentation	100	1	100	14.5
Total points			700	

Grading Scale

Course final grades will be determined using the following scale:

Letter grade	Corresponding numerical point range
A	95-100
A-	90-94
B+	87-89
B	83-86
B-	80-82
C+	77-79
C	73-76
C-	70-72
D+	67-69
D	63-66
D-	60-62
F	59 and below

Assignment Submission Policy

All assignments are expected to be submitted by the beginning of the class on the perspective due date. Turning your assignment late on the due date will result in a 15% points deduction. Assignments turned in after the due date will not be accepted.

Grading Timeline

Grades for all assignments will be posted on Brightspace within one calendar week following the due date.

Pop Reading Check-ins: Ten times throughout the semester, class will begin with a short pop reading check-in. A pop reading check-in may involve taking a quiz, writing a short

reading response, or answering poll questions. The purpose of these check-ins is to make sure that students are carefully and thoroughly completing reading assignments.

Essays: The purpose of the essays is to develop and test your ability to write clear, accurate, original, well-written, well-organized, well-argued, and philosophically rich papers on topics in bioethics.

They should also be double-spaced, with 1-inch margins, and written in 12-point Times New Roman or Arial font. Essay citations need to follow APA citation style. Essays which are not formatted and submitted correctly will be deducted 10 points.

Exams: There will be 2 midterm exams throughout the semester. Each midterm exam will be administered during lecture (in-person), will be 60 min long, and will consist of mainly multiple-choice questions and short answers. Exams are NOT open book or open notes. A student is not allowed to start an exam after the first student has left the exam room.

Research Presentations:

Students will be working in groups of 3-4 to present a google slide presentation on a Bioethics topic of their choice but approved by the professor. Each presentation should be a 15-20 minute group presentation in which all members contribute to both the preparation and execution of the presentation. Rubrics will be posted prior to the presentation. Each student will be graded individually based on content, delivery, and grammar.

Readings: Before each class session, you should actively, carefully, and critically read the required materials for that session so that you can come to class ready to discuss those materials.

Discussion: Most of our class sessions should be much more like conversations than lectures. You are expected to participate in that conversation by offering comments, asking questions, and so on. (The more you participate, the more fun and rewarding class will be.) Class sessions will be held in-person.

Respect: You are always expected to treat other students with respect regardless of the opinions they express or their religion, sex, ethnicity, and so on. One important skill which we will train in this course is understanding other people's views and taking them seriously even when we think they are incorrect—or immoral. (I myself will often play devil's advocate in class and temporarily defend views which I think are incorrect.) This skill cannot be developed properly unless we foster an environment of curiosity and respect in which all of us can freely express our views.

Academic Integrity

The University of Southern California is foremost a learning community committed to fostering successful scholars and researchers dedicated to the pursuit of knowledge and the transmission of ideas. Academic misconduct is in contrast to the university's mission

to educate students through a broad array of first-rank academic, professional, and extracurricular programs and includes any act of dishonesty in the submission of academic work (either in draft or final form).

This course will follow the expectations for academic integrity as stated in the [USC Student Handbook](#). All students are expected to submit assignments that are original work and prepared specifically for the course/section in this academic term. You may not submit work written by others or “recycle” work prepared for other courses without obtaining written permission from the instructor(s). Students suspected of engaging in academic misconduct will be reported to the Office of Academic Integrity.

Other violations of academic misconduct include, but are not limited to, cheating, plagiarism, fabrication (e.g., falsifying data), knowingly assisting others in acts of academic dishonesty, and any act that gains or is intended to gain an unfair academic advantage.

The impact of academic dishonesty is far-reaching and is considered a serious offense against the university and could result in outcomes such as failure on the assignment, failure in the course, suspension, or even expulsion from the university.

For more information about academic integrity see the [student handbook](#) or the [Office of Academic Integrity's website](#), and university policies on [Research and Scholarship Misconduct](#).

Course Schedule (subject to change):

Week	Date	Topic	Lecture	Readings	Assignments
1	25-Aug	Introduction to Ethics	1	Chapter 1 (pgs. 1-3)	
	29-Aug	Ethics vs Bioethics	2	Chapter 1 (pgs. 5-8)	
2	1-Sep	Labor Day – No Class			
	5-Sep	Other Ethical theories	3	Chapter 2 (pgs. 38-49, 56, 67)	Pop-Reading check-in
3	8-Sep	Patient Autonomy - Part I Patient Rights-Confidentiality	4	Chapter 3 (pgs. 97-100)	
	12-Sep	Patient Autonomy – Part II	5	Chap 4 (pgs. 170-175) Chap. 5 (pgs. 200-207)	Pop-Reading check-in
4	15-Sep	Organ Markets – Transplantation Ethics	6		
	19-Sep	Abortion, Sterilization, Contraception	7	Chapter 7 (pgs. 305-316)	Pop-Reading check-in
5	22-Sep	Prenatal screening, IVF, Surrogacy	8	Chapter 8 (pgs. 391-398)	
	26-Sep	Genetic screening/Genetic Counseling	9	Chapter 9 (pgs. 466-481)	
6	29-Sep	Principles of Biotechnology - Stem Cell Research/rDNA	10	Chapter 6 (pgs. 238-244)	Pop-Reading check-in
	3-Oct	In-class Exam			
7	6-Oct	Human Cloning – ownership of human tissue	11	Chapter 8 (pgs. 400-405)	Pop-Reading check-in
	10-Oct	Fall Recess – No Class			
8	13-Oct	Animals in Biomedical Research	12	Handout	
	17-Oct	Animal Ethics	13	Handout	Pop-Reading check-in
9	20-Oct	Performance - Enhancing Drugs	14	Handout	
	24-Oct	Genetic Enhancement: Gods in the laboratory?	15	Handout	Pop-Reading check-in
10	27-Oct	Genetically Modified Organisms	16	Handout	
	31-Oct	Euthanasia/End-of-life decision making	17	Chapter 10 (pgs. 551-561)	Pop-Reading check-in
11	3-Nov	Physician Aid in Dying	18	Chapter 10 (pgs. 551-561)	
	7-Nov	The ethics of the business of science & Big Pharma	19	Handout	

12	10-Nov	Justice & Healthcare	20	Chapter 11 (pgs. 631-640)	Pop-Reading check-in
	14-Nov	Public Health & Bioethics	21	Chapter 11 (pgs. 631-640)	
13	17-Nov	Pandemic/Vaccine Ethics	22	Chapter 12 (pgs. 697-707)	
	21-Nov	Case Studies readings & Discussion	23	Handout	Pop-Reading check-in
14	24-Nov	Guest speaker – Law & Bioethics or Business & Bioethics	24	Article reading	
	28-Nov	Thanksgiving Break			Work on research presentation
15	1-Dec	Research Project Presentations	25		Work on research presentation & exam
	5-Dec	Research Project Presentations	26		Work on research presentation & exam
FINAL		In-class Exam			

Statement on Academic Conduct and Support Systems

Academic Integrity:

The University of Southern California is a learning community committed to developing successful scholars and researchers dedicated to the pursuit of knowledge and the dissemination of ideas. Academic misconduct, which includes any act of dishonesty in the production or submission of academic work, compromises the integrity of the person who commits the act and can impugn the perceived integrity of the entire university community. It stands in opposition to the university’s mission to research, educate, and contribute productively to our community and the world.

All students are expected to submit assignments that represent their own original work, and that have been prepared specifically for the course or section for which they have been submitted. You may not submit work written by others or “recycle” work prepared for other courses without obtaining written permission from the instructor(s).

Other violations of academic integrity include, but are not limited to, cheating, plagiarism, fabrication (e.g., falsifying data), collusion, knowingly assisting others in acts of academic dishonesty, and any act that gains or is intended to gain an unfair academic advantage.

The impact of academic dishonesty is far-reaching and is considered a serious offense against the university. All incidences of academic misconduct will be reported to the Office of Academic Integrity and could result in outcomes such as failure on the assignment, failure in the course, suspension, or even expulsion from the university.

For more information about academic integrity see [the student handbook](#) or the [Office of Academic Integrity's website](#), and university policies on [Research and Scholarship Misconduct](#).

Please ask your instructor if you are unsure what constitutes unauthorized assistance on an exam or assignment, or what information requires citation and/or attribution.

Students and Disability Accommodations:

USC welcomes students with disabilities into all of the University's educational programs. [The Office of Student Accessibility Services](#) (OSAS) is responsible for the determination of appropriate accommodations for students who encounter disability-related barriers. Once a student has completed the OSAS process (registration, initial appointment, and submitted documentation) and accommodations are determined to be reasonable and appropriate, a Letter of Accommodation (LOA) will be available to generate for each course. The LOA must be given to each course instructor by the student and followed up with a discussion. This should be done as early in the semester as possible as accommodations are not retroactive. More information can be found at osas.usc.edu. You may contact OSAS at (213) 740-0776 or via email at osasfrontdesk@usc.edu.

Support Systems:

[Counseling and Mental Health](#) - (213) 740-9355 – 24/7 on call

Free and confidential mental health treatment for students, including short-term psychotherapy, group counseling, stress fitness workshops, and crisis intervention.

[988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline](#) - 988 for both calls and text messages – 24/7 on call

The 988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline (formerly known as the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline) provides free and confidential emotional support to people in suicidal crisis or emotional distress 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, across the United States. The Lifeline is comprised of a national network of over 200 local crisis centers, combining custom local care and resources with national standards and best practices. The new, shorter phone number makes it easier for people to remember and access mental health crisis services (though the previous 1 (800) 273-8255 number will continue to function indefinitely) and represents a continued commitment to those in crisis.

[Relationship and Sexual Violence Prevention Services \(RSVP\)](#) - (213) 740-9355(WELL) – 24/7 on call

Free and confidential therapy services, workshops, and training for situations related to gender- and power-based harm (including sexual assault, intimate partner violence, and stalking).

[Office for Equity, Equal Opportunity, and Title IX \(EEO-TIX\)](#) - (213) 740-5086

Information about how to get help or help someone affected by harassment or discrimination, rights of protected classes, reporting options, and additional resources for students, faculty, staff, visitors, and applicants.

[Reporting Incidents of Bias or Harassment](#) - (213) 740-5086 or (213) 821-8298

Avenue to report incidents of bias, hate crimes, and microaggressions to the Office for Equity, Equal Opportunity, and Title for appropriate investigation, supportive measures, and response.

[The Office of Student Accessibility Services \(OSAS\)](#) - (213) 740-0776

OSAS ensures equal access for students with disabilities through providing academic accommodations and auxiliary aids in accordance with federal laws and university policy.

[USC Campus Support and Intervention](#) - (213) 740-0411

Assists students and families in resolving complex personal, financial, and academic issues adversely affecting their success as a student.

[Diversity, Equity and Inclusion](#) - (213) 740-2101

Information on events, programs and training, the Provost's Diversity and Inclusion Council, Diversity Liaisons for each academic school, chronology, participation, and various resources for students.

[USC Emergency](#) - UPC: (213) 740-4321, HSC: (323) 442-1000 – 24/7 on call

Emergency assistance and avenue to report a crime. Latest updates regarding safety, including ways in which instruction will be continued if an officially declared emergency makes travel to campus infeasible.

[USC Department of Public Safety](#) - UPC: (213) 740-6000, HSC: (323) 442-1200 – 24/7 on call

Non-emergency assistance or information.

[Office of the Ombuds](#) - (213) 821-9556 (UPC) / (323-442-0382 (HSC)

A safe and confidential place to share your USC-related issues with a University Ombuds who will work with you to explore options or paths to manage your concern.

[Occupational Therapy Faculty Practice](#) - (323) 442-2850 or otfp@med.usc.edu

Confidential Lifestyle Redesign services for USC students to support health promoting habits and routines that enhance quality of life and academic performance.