

## BIOETHICS AMID A PANDEMIC

PROFESSOR: Dr. Blake Hereth (“Dr. H”)

EMAIL: [sbhereth@uark.edu](mailto:sbhereth@uark.edu)

E-OFFICE: Collaborate Ultra (Blackboard)

CLASS MEETINGS: Tuesday/Thursday 3:30pm-4:45pm via Collaborate Ultra

E-OFFICE HOURS: Wednesdays 12-2pm and by appointment

### COURSE DESCRIPTION:

Most of us have spent some amount of time in the hospital or under someone’s medical care or know someone who has—especially during the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. That itself gives us good reason to care about bioethics. Most of us have been concerned, angry, sorrowful, relieved, or delighted at the care we or others have received. That gives us good reason to think we’re already doing bioethics. The point of this course is to learn a little about how to do it *well* by (1) gaining an understanding of some of the important issues in contemporary medical ethics, (2) becoming familiar with the variety of perspectives, arguments, and people involved in these debates, (3) learning to make valid and sound arguments of your own and applying them to the issues we discuss, and (4) revising your arguments in light of feedback.

### COURSE GOALS:

By the end of the course, students should be able to:

- get familiar with and understand some central philosophical issues in bioethics, such as: the ethics of procreation (anti-natalism, eugenics, and disability), feminist worries about age-based healthcare rationing, using nonhuman animals in biomedical research, organ donation, compulsory vaccinations, and disability and assisted suicide;
- reconstruct arguments they find on the issues above and evaluate them charitably and critically;
- develop arguments of their own that are valid and sound; and
- revise their arguments in light of feedback.

### COURSE REQUIREMENTS:

- Class Participation (15%): Class will be held in Blackboard’s Collaborate Ultra feature. Do the required readings carefully and come prepared to discuss them. Then, when in online class, discuss them in the chat window. You won’t receive credit just for being present.
- Critical Questions (20%): Each day of class, students must submit a critical question for that day’s assigned reading. (That’s about two per week. If there are multiple readings assigned for that day, choose only one to write a question about.) Each critical question should be substantive and reflect strong familiarity with the reading and will serve as a

starting point for class discussions. Students with last names A-M should submit questions for Weeks 2-8; students with last names N-Z should submit questions for Weeks 9-13 and 15-16. (So, each student will submit a total of roughly 14 critical questions.) The questions are due by 5pm the night before the class day for which the reading is assigned. Students who submit substantive critical questions on the relevant reading by the required time will receive full credit.

- Critical Reading Responses (25%): Each student will write five (5) critical reading responses. All you need to do is (1) briefly explain what the argument is you're evaluating and (2) raise an important criticism of the argument. Each reading response should be one page long, double-spaced. It's up to you which reading you pick, but I recommend that you get started early.
- Draft Paper (10%): Each student should write a 3,000-word draft paper (exclusive of notes and bibliography) where they make an original, creative argument on a relevant course topic. (See the Blackboard rubric for further details.) The Draft Paper is due Monday, November 2, 2020, at 5pm on Blackboard.
- Final Paper (30%): Each student should write a 4,000-word paper (exclusive of notes and bibliography) in which they revise their Draft Paper in light of my feedback. The idea is to polish, and add to, the Draft Paper. The Final Paper is due Tuesday, December 15, 2020, at 5pm on Blackboard.

### **GRADING SCALE:**

I use a standard grading scale for this course:

- A = 90-100%
- B = 80-89.99%
- C = 70-79.99%
- D = 60-69.99%
- F = 59.99 or below

### **TEXTBOOK(S):**

- *Arguing About Bioethics*. Edited by Stephen Holland. New York: Routledge, 2012
- All other readings will be made available via Blackboard

### **READING SCHEDULE:**

**(NOTE: THIS IS A TENTATIVE READING SCHEDULE. I MAY ADJUST IT DEPENDING ON NEED OR CLASS PROGRESS. BOLDED READINGS ARE ON BLACKBOARD; NON-BOLDED READINGS ARE IN THE TEXTBOOK.)**

WEEK 1 (AUG 25 & 27): COURSE INTRODUCTION + LOGIC

Readings:

- Syllabus
- Logic Exercises

WEEK 2 (SEP 1 & 3): PROCREATION

Readings:

- J. Savulescu, "Procreative Beneficence: Why We Should Select the Best Children"

- E. Parens and A. Asch, “The Disability Rights Critique of Prenatal Genetic Testing: Reflections and Recommendations”

WEEK 3 (SEP 8 & 10): PROCREATION

Readings:

- **D. Benatar, “Why it is Better Never to Come into Existence”**
- J.A. Robertson, “Preconception Gender Selection”

WEEK 4 (SEP 15 & 17): HUMAN EMBRYOS

Readings:

- M. Reichlin, “The Argument from Potential: A Reappraisal”
- J.P. Lizza, “Potentiality and Human Embryos”

WEEK 5 (SEP 22 & 24): NONHUMAN ANIMALS

Readings:

- C. Cohen, “The Case for the Use of Animals in Biomedical Research”
- P. Singer, “Animal Liberation at 30”

WEEK 6 (SEP 29 & OCT 1): INFORMED CONSENT

Readings:

- This week will include a viewing of the *20/20 Special* on Dax Cowart
- O. O’Neill, “Some Limits of Informed Consent”
- **J. Gibson, “The Voices Missing from the Autonomy Discourse”**

WEEK 7 (OCT 6 & 8): PUBLIC HEALTH

Readings:

- D. Isaacs, H.A. Kilham, and H. Marshall, “Should Routine Childhood Immunizations Be Compulsory?”
- **J. Brennan, “A Libertarian Case for Mandatory Vaccination”**

WEEK 8 (OCT 13 & 15): PUBLIC HEALTH

Readings:

- S. Chapman, “Banning Smoking Outdoors is Seldom Ethically Justifiable”
- **C. Timmermann, “Epistemic Ignorance, Poverty, and the COVID-19 Pandemic”**

WEEK 9 (OCT 20 & 22): RESEARCH ETHICS

Readings:

- **R. Yetter Chappell and Peter Singer, “Pandemic Ethics: The Case for Risky Research”**
- **H. Lindemann, “Bioethics’ Gender”**

WEEK 10 (OCT 27 & 29): IMMIGRATION AND RACE IN BIOETHICS

Readings:

- For Tuesday, we will watch the documentary *Clinica de Migrantes*
- **J. Kotalik and G. Martin, “Aboriginal Health Care and Bioethics: A Reflection on the Teaching of the Seven Grandfathers”**

WEEK 11 (NOV 3 & 5): ASSISTED SUICIDE

Readings:

- R. Dworkin, T. Nagel, R. Nozick, J. Rawls, T. Scanlon, and J.J. Thomson, “Assisted Suicide: The Philosopher’s Brief”
- **Dena Davis, “Alzheimer Disease and Pre-Emptive Suicide”**

WEEK 12 (NOV 10 & 12): ASSISTED SUICIDE

Readings:

- **Anita Silvers, “Protecting the Innocents: People with Disabilities and Physician-Assisted Dying”**
- For Thursday, we will watch the documentary *How to Die in Oregon*

WEEK 13 (NOV 17 & 19): ORGAN DONATION

Readings:

- The Draft Paper is due Monday, November 2, at 5pm on Blackboard
- C. Cohen, “The Case for Presumed Consent to Transplant Human Organs After Death”
- T.M. Wilkinson, “What’s Not Wrong with Conditional Organ Donation?”

WEEK 14 (NOV 24 & 26): THANKSGIVING BREAK!

WEEK 15 (DEC 1 & 3): AGE AND AGEISM

Readings:

- A. Williams and J. Grimley Evans, “The Rationing Debate. Rationing Health Care by Age: The Case For, the Case Against”
- **S. Clark Miller, “The Invisibility of Gender: A Feminist Commentary on Age-Based Healthcare Rationing”**

WEEK 16 (DEC 8 & 10): INTERNATIONAL BIOETHICS

Readings:

- M. Angell, “The Ethics of Clinical Research in the Third World”
- D. Orentlicher, “Universality and its Limits: When Research Ethics Can Reflect Local Circumstances”

WEEK 17 (DEC 15): FINALS WEEK

- The Final Paper is due Tuesday, December 15, at 5pm on Blackboard

## **POLICIES:**

- Academic Integrity: As a core part of its mission, the University of Arkansas provides students with the opportunity to further their educational goals through programs of study and research in an environment that promotes freedom of inquiry and academic responsibility. Accomplishing this mission is only possible when intellectual honesty and individual integrity prevail. Each University of Arkansas student is required to be familiar with and abide by the University’s ‘Academic Integrity Policy’ which may be found at [provost.uark.edu](http://provost.uark.edu) Students with questions about how these policies apply to a particular course or assignment should immediately contact their instructor.
- Selling Notes: There are companies that will try to lure you into selling the notes you take in this class. Don’t let these companies take advantage of you. Selling my notes to any commercial service I will consider a violation of my intellectual property rights and/or copyright law as well as a violation of the U of A’s academic integrity policy. Continued enrollment in this class signifies intent to abide by the policy. Any violation will be reported to the Office of Academic Initiatives and Integrity.
- Respect of Self and Others: As a (mostly) consistent Kantian, I expect everyone in this course to maintain a certain level of self-respect. This means taking yourself seriously (although not *too* seriously) and avoiding excessive self-deprecation. You are valuable and an important part of the philosophical community. I also expect everyone in this course to maintain respect for others. Philosophical engagement is often aggressive and it’s easy to

see why: Sometimes you develop a devastating objection to someone's argument and you want to deliver it in epic fashion. But we won't indulge those impulses here. It's okay to care about the material and to discuss it passionately, but *don't* interrupt others, *do* be equitable with your speaking time (and be aware that we're often bad judges of when we've exceeded our equitable speaking time), *do* aim to help someone identify any flaws in their view *and* make suggestions for how they might improve it, and *do* respect others' pronouns.

- **Attendance:** Education at the university level requires active involvement in the learning process. Therefore students have the responsibility to attend classes and to actively engage in all learning assignments or opportunities provided in their classes. Instructors have the responsibility to provide a written policy on student attendance that is tied to course objectives and included in a course syllabus. There may be times, however, when illness, family crisis, or university-sponsored activities make full attendance or participation impossible. In these situations students are responsible for making timely arrangements with the instructor to make up work missed. Such arrangements should be made in writing and prior to the absence when possible. Examples of absences that should be considered excusable include those resulting from the following: (1) illness of the student, (2) serious illness or death of a member of the student's immediate family or other family crisis, (3) University-sponsored activities for which the student's attendance is required by virtue of scholarship or leadership/participation responsibilities, (4) religious observances (see Students' Religious Observances policy below), (5) jury duty or subpoena for court appearance, and (6) military duty. The instructor has the right to require that the student provide appropriate documentation for any absence for which the student wishes to be excused.
- **Weather:** When the University of Arkansas declares that the inclement weather policy is in effect, we won't meet for seminar. In such cases, and in any other case when class is cancelled, you will be notified via email or Blackboard. In cases of questionable whether, please check the university website.
- **Disability Related Accommodation:** University of Arkansas Academic Policy Series 1520.10 requires that students with disabilities are provided reasonable accommodations to ensure their equal access to course content. If you have a documented disability and require accommodations, please contact me privately at the beginning of the semester to make arrangements for necessary classroom adjustments. Please note, you must first verify your eligibility for these through the Center for Educational Access (contact 479-575-3104 or visit [cea.uark.edu](http://cea.uark.edu) for more information on registration procedures).
- **Reminder About Concealed Carry on Campus:** Handguns are only allowed on campus (including all classrooms) to the extent specifically authorized by state law. Each individual who lawfully possesses a handgun and an enhanced carry permit is required to keep the handgun concealed from public view at all times and is responsible for carrying the handgun in a safe manner. If an individual carries a concealed handgun in a personal carrier such as a backpack, purse, or handbag, the carrier must remain within the individual's immediate vicinity (within arm's reach). During this course, you may be required to engage in activities that may require you to separate from your belongings such as taking a quiz or examination, and thus you should plan accordingly. Any student who violates the concealed carry laws while on campus may be subject to criminal prosecution and/or discipline by the University, up to and including dismissal. If you observe someone displaying a handgun or other weapon on campus, it should be reported

to the University of Arkansas Police Department. For more information, please go to [safety.uark.edu](http://safety.uark.edu).

- Problems with the Course: If you have concerns or suggestions regarding this course, I encourage you to speak to me directly about them. If you would prefer to speak with someone else, however, you may contact:

Dr. Edward Minar  
Chair, Department of Philosophy  
Old Main 318E  
479-575-8712  
[eminar@uark.edu](mailto:eminar@uark.edu)