

Course Syllabus

Philosophy 265 – Biomedical Ethics

Winter 2011

Online Course – No prerequisites and no meeting times.

Dates of Instruction: 3 Jan 2011 – 23 Mar 2011

Instructor: Jason Benchimol

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Course Description:

This course uses the tools of moral philosophy to investigate the ethical, social, and political dimensions of biomedicine. Topics may include euthanasia and physician assisted suicide, abortion and new reproductive technologies, stem cell research, human reproductive cloning, the right to refuse treatment, and paternalism and informed consent in the doctor-patient relationship. We begin with a primer on arguments and philosophical reasoning and a brief exploration of influential moral theories. Then, we will dedicate most of our time and attention to particular issues in bioethics. The focus is on understanding and evaluating arguments, on challenging ourselves to think more carefully about bioethics, learning to express our views more clearly, and not simply asserting our opinions without argument or simply accepting the others' opinions without argument.

This course has no prerequisites. It is suitable for both veterans and newcomers to philosophy. That is, background in philosophy, while helpful, is neither assumed nor required. But please be advised: the course material is challenging by nature, and will present special challenges that are unique to the philosophical discipline. Bellevue College estimates that, during a normal 11-week quarter, students should plan to spend approximately 15 hours a week doing class-related work for 5-credit online course. You are hereby advised that success in this course will likely require – and is surely not guaranteed by – spending at least this much time working on this course. Success in this course requires a willingness to patiently read, re-read, and digest quite a lot of rather dense material, a personal schedule that allows one to devote significant time to thinking independently about this material, and a readiness to spend a good amount of time sharpening one's argumentative skills.

Texts:

There is no required textbook for the course. All readings are electronic and provided on the Vista site. Readings can be accessed via the Blackboard/Vista site under the corresponding module heading in which they are assigned.

ASSESSMENT:

Final grades will be calculated based on grade credits earned in the following categories:

- Weekly Exercises – 45% of final grade
- Objective Assessment (one midterm and one final exam) – 30% of final grade
- Participation – 25% of final grade

More comments:

All information pertinent to assessment can be found on the “Getting Started” section of the Vista site. You are advised to read the document titled “Categories of Assessment” very thoroughly. You are responsible for all the information contained therein.

- Hardship withdraws and incompletes will be granted only in the most serious of circumstances and only if the student has contacted the instructor with such a request in a timely manner.
- Don't cheat. If you do not understand what constitutes plagiarism or academic misconduct, you should seek BC policy guides on these matters as soon as possible. I have a moral obligation to report all instances of cheating that I discover. You are encouraged to read widely and to discuss ideas and problems with others, but you must credit your sources.

OTHER CLASS POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

Navigate **immediately** to the Home Page of the Vista site. After clicking on “Getting Started”, you will see a folder containing information about several course policies. Read these policies very carefully. Before you can submit any work for credit, you must take the “Course Policies Self-Test” and earn a score of 100% on this self-test. (This self-test does not count for any grade credit.)

It is **your responsibility to ensure that you have regular access** to the Vista site, and that you are able to complete all grade evaluable work in the time frames allotted. **There will be no allowances for earning credit after deadlines have passed, no matter the circumstances.** Please note, however, you are never required to be logged on to the Vista site for any specific period of time, or at any specific time. It is entirely up to you how to manage your time, but the deadlines for assignments, discussions, and exams are not negotiable.

LIBRARY MEDIA CENTER

The Bellevue College Library Media Center has extensive resources available online for all Distance Education students. Become acquainted with the LMC homepage: <http://bellevuecollege.edu/lmc/>. By clicking on the Research Help link you will find copies of handouts as well as tutorial help, including the LMC Guide for BAS Students. The BCC Catalog will tell you which books and films the library owns. Full-text journal articles can be found by searching the EBSCOhost and Proquest databases, located under Periodicals / Databases.

Online access to the library is available 24 x 7, but personal help is available via telephone only when the library is open. Those hours are posted under Library Information on the homepage. The Reference Desk phone number is

(425) 564-6161. At other times, you may e-mail bccref@bellevuecollege.edu. You will receive an answer as soon as the library opens again.

ACCOMMODATIONS AND SUPPORT SERVICES FOR STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

Bellevue Community College provides reasonable accommodations to students with disabilities. Students who need course accommodations because of a disability, have emergency medical information, or need special arrangements in case the building must be evacuated, should notify the instructor as soon as possible. The responsibility for determining a student's eligibility for accommodations rests with Disability Resource Center. For more information, visit the Disability Resource Center in room B132, call (425) 564-2498 (TTY line (425) 564- 4110), or go to bellevuecollege.edu/drc.

AFFIRMATION OF INCLUSION

Bellevue Community College is committed to maintaining an environment in which every member of the campus community feels welcome to participate in the life of the college, free from harassment and discrimination. We value our different backgrounds at BCC, and students, faculty, staff members, and administrators are to treat one another with dignity and respect.

For further information regarding the Bachelor of Applied science program and policies, see the BAS student handbook. For further information regarding BCC policies, programs and services, review the BCC student handbook at bellevuecollege.edu/stupro/handbook_cd2008/programs/default.html.

CHEATING POLICY

Upon demonstrable evidence of cheating and/or plagiarism, students will be subject to the following penalties:

1st offense: a score of '0' for the assignment itself.

2nd offense: a score of '0' for the entire category of assessment in which the offense was detected.

3rd offense: class failure.

Topics and Readings (subject to change at the instructor's discretion: timely advance notice of any changes will of course be given.) All readings listed here are required readings and can be found in each Module's Reading Packet on the Vista site. Please note: the Lectures provided to you in the Module Lecture Packets are not listed here as required readings, but you are nevertheless accountable for the information contained therein.

Note: In addition to these assigned readings, there will be also supplementary materials provided. The supplementary materials are not optional readings: students are expected to read these carefully and will be accountable for the information they contain.

Module 1 – Fundamentals of Philosophical Ethics (Weeks 1 - 4)

Philosophical Reasoning

Week 1 (03 jan – 09 jan):

- Vaughn – Chapter 1, “Moral Reasoning in Bioethics”

Week 2 (10 jan – 16 jan):

- Rachels, "The Challenge of Cultural Relativism"

Note: Beginning this week, there will be a written assignment due every Sunday at 23.59. These assignments will always be made available to students every Thursday at 00.00.

Moral Theory

Week 3 (17 jan – 23 jan):

- Vaughn – Chapter 2, “Bioethics and Moral Theories”
- O’Neill – “The Humanity Formulation of Kant’s Categorical Imperative”

Week 4 (24 jan – 30 jan):

- Harris – “The Survival Lottery”

Module 2 – Decisions Regarding Life-Sustaining Treatment (Weeks 5 - 6)

Death and Decisions Regarding Life-Sustaining Treatment

Week 5 (31 jan – 6 feb):

- AMA Statement on the Right to Refuse Life-Sustaining Treatment
- Burton, “Dax’s Case as it Happened” and Commentaries by Engelhardt and White
- Michel, "Suicide by Persons With Disabilities Disguised as Treatment Refusal"

Advance Directives

Week 6 (7 feb – 13 feb):

- Cantor, “Testing the Limits of Prospective Autonomy: Five Scenarios”
- Robertson, “Second Thoughts on Living Wills”
- Kuhse, “Some Reflections on Advance Directives, Personhood, and Personal Identity”

***** Midterm exam must be completed by 11 Feb 2011 at 11.59 p.m.*****

Module 3 – Euthanasia and Assisted Suicide (Weeks 7 - 8)

What is Euthanasia?

Week 7 (14 feb – 20 feb):

- Rachels, “Active and Passive Euthanasia”
- Steinbock, “The Intentional Termination of Life”

The Morality of Assisted Dying

Week 8 (21 feb – 27 feb):

- Battin, “The Case for Euthanasia”
- Gay-Williams, “The Case Against Euthanasia”
- Ackerman, “Assisted Suicide, Terminal Illness, Severe Disability and the Double Standard”

Module 4 – Genetic Technology (Weeks 9 - 10)

Human Reproductive Cloning

Week 9 (28 feb – 6 mar):

- Robertson, “Liberty, Identity and Human Cloning”
- Kass, “The Wisdom of Repugnance”
- Kitcher, “Human Cloning: A Kantian Approach”

The Disability Rights Critique of Prenatal Diagnosis and Selective Abortion

Week 10 (7 mar – 13 mar):

- Asch, “Prenatal Diagnosis and Selective Abortion: A Challenge to Practice and Policy”
- Steinbock, “Disability, Prenatal Testing, and Selective Abortion”
- Saxton, “Why Members of the Disability Community Oppose Prenatal Diagnosis and Selective Abortion”

Personal Enhancement

Week 11 (14 mar – 20 mar):

- Sandel, “The Case Against Perfection”
- Other Readings TBA (I will have these determined no later than the ninth week of the course)

Course Review and Final Exam Period (21 Mar – 23 Mar)

*****Final Exam must be completed by 23 Mar at 11:59 p.m.*****