

**BIOMEDICAL ETHICS  
PHILOSOPHICAL AND THEOLOGICAL APPROACHES**

Spring, 2006  
Mondays, 6 – 8:30 p.m.  
HC 212

SRP 457N  
PHL 457N  
THL 457N  
HAP 457N

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**Texts**

Beauchamp & Walters, eds., Contemporary Issues in Bioethics, 6<sup>th</sup> ed. (CIB)  
Leies et al., Handbook on Critical Life Issues, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. (CLI)  
Carlson, Words of Wisdom: A Philosophical Dictionary (electronic form)

**Course Content and Objectives**

This course will examine the nature of biomedical ethics, with a focus on “critical life issues.” Our aims are (1) to situate the field of biomedical ethics within the more general study of ethics; (2) to accurately understand Roman Catholic positions on a number of concrete issues (e.g., medically assisted reproduction, human cloning, stem cell research, abortion, end-of-life decision making, and euthanasia and assisted suicide); (3) to critically compare and contrast these positions with others expressed in contemporary discussions, especially in the United States; and (4) to consider, in light of the above, the prospects for the formulation of public policy on health care issues in a society that is increasingly pluralistic.

Our subject matter is interdisciplinary of its very nature. That is, it will involve a study of questions in biology, medicine, economics, politics, and law—as well as in philosophy and theology.

We will begin with a consideration of ethical theories, including the philosophical and theological components of Christian tradition, especially as expressed in Catholic moral teaching. Thereafter, we will consider how these diverse theoretical approaches relate to specific topics in biomedical ethics.

**Other Resources**

CIB has Suggested Readings at the end of each Chapter; CLI has a general bibliography. Additionally, I can recommend the following websites as ones that provide reliable information and analyses:

American Journal of Bioethics

<http://www.bioethics.net/>

Center for Bioethics, University of Pennsylvania

<http://www.bioethics.upenn.edu/>

Stanford Center for Biomedical Ethics

<http://scbe.stanford.edu/>

National Catholic Bioethics Center

<http://www.ncbcenter.org/>

The leading journals in the field are the Hastings Center Report, the Kennedy Institute of Ethics Journal, and, with special reference to Catholic tradition, The National Catholic Bioethics Quarterly. Articles of ethical interest also sometimes appear in the leading medical journals, especially the Journal of the American Medical Association and The New England Journal of Medicine.

### **Written Work, Oral Exams, and Grading**

On the third through the sixth Mondays (Jan. 30 – Feb. 20), and again on the ninth through the twelfth Mondays (March 20 – April 10), you will submit a 3 – 5 page word-processed “journal” essay (responding, e.g., to discussion questions in the texts or ones developed in class). These essays may be submitted in paper form or electronically. Because this is a certified writing course, you will revise and resubmit one of the journal entries for each half of the semester. (Your grade for those two entries will be the average of the two individual grades.) Journals that are late will be penalized one point per calendar day.

Essays will be graded primarily on **exposition** (“E”)—i.e., how well you present a theory or issue; and **critical analysis** (“C”)—i.e., how cogently you discuss the view(s) presented. As many as 45 total points may be deducted under each of these headings. Up to 10 points may be deducted for errors in basic **writing** (“W”)—organization, sentence structure, word choice, spelling and punctuation. Especially good passages can earn “plus points.” Your eight journal grades will be averaged, with the result counting 80% of your final grade.

Additionally, there will be an oral mid-term exam and a written final exam. The mid-term will last 20 minutes and be based on a list of questions distributed beforehand. (Times for these exams will be arranged on an individual basis during Feb. 28 – March 3, the week before Spring Break.) The final exam is scheduled for Monday, May 1; it too will be based on a list of questions distributed beforehand. Each exam grade will count 10% toward your final grade.

Your final average will be expressed numerically and then converted to a letter grade as follows:

- A 93 – 100
- B+ 89 – 92
- B 85 – 88
- C+ 80 – 84
- C 75 – 79
- D 70 – 74
- F 69 or below.

### **Attendance and Class Cancellation Policies**

Since the course meets just once per week, attendance is required. Each unexcused absence after the first will result in your final average being lowered by 2 points.

I do not anticipate a need to cancel any class sessions. In the event that such a need arises, I will notify all students by e-mail by noon of the day in question. (Any University-wide cancellations due to inclement weather also will be observed.)

### **Academic Integrity**

This course encourages cooperative learning and the use of sources; however, all written work must be the student's own.

Two years ago, the student and faculty senates together developed a policy on Academic Integrity. You should be familiar with this policy. You will be asked to attach to your written work a signed copy of a portion of the Academic Integrity Pledge, which reads: "I pledge that this work is my own and that I have neither given nor received inappropriate assistance in preparing it."

Academic dishonesty is treated very seriously by the University and by this professor. Any piece of written work that is found to violate the academic integrity policy will be given a grade of 0.

Of course, my hope—and my expectation—is that you will find our topics so interesting that you will want to do your own work!

## SCHEDULE

<u>Date</u>	<u>Class #</u>	<u>Topics and Readings</u>
1/16	1	Introduction to Course
1/23	2	Philosophical and Theological Ethics CIB, Chap. 1; CLI, Chaps. 1-5; selected Dictionary entries
1/30	3	Justice in Health Care CIB, Chap. 2
2/6	4	Autonomy Rights and Medical Information CIB, Chap. 3 (109-155)
2/13	5	Research Involving Human and Animal Subjects CIB, Chap. 6
2/20	6	Beginning of Life/Abortion CIB, Chap. 5; CLI, Chaps. 6-8 Review for Mid-Term
2/27	7	Reproductive Technologies CIB, Chap. 8 (563-592); CLI, Chap. 9 and Appendix B Review for Mid-Term (continued)
3/13	8	Human Embryology, Cloning and Stem Cell Research CIB, Chap. 8 (593-659); CLI, Chaps. 9-10; Video (“Stem Cells”)
3/20	9	Eugenics and Human Genetics CIB, Chap. 7; Video (“Making Better Babies”)
3/27	10	Determination of Death CLI, Chap. 15; Video (“A Death of One’s Own”) to prepare for Sessions ##11-13.
4/3	11	End of Life Decision Making CIB, Chap. 3 (156-176), and 4 (244-259); CLI, Chaps 13-14
4/10	12	Euthanasia and Physician-Assisted Death CIB, Chap. 4 (186-243); CLI Chap. 12 and Appendix C
4/17	13	Euthanasia and Physician-Assisted Death (Continued) [NOTE: This is the Monday after Easter; classes resume at 5 p.m.)
4/24	14	Summary; Review for Final Exam; Course Evaluation