

PHILOS 208: Biomedical Ethics

Fall 2021

University of Wisconsin Green Bay

Section 0800: Asynchronous online

Instructor: Robert Kyle Whitaker, PhD

Online Office Hours (Zoom): By appointment

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Course Description

This course introduces students to moral issues that arise in the practice of health care and modern medicine. The primary goal of the course is to help students become better equipped to make reasoned judgments about certain ethical issues that arise in healthcare practice and policy formation. The course includes a brief introduction to basic ethical theory, which is intended to serve as a background aid for thinking through the particular medical issues discussed in the course. Those issues include principles healthcare ethics (autonomy, beneficence, justice, etc.), paternalism, the professional/patient relationship, experimentation on human subjects, confidentiality and truth-telling, informed consent, competency, the meaning of health and disease, beginning and end of life issues, health-related technology, health care reform, and public health policy.

Required Materials

- § There is no required textbook for this class. All required readings and other resources will be available via Canvas and Perusall (see below).
- § A computer with a good internet connection and familiarity with Canvas and Perusall.

Course Objectives and Assessment

By the end of the course:

- (1) Students will understand and be able to explain principles of biomedical ethics and will be able to apply these principles to ethical issues that arise in the practice of modern medicine.
- (2) Students will be able to evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of opposing positions on some of the most central ethical issues that arise in medical research, healthcare practice, and policy formation.
- (3) Students will be able to present, discuss, and provide reasons for and against prominent models and conceptions of the nature of the patient-medical provider relationship.
- (4) Students will be able to present, discuss and provide reasons for and against positions taken regarding a number of ethical problems relating to the dignity of human life.

These objectives will be assessed via two exams, regular discussion posts, and Perusall engagement.

COVID-19 Guidelines

This course meets **entirely online** and **asynchronously**. Since there are no in-person or live meetings, there

is no need to contact me should you or anyone in your household contract COVID-19 **unless your ability to complete course assignments is impaired**. If that happens, email me as soon as possible, and I'll be as accommodating of your circumstances as I can be.

UW-Green Bay Land Acknowledgement

We at the University of Wisconsin-Green Bay acknowledge the First Nations people who are the original inhabitants of the region. The Ho Chunk Nation and the Menominee Nation are the original First People of Wisconsin and both Nations have ancient historical and spiritual connections to the land that our institution now resides upon. Today, Wisconsin is home to 12 First Nations communities including the Oneida Nation of Wisconsin, Potawatomi Nation, Ojibwe Nation communities, Stockbridge-Munsee Band of the Mohican Nation, and the Brothertown Indian Nation.

Inclusivity Statement

The University of Wisconsin-Green Bay (UWGB) is an institution of higher learning where the safety of its multifaceted community of people is expected and enforced. Campus activities, programs, classes, lectures, and everyday interactions are enriched by our inclusion of one another as we strive to learn from each other in an atmosphere of positive engagement and mutual respect.

Student Resources

Student Services (GBOSS) provides an array of support resources to help students in the areas of admissions, financial aid, and registration. Please call at 920-465-2111 if you need help.

Phoenix Cares is your place to go to share a concern about another student or if you need assistance yourself. It provides academic support, crisis and mental health care, financial support, social support, food resource information, housing and shelter information, and sexual assault & personal safety information. Please go to <https://www.uwgb.edu/phoenix-cares/> for more information.

IT Help Desk for Canvas problems. Please call at 920-465-2309 or stop by its location at IS 1150.

E-tutoring/writing: Students can contact TLC virtual front desk by navigating to the website, emailing sttutor1@uwgb.edu, or calling 920-465-2958 to get connected with student tutors using many of the same platforms used in their courses. Setting up an account with Brainfuse, the 24/7 online live help tutoring vendor, is also suggested.

Disability Services: Consistent with federal laws and the policies of the University of Wisconsin, it is the policy of UW-Green Bay to provide appropriate and necessary accommodations to students with disabilities. If you require any academic accommodations due to a disability, please contact Student Accessibility Services as soon as possible (website: <https://www.uwgb.edu/student-accessibility-services/>; phone: 920-465-2841; email: SAS@UWGB.EDU) to register and/or request services. If you have already established accommodations, please communicate them to me at your earliest convenience so we can discuss your needs in this course.

Communication

The primary method of communication between us will be email, using UWGB email addresses. I expect that you will read and, if necessary, respond to any emails I send you in a timely manner. I will attempt to do the same. If you have not heard back from me within 48 hours, feel free to send a follow-up.

Additionally, please recognize standard email etiquette. Initial emails to me should contain (minimally) a subject, greeting and closing. Here's a template to use for communication with all of your professors:

“Hello Dr./Professor [professor’s last name],

[Your message]

Sincerely,

[Your full name]”

Subsequent replies in an email chain do not need to follow this format.

Additionally, I recommend that you review UWGB’s “netiquette” guidelines for conducting yourself in an online professional environment, found here: <http://www.albion.com/netiquette/corerules.html>.

Course Requirements

Course Composition:

Perusall	20%
Discussion Posts	50%
Midterm Exam	15%
Final Exam	15%

Grading Scale:

A	94 – 100	C	70 – 75.9
AB	88 – 93.9	CD	64 – 69.9
B	82 – 87.9	D	58 – 63.9
BC	76 – 81.9	F	0 – 57.9

Perusall: For the required readings (beginning with Week 2), we will be using a program called Perusall, which enables collaborative discussion between classmates within the assigned texts themselves. Links to the Perusall site for each required text will be included in Canvas. **For each reading assignment in Perusall, each student will be expected to make at least three comments (“annotations”).** (Note: this is three *per week’s assigned reading*, not *per text*—all weeks will have more than one required text, but you are still only required to make at least three annotations for all of the assigned readings for a single week.) To make an annotation, simply highlight a portion of text, and type in the box that appears. These annotations can be questions about particular sections of the text, thoughts you have about what is being said, or responses to the comments of classmates. **At least one of these three annotations should be a question for class discussion, and at least one should be a response to another classmate’s question. Annotations are due by 11:59 pm every Friday** (an exception is Thanksgiving: during that week, the Perusall assignment will be due on Wednesday). Perusall will automatically grade your annotations from 0-3 points, with 0 representing a superficial reading of only a portion of the text, and 3 representing a deep

reading of the entirety of the text. A guide to using Perusall, including additional information about Perusall scoring, will be posted on Canvas. Collectively, Perusall annotations throughout the semester constitute **20%** of the final course grade.

Discussion Posts: Ten times during the semester, you will **create a discussion post** in response to a posted media resource for that week, either in the form of a streamable video or a podcast (see Canvas under “Home” → “Discussion Posts”). You will then **reply to one of the posts of your fellow classmates**. The **initial post will be due by end of day on the Wednesday of the week it is assigned**; the **follow-up reply post will be due by end of day on the following Friday**. (An exception to this pattern is Thanksgiving: during that week, the initial post will be due on Tuesday, and the reply will be due on Wednesday.) You will receive **5 points** for each of these posts (post + reply), which together constitute **50%** of the final grade.

Discussion posts and responses should be crafted as follows:

Content: The goal of a discussion post is to raise a point for class discussion based on the media resource for the week. This might take any of the following forms:

- a question
- a point of confusion or need for clarification
- a suggestion for how the resource connects with a text we’re reading or how it helps to resolve an issue we’ve been grappling with
- an insight prompted by the resource that might advance our thinking as a class about the issue under investigation

The goal of a response to a classmate’s discussion post is to civilly engage with their content in a way that:

- attempts an answer to their question, or else complicates it in an interesting way
- resolves expressed confusion or provides clarification
- provides an alternative interpretation of the issue under consideration
- takes issue with a stated argument or point raised

Structure: The **initial discussion post** should be **two paragraphs** in length:

- The first paragraph should briefly summarize the part of the media resource or the issue on which you are focusing.
- The second paragraph should contain a brief explication of your point for discussion. In this paragraph, you need to either pose a question or set of questions about the issues raised in the resource, or take a position of either agreement or disagreement with a part of the resource and explain your reasons, or identify aspects of the resource that are confusing or challenging and indicate why, try out a possible interpretation, etc.

The **response to a classmate’s discussion post** should be **one paragraph** in length, and does not need to restate the issue under consideration, unless you are disagreeing with a classmate’s interpretation of the media resource.

Evaluation: In order to receive full credit, a discussion post and/or response must:

- adhere to the length requirements.

- demonstrate serious engagement with the media resource (and any related reading), and with the thoughts of your classmates. For example, in a discussion post, it is not sufficient to merely write a summary, just as in a response, it is not sufficient to merely ask a question.
- contain no serious grammatical errors, typos, etc. which affect the meaning and readability of the post (be sure to proofread!).

Midterm Exam: There will be an **open-notes midterm exam** during Week 8, covering the content of the first seven weeks (see Canvas under “Quizzes”). You will have from **Monday, October 18 through Friday, October 22** to complete it. The exam will include 15 multiple choice and 15 true/false questions. It is worth **15%** of the final course grade.

Final Exam: There will be an **open-notes final exam** during Week 16, covering the content of weeks eight through fifteen (see Canvas under “Quizzes”). You will have from **Tuesday, December 14 through Friday, December 17** to complete it. The exam will include 15 multiple choice and 15 true/false questions. It is worth **15%** of the final course grade.

Study guides will be provided for these exams (see Canvas under “Files” → “Study Guides”). You will have **two hours** to complete them once they are started. **Do not open these exams in Canvas until you are ready to take them, as they cannot be reopened or made up once they are started.** If you are owed any disability-related accommodations, those will be granted for these exams to the extent possible.

Late Work/Make-Up Work Policy: Five percentage points will be deducted from an assignment grade for each late day (including weekends). For example, a student who has earned an 85% on an assignment but who has completed it a day late may receive a maximum grade of 80%. There will be no make-up opportunity for missed exams, except in extraordinary circumstances.

Extra Credit: I have included several **recommended readings** in the schedule. These are clearly marked as “Recommended” and appear in a slightly smaller font size. You are not required to read these for class, but if you choose, you may read them and write a short (**2-3 paragraphs, double-spaced**) response **summarizing the main argument of the reading**. The goal is not to critique the reading, but simply to restate in your own words the central argument that the author is making. Each of these responses will be worth a maximum of **1 final percentage point**. You may write a maximum of **two** responses during the semester. These may be turned in to the **Canvas dropbox** (see the “Recommended Resources” module under “Home”) any time prior to **December 13**—they do *not* need to be turned in when they are listed in the schedule.

Grading: A word on rounding grades: I will not round assignment grades. For final course grades, my policy is that a student must meet three conditions to have a grade rounded up: 1. The grade is within a half percentage point of the next higher letter grade, 2. The student completed all of the course assignments, including extra credit, and 3. The student was engaged and applied serious effort throughout the semester.

Reading: The reading for this course is at times difficult, and there is a fair amount of it. It is crucial that you keep up with the reading schedule and engage the material. This means setting aside adequate time to

complete the reading *before class*. If something from the reading is unclear, you may always ask about it in Perusall, bring it up in a discussion post, or discuss it with me during office hours. Remember that reading philosophy is a skill like any other, and you will get better at it with practice.

Academic Dishonesty: The University of Wisconsin-Green Bay is committed to fostering an environment of academic honesty and achievement. Academic dishonesty will not be tolerated. This includes, but is not limited to, cheating, plagiarizing, fabricating information or citations, facilitating acts of academic dishonesty by others, having unauthorized possession of examinations, submitting work of another person or work previously used without informing the instructor, or tampering with the academic work of other students. Students who are found in violation of this policy will be subject to academic sanctions, such as an “F” grade on the assignment, exam, and/or for the course. A report will also be filed with the Dean of Students Office for possible further disciplinary action. More information on what counts as academic dishonesty as well as tips on how to avoid it can be found here: <http://libguides.marquette.edu/plagiarism> and here: <http://www.plagiarism.org/plagiarism-101/what-is-plagiarism/>.

Conduct: Disagreement is a basic feature of philosophy and all other academic discourse. In this class, we will be discussing important and controversial issues. We may be engaging in discussions which challenge some of our most deeply held beliefs, and disagreement is sure to arise. For this reason, it is vital for each student, and myself, to always conduct ourselves with generosity and sensitivity toward one another and our authors. I reserve the right to steer discussions in whatever way I deem most appropriate, and I will not tolerate rude, disrespectful, or offensive comments. If you are unsure whether something you plan to say could possibly be rude, disrespectful, or offensive, always talk to me before sharing it with the class.

Tentative Schedule

All readings and assignments should be completed during the week assigned.

“D” indicates a Discussion Post assignment.

Date	Text	Page #
Intro to Course		
Week 1 (9/2 - 9/3)	Syllabus quiz (due by end of day on 9/3; no other reading) LABOR DAY RECESS: 9/4 - 9/6	
Intro to Philosophy and Ethics		
Week 2 (9/7 - 9/11)	What Is Philosophy? (Video Lecture) Bertrand Russell: “Philosophy for Laymen” Louis Pojman: “What Is Moral Philosophy” (from <i>Moral Philosophy: A Reader</i>) <i>Recommended:</i> James Rachels: “The Challenge of Cultural Relativism” (2.1-2.9) (from <i>The Elements of Moral Philosophy</i>)	1-10 ix-xiv 15-32
Ethical Theories and Principles of Healthcare Ethics		
Week 3 (9/12 - 9/18)	The Hippocratic Oath Rosemarie Tong: “Ethical Theories and Principles in Health Care” *Optional* Ethical Theory Overview Pts. 1 & 2 (Video Lectures) “The Trolley Problem” (Episode of <i>The Good Place</i>) D <i>Recommended:</i> Louis Pojman: “Utilitarian Ethics: Introduction” (from <i>Moral Philosophy: A Reader</i>) <i>Recommended:</i> Louis Pojman: “Deontological Ethics: Introduction” (from <i>Moral Philosophy: A Reader</i>) <i>Recommended:</i> Rosalind Hursthouse: “Virtue Ethics” (from <i>Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy</i>)	61 6-34 156-157 216-217 1-9
The Healthcare Professional - Patient Relationship		
Week 4 (9/19 - 9/25)	Rosemarie Tong: “The Health Care Professional-Patient Relationship” *Optional* Health Care Professional-Patient Relationship Pts. 1 & 2 (Video Lectures) Alan Goldman: “The Refutation of Medical Paternalism” <i>Wit</i> (Film) D <i>Recommended:</i> Ezekiel Emanuel and Linda Emanuel: “Four Models of the Physician-Patient Relationship” <i>Recommended:</i> Terrence Ackerman: “Why Doctors Should Intervene”	38-59 62-70 78-86 73-77
Origins of U.S. Research Ethics & Human Experimentation		
Week 5 (9/26 - 10/2)	Allan Brandt: “Racism and Research: The Case of the Tuskegee Syphilis Study” “The Belmont Report: Ethical Principles and Guidelines for the Protection of Human Subjects of Research” <i>In the Shadow of the Reich: Nazi Medicine</i> (Documentary) D <i>Recommended:</i> “The Nuremberg Code” <i>Recommended:</i> David and Sheila Rothman: “The Willowbrook Hepatitis Studies”	753-763 764-770 739-740 749-753
Confidentiality, Informed Consent, and Truth-Telling		

Week 6 (10/3 - 10/9)	Jay Katz: "Informed Consent—Must It Remain a Fairy Tale?"	89-96
	Leslie Blackhall, et al: "Bioethics in a Different Tongue: The Case of Truth-Telling"	101-109
	"The Buried Bodies Case" (<i>Radiolab</i> Podcast) D	
	<i>Recommended:</i> John Arras: "Antihypertensives and the Risk of Temporary Impotence: A Case Study in Informed Consent" 87-88 <i>Recommended:</i> Joan Tronto: "Consent as a Grant of Authority: A Care Ethics Reading of Informed Consent"	
Competency & Deciding for Others		
Week 7 (10/10 - 10/16)	Keith Burton: "A Chronicle: Dax's Case as It Happened"	379-383
	Allen Buchanan and Dan Brock: "Deciding for Others: Competency"	368-378
	Hilde Lindemann: "Holding on to Edmund: The Relational Work of Identity" 65-79 "Dax" (YouTube clip of interview with Don "Dax" Cowart) D	
	<i>Recommended:</i> Naomi Scheman: "Narrative, Complexity, and Context: Autonomy as an Epistemic Value" 106-124	
Health and Disease		
Week 8 (10/17 - 10/23)	Rosemarie Tong: "Biological Givens or Social Constructions?"	61-78
	Ron Amundson: "Against Normal Function"	471-485
	Optional Health & Disease (Video Lecture)	
	<i>Recommended:</i> Rachel Cooper: "What's Special about Mental Health and Disorder" 487-497 *Midterm Exam Available from 10/18 thru 10/22*	
Abortion		
Week 9 (10/24 - 10/30)	Don Marquis: "Why Abortion Is Immoral"	1-11
	Judith Jarvis Thomson: "A Defense of Abortion"	47-66
	"Abortion and Infanticide: Peter Singer Debates Don Marquis" (YouTube) D	
	<i>Recommended:</i> David Leonhardt: "How Abortion Views Are Different" (<i>New York Times</i>) 1-5	
Reproductive Technology		
Week 10 (10/31 - 11/6)	John Robertson: "The Presumptive Primacy of Procreative Liberty"	599-609
	Vatican: "Instruction on Respect for Human Life in Its Origin and on the Dignity of Procreation"	609-618
	Thomas Murray: "What Are Families For? Getting to an Ethics of Reproductive Technology"	618-623
Euthanasia, Assisted Suicide, and Palliative Care		
Week 11 (11/7 - 11/13)	Rosemarie Tong: "Euthanasia, Assisted Suicide, and Palliative Care"	262-285
	Robin Marantz Henig: "A Life-or-Death Situation" & "Choosing to Die After a Struggle With Life" (<i>New York Times</i> articles)	1-22
	Jason Welle: "On Love and Dignity and Dying" (<i>The Jesuit Post</i>) 1-2 "Ethics" (Episode of <i>Star Trek: Next Generation</i>) D	
	<i>Recommended:</i> John Arras: "Physician-Assisted Suicide: A Tragic View" 477-483	
	<i>Recommended:</i> Timothy Quill: "Death and Dignity: A Case of Individualized Decision Making" 473-476	
	<i>Recommended:</i> Adrian Ghobrial: "Marginalized Communities Concerned about Changes to Assisted-Dying Laws" (<i>CityNews</i>) 1-4	
Emerging Medical Technology		

<p>Week 12 (11/14 - 11/20)</p>	<p>Stephen Pinker: “The Designer Baby Myth” “A Young Mississippi Woman’s Journey Through A Pioneering Gene-Editing Experiment” & “A Year In, 1st Patient To Get Gene Editing For Sickle Cell Disease Is Thriving” (NPR broadcasts) D Mark Rothstein: “Applications of Behavioral Genetics: Outpacing the Science?”</p>	<p>1-4 848-856</p>
<p>Healthcare Reform</p>		
<p>Week 13 (11/21 - 11/24)</p>	<p>Norman Daniels: “Equal Opportunity and Health Care” “Social Determinants of Health: The Solid Facts” Norman Daniels: “Justice, Health, and Healthcare” Gopal Sreenivasan: “Opportunity Is Not the Key” “Which Country Has the World’s Best Healthcare System?” (<i>Vox Conversations</i> Podcast) D</p> <p style="text-align: center;">FALL RECESS: 11/25 - 11/28</p>	<p>200-202 213-222 231-234 235-236</p>
<p>COVID-19: The Value of Life</p>		
<p>Week 14 (11/29 - 12/4)</p>	<p>The Value of a Life:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ezekiel Emanuel, James Phillips, & Govind Persad: “How the Coronavirus May Force Doctors to Decide Who Can Live and Who Dies” (<i>NYT</i>) <p>Life Value vs. Economic Value:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Eduardo Porter & Jim Tankersley: “Shutdown Spotlights Economic Cost of Saving Lives” (<i>NYT</i>) • Matteo Arena: “Saving Lives Will Also Save the Economy: A Present Value Analysis” (<i>Marquette Today</i>) <p>Anti-Asian Racism & Xenophobia:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sabrina Tavernise & Richard Opiel Jr.: “Spit On, Yelled At, Attacked: Chinese-Americans Fear for Their Safety” (<i>NYT</i>) • Kimmy Yam: “Progress Is Why Viruses Aren’t Named after Locations Anymore, Experts Say” (<i>NBC News</i>) • Sean Illing & Natalia Molina: “Why Pandemics Activate Xenophobia” (<i>Vox</i>) <p>TBD D <i>Recommended:</i> “Playing God” (<i>Radiolab</i> podcast episode)</p>	<p>1-2 1-3 1-2 1-3 1-5</p>
<p>COVID-19: Allied Issues</p>		
<p>Week 15 (12/5 - 12/13)</p>	<p>Trust & Misinformation:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Kyle Whitaker: “COVID-19: Who Should You Trust?” (<i>We Are Marquette</i>) • Zeynep Tufekci – “Why Did It Take So Long to Accept the Facts About Covid?” (<i>NYT</i>) <p>Vaccines</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Anita Sircar: “As a doctor in a COVID unit, I’m running out of compassion for the unvaccinated. Get the shot.” (<i>LA Times</i>) • “Twitter - Anonymous TN nurse on COVID patients” • Arthur Caplan & Dorit Reiss: “Vaccine Mandates Aren’t Enough. Make Unvaccinated People Pay if They Harm Others.” (<i>Barron’s</i>) 	<p>1-5 1-15 1-6 1-4</p>

Final Exam		
Week 16 (12/14 - 12/20)	*Final Exam Available from 12/14 thru 12/17*	