

Medicine and Human Values
Philosophy 309
Fall 2007

Professor: *Shannon McIntyre Skousgaard, Ph.D.*

Office: Robinson B454

To Contact Professor: Use office hours or email: sskous@erols.com

Note: This email address is checked frequently; it is the surest and most effective way to reach me outside class. You can, of course, always reach me in the office during office hours (below); if I am unavailable, however, please do not leave phone messages as the machine is difficult to work with; this email is more prompt and certain. If a student is in the office he takes precedence over someone on the phone, so a visit is always best!

Office Hours: 1030-1130 Tuesdays and Thursdays or by appointment

Texts:

Being Human: Core Readings in the Humanities, Leon Kass

Classic Cases in Medical Ethics, Gregory Pence

Biomedical Ethics, Mappes

Decision Making for Incompetent Persons, Jordan

Various articles emailed by the professor

Course Description:

In this course students will learn the foundational values upon which the practice of medicine is based. These provide structure for the study of the ethical theories and moral principles relevant to important issues in the field. The course employs traditional lecture/discussion but also features participative learning. Students work in small groups to present issues or cases and write a report. Because some assigned articles will be sent by email, all students are responsible for providing the professor with an accurate email address and for checking that address regularly. Students are responsible for all information conveyed through email. This course satisfies the University General Education Synthesis Requirement.

Course Goals:

1) To achieve an understanding of the foundational values upon which moral reasoning is based in Western philosophy; 2) To recognize and understand major normative theories of Western philosophy; 3) To understand the chief principles underlying issues in bioethics; 4) To recognize some of the defining cases in the field of bioethics; 5) To understand how the values, theories and principles inform the analysis of contemporary issues in bioethics.

Course Objectives:

Students will:

1. understand the impact of foundational values and moral principles in formulating problems in bioethics;

2. understand and apply ethical theories to issues of contemporary bioethics;
3. apply critical thinking skills to ethical issues in medicine;
4. understand and present defining cases in bioethics;
5. work cooperatively in a group setting to prepare and deliver a presentation;
6. demonstrate the quality of writing and speaking skills expected at the college level.

Course Requirements:

A. Email Contact

All students will immediately contact the professor at this email address: sskous@erols.com in order to establish a reliable email address. To establish this contact, students must use the email address they will check regularly for information and assignment from the professor. Students are fully responsible for initiating this contact, for checking the address regularly, and for informing the professor by email of any change in the address during the semester.

B. Class Attendance

The professor does not take attendance at every class, however grades on each of the assignments assume attendance and participation on your part. That is, you are completely responsible for material presented by the professor or other students, even on days you are absent. If this material is relevant to an assignment it must be included even if it is not in the readings. Missed classes have a severe negative impact on grades. I assume timely appearance on class days, regular attendance and involvement in discussion on days you are not presenting. For group assignments, all members of the group will receive the same grade; however, poor participation in the work required to develop and produce the group projects may result in some members of the group receiving lower scores than others. Each member of the group will be asked to report on the contribution of other members of the group. The unanimous judgment of your group that you failed to make an adequate contribution (e.g. missed scheduled meetings, were difficult to contact, failed to provide materials in a timely manner, etc.) is sufficient to negatively impact your grade on that assignment. The participation grade itself is based primarily on your participation during class discussions and other group presentations. Absences from group presentations *for any reason* will reduce your participation score. I will take roll on presentation days. Here are my general expectations:

1. Students will *come to class on time*.
2. Assignments will be read by class time on the day scheduled.
3. Oral reports will be given on the day assigned. There will be no make-up assignments for oral reports.
4. Late arrival and improper dress for presentations is penalized. Business attire is appropriate for presenters. For men: suit or sport coat and tie; business shoes. For women: business suit or business dress or slacks with jacket; business shoes only, no open-toed shoes; no large, excessively dangling earrings or other excessive jewelry; no see-through clothing; no deep cut shirts.
5. All papers will be turned in at the beginning of class on the assigned due-date; no extensions will be given. There will be a penalty of one (1) letter grade for each class day that the paper is late, including the due date if submitted after class begins. For the group assignment this applies to all members, even those who were present but did not have the paper to turn in. Choose your group leader carefully.
6. All assignments must be attempted and submitted to earn a passing grade in the course.

C. About Written Submissions

All papers must be typed in a legible 12-point face, paginated, securely and safely fastened, and double spaced with appropriate margins. Bibliographies must be attached to the papers at the due date or the entire paper is considered late. Papers that do not meet these requirements will be returned and penalized one letter grade per class day until resubmission. Please pay attention to this requirement as it will be enforced. All written work is expected to reflect college-level writing; penalties will be assessed for deficiencies. Any typing errors in papers are writing errors. Be sure to run a spell check with your word processor, but don't rely on that since spell check does not check grammar. Misuse of homonyms is an error. Proofread carefully; have someone else proofread your work. If you believe your writing preparation may be inadequate, consult the university's Writing Center for assistance well before you hand in papers. Any papers requiring citations should follow an appropriate research paper format [e.g., MLA or APA].

I recommend the *New Century College Online Writing Guide* (<http://classweb.gmu.edu/nccw/>).

NOTE: It is not smart to turn in any paper without having a copy of it; and if your copy is on disk, it is your responsibility to back up your disk. Computer problems are not accepted as excuses for delayed work. Attend to the fact that the computers and the printers at the university are not reliable, so do not rely on them. Lack of availability of university equipment will not be accepted as an excuse. See penalties above.

NOTE: Do not discard any returned assignments until end of the semester. You may need them to verify your submission or your grade.

D. Dates to Attend To With Care:

1. Selection of *group members* by class time **09/04/07**. If you have not self-selected your group by this time the professor will assign you to an *ad hoc* group.

2. Written declaration of *group presentation topic* to professor by start of class time **09/11/07**. This will include the names of all members and the identification of a group leader. This information will be submitted via email to the professor by the group leader. All email submissions, including this one, from the group leader or any member of the group to the professor will be copied to all members or the professor will not respond. Delays in receiving responses from the professor caused by this failure will not serve as an excuse for delays in submissions.

2. *Foundational Values Essays*: Take home essay(s) responding to 2 questions on the ethical principles or values discussed in the text and in class. Maximum of two typed pages per question. **Due 10/04/07**. Professor will present questions to students one week prior to due date.

3. *Group Presentation and Report*: This is a Group Project in which an important topic in bioethics is presented, analyzed, and put in historical and, if relevant, legal context. Written report is due one week after presentation. **Due As Assigned For Individual Groups**

Note: Student contributions to group projects (both for the presentation and the paper) will be assessed by other members of the group. Those assessments can affect your grade on these assignments.

4. *Issue Analysis*: Final essay on an issue presented in weeks 7 - 14. **Due 12/06/07**

5. *Participation*: this grade is based primarily on your participation in class discussions and your attention to other case presentations.

PRESENTATION

This is a group assignment. Your starting point will be the assigned reading in Pence and the associated readings in Kass, but you are expected to go beyond those readings to provide additional information and perspectives. You must prepare an outline, timeline and bibliography and distribute them to the class at the presentation. The case presentation should cover the following:

- a. Timeline of the issue including court rulings when applicable
- b. Background -- what was the thinking about the issue when the case emerged; definitions of terms and meaning of philosophical and ethical terms
- c. Foundational values and moral principles operative in the case analysis
- d. Facts about the issue and key individuals associated with it
- e. Proposed responses to the issue or legal resolutions if applicable
- f. Any evidence of preference for a particular ethical theory
- g. Update -- what is the current thinking on the issue(s)

Oral reports are evaluated on traditional criteria for presentations, including quality of oral communication as well as quality of content. Evaluation criteria will include clarity, good organization, accuracy of information, completeness, and quality of insight and analysis, degree of audience attention and learning. Points are deducted for any presentation not organized to fit within the forty minute time period allotted for the assignment. For an excellent resource on public speaking see Peggy Noonan, *Simply Speaking*.

WRITTEN REPORT

Written reports are due one week after the group presentation.

Like the presentation, this is a group assignment. I expect all members of the group to work cooperatively in developing a thesis for the paper and contributing to the organization and writing of the completed paper. The paper is a narrative, not simply an outline, in which you explain the significance of this issue for bioethics. As with any paper, you should have a beginning, middle, and end. In other words, introduce your thesis, develop your thesis, and reach a conclusion. Append the timeline and bibliography to the end of the paper. Remember that, like the presentation, the paper is a joint project. Do not simply write separate sections and put them together in a binder. You should discuss and agree on all the elements of the paper. Be sure to cover the foundational values, major ethical theories and moral principles that are applicable to the issue or case. There are supporting readings for each of the assigned topics; I expect you to consult them and to cite them in your paper. The paper should be approximately ten double-spaced pages in length.

Daily Class

I assume the student has read required texts as assigned whether they are in the text or sent by email; in class we work from that point, through discussion, toward class objectives. For each theory and issue I bring significant background information which is not in the text and for which the student is *fully* responsible -- *whether or not he is in class!* Although attendance is not taken (except for Class Presentations), students are responsible for the content of all lectures and discussions, assignments and changes. *The professor will not be the source for information or assignments missed in unattended classes.* Consequently, it will be helpful for students to find a

study-buddy to check with. In case of serious illness or other "dean worthy" excuses, I am happy to assist the student. Important notice: your papers and exam essay *must* reflect the content of classroom work or they will not receive a satisfactory grade.

E. The Honor Code and plagiarism:

All work is understood to be submitted in accordance with the university Honor Code. According to the university "plagiarism encompasses the following: 1. Presenting as one's own the words, the work, or the opinions of someone else without proper acknowledgment. 2. Borrowing the sequence of ideas, the arrangement of material, or the pattern of thought of someone else without proper acknowledgment. Familiarize yourself with the Honor Code and its requirements before you submit work. This is your responsibility entirely.

<http://www.gmu.edu/catalog/apolicies/#Anchor12>

All work must be consistent with Honor Code aspirations.

F. Grading:

Foundational Values Essay:	15%
Presentation	20%
Report:	25%
Issue Analysis:	30%
Class Participation:	10%