

SC203 Bioethics and Biosciences

Seminar Leader: Ian Lawson

Course Times: Mondays and Wednesdays, 9:00am – 10:30am

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Office Hours: by appointment

Course Description

How do we define death, and when does life begin? Do we own our bodies? Does our biological knowledge of animals conflict with their legal status? Contemporary advances in biology and biotechnology have the potential to radically alter the way we answer such questions, and confront ethical debates with complicated and context-sensitive procedures and theories. The first focus of this course will be on tracing the origins of common values and assumptions about life, and the aims of scientific interventions on biology. Second, the course will cover some details of biological theory and biomedical procedures, including recent developments in technologies such as genetic manipulation and stem cell research. These foci, the ethical and the scientific, will be explored through particular case studies in medicine and environmental science. Taking an evidence-based, history-of-science approach to these bioethical questions, students will analyze in a critical fashion the application of ethical reasoning to complex technoscientific issues. The course does not aim to provide definitive responses to ethical questions or to give an overview of historical ethical frameworks, but rather to develop an understanding of the complex relationship between knowledge and values, in the particular field of biology and medicine. Among the topics explored will be classic issues in medical ethics about the beginnings and ends of lives, the allocation of public resources, and the line between treatment and enhancement. The broader implications for local and global environments, and postcolonial concerns about biological research and medical intervention will also be addressed.

Course Books

Helga Kuhse and Peter Singer (eds.) *Bioethics. An Anthology* 2nd edition, Blackwell Publishing, ISBN: 9781405129480

The library has several copies of this book reserved for the class. The college book policy is that reserve stocks of books will be lent to students on the basis of need, or (thereafter) on a first come first served basis. Otherwise, students must purchase all course books.

The library also has a good selection of bioethics and general ethics books for reading about general and specific topics. Please make use of these resources!

Requirements

Academic Integrity

Bard College Berlin maintains the staunchest regard for academic integrity and expects good academic practice from you in your studies. Instances in which students fail to meet the expected standards of academic integrity will be dealt with under the Code of Student Conduct, Section III Academic Misconduct.

Attendance

Attendance is mandatory and your presence in ALL classes is expected. More than two absences in a semester will significantly affect your participation grade for the course.

Please consult the Student Handbook for the regulations governing periods of illness or leaves of absence.

Policy on Late Submission of Papers

The following policy on the submission of essays can also be found in the Student Handbook: *essays that are up to 24 hours late will be downgraded one full grade (from B+ to C+, for example). Instructors are not obliged to accept essays that are more than 24 hours late. Where an instructor agrees to accept a late essay, it must be submitted within four weeks of the deadline and cannot receive a grade of higher than C. Thereafter, the student will receive a failing grade for the assignment.*

Grade Breakdown

Class participation: 20%

In-class debate: 20%

Midterm quiz: 25%

Final essay on topic of interest: 35%

Assignments

Your participation in class discussions, through questions, thoughts, opinions, and engagement in group activities, will be assessed throughout the semester.

There will be a midterm quiz on important issues, definitions and arguments from bioethical and ethical literature.

The final week of the course (two sessions) is given over to in-class debates. You will participate in one of these (pending final student numbers) and assessed on a prepared presentation and responses to questions from classmates.

The course will conclude with an essay on a topic of your choice from those addressed throughout the semester.

Essay Deadlines

Midterm quiz: 24 October (Wednesday in class)

Final essay: 18 December (Tuesday of completion week)

Schedule

Please note that the class missed on 3 October due to a federal holiday will not be rescheduled. Classes missed due to conferences or due to illness (of the professor) are rescheduled.

All readings are in Kuhse & Singer except those highlighted, which will be circulated by the seminar leaders.

Week starting	Monday	Wednesday
September 3	Introduction to Bioethics <i>No assigned reading</i>	<u>What makes ethical statements true (or false?)</u> Prinz, 'The emotional basis of moral judgements'
September 10	Science and Ethics I Reading TBC	<u>Science and Ethics II</u> Reading TBC
September 17	<u>Abortion I</u> Thomson, 'A Defense of Abortion' Marquis, 'Why Abortion is Immoral'	<u>Abortion II</u> Tooley, 'Abortion and Infanticide' Finnis, 'Abortion and Healthcare Ethics'
September 24	<u>Assisted Reproduction</u> Purdey, 'Surrogate Mothering: Exploitation or Empowering?' Dodds and Jones, 'A Response to Purdy' Hanscombe, 'The Right to Lesbian Parenthood'	<u>Future Children</u> Parfit, 'Rights, Interests, and Possible People' Purdy, 'Genetics and Reproductive Risk' Tooley, 'The Moral Status of the Cloning of Humans'
October 1	<u>Deafness and Selection</u> Chad, 'Genetic Technology: A Threat to Deafness'	Federal Holiday: No class
October 8	<u>Genetic Therapy</u> Glover, 'Questions About Some Uses of Genetic Engineering' Lappé, 'Ethical Issues in Manipulating the Human Germ Line' Resni, 'The Moral Significance of Therapy-	<u>Gene Manipulation Technologies</u> Reading TBC

	Enhancing Distinction in Human Genetics'	
October 15	<p><u>Sanctity of Life?</u> Glover, 'The Sanctity of Life' Sacred Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, Declaration on Euthanasia Grise and Boyle, 'The Morality of Killing: A Traditional View' Singer, 'Is the Sanctity of Life Ethic Terminally Ill?'</p>	<p><u>Killing and Letting Die</u> Rachels, 'Active and Passive Euthanasia' Nesbitt, 'Is Killing No Worse than Letting Die?' Kuhse, 'Why Killing is not Always Worse - and sometimes better - than letting die'</p>
October 22	<p>Midterm Quiz, in class (35') <u>Severely Disabled Newborns</u> Campbell, 'When Care Cannot Cure' Haare, 'The Abnormal Child: Moral Dilemmas of Doctors and Parents David, 'Right to Life of Handicapped'</p>	<p><u>Brain Death</u> 'A Definition of Irreversible Coma' Visit to the Charité exhibition 'Buried Alive'</p>
AUTUMN BREAK!		
November 5	<p><u>Voluntary Euthanasia</u> Hill, 'TheNote' Callahan, 'When Self-Determination Runs Amok' Lachs, 'When Abstract Moralizing Runs Amok' Admiraal, 'Listening and Helping to Die: The Dutch Way'</p>	<p><u>Resource Allocation</u> Menzel, 'Rescuing Lives' Moss & Siegler, 'Should Alcoholics Compete Equally for Liver Transplantation?' Veatch, 'How Age Should Matter'</p>
November 12	<p><u>Organ Donation</u> Radcliffe-Richards, 'The Case for Allowing Kidney Sales' Harris, 'The Survival Lottery' Titmuss, 'Why Give to Strangers?' Kluge, 'Organ Donation and Retrieval'</p>	<p><u>Human Experiment</u> Beecher, 'Ethics and Clinical Research' Freedman, 'Equipoise and the Ethics of Clinical Research' Hellman, 'The Patient and Public Good' Fännsjö, 'The Morality of Clinical Research - A Case Study' Bagada & Musoke-Mudido, 'We're Trying to help Our Sickest People, not Exploit Them'</p>
November 19	<p><u>Stem Cells</u> All readings</p>	<p><u>Animal Ethics I: Experimentation</u> All readings from Singer & Kuhse Part VIII (pp. 559 - 588)</p>
November 26	<p><u>Animal Ethics I: Are Animals Entitled to Ethical Treatment?</u></p>	<p><u>Animal Ethics III: Food</u> Pollan, 'How to Feed the World'</p>

	Pages from Peter Singer, 'Animal Liberation'	plus one more TBC
December 3	Confidentiality and Truth Telling Siegler, 'Confidentiality in Medicine' Kant, 'On a Supposed Right to Lie from Altruistic Motives' Collins, 'Should Doctors Tell the Truth?' Higgs, 'On Telling Patients the Truth'	<u>Consent</u> Mill, 'On Liberty' Elliott, 'Amputees by Choice' Veatch, 'Abandoning Informed Consent' Macklin, 'The Doctor-Patient Relationship in Different Cultures'
December 10	<u>Debate class</u> Topics TBC The class will be divided into groups which will prepare (at home) the defense or criticism of an argument following opposite ethical reasonings and conducting some research supervised by one of the instructors	<u>Debate class</u> Topics TBC
COMPLETION WEEK!	Final Essay due Tuesday 18 December (because who wants to write (and read) all the way up to Christmas...?)	