

PHIL 155A Medical Ethics

Instructor	Colleen Hanson crhanson@humnet.ucla.edu
TA	Hannah Widmaier hwidmaier@g.ucla.edu
Lecture	Tuesday and Thursday, 1–3:05pm, Rolfe Hall 3126
Section Meeting Times	Tues 9:30–10:20 am, Thurs 11:30–12:20pm, Rolfe Hall 3116
Colleen’s Office Hours	Tuesday and Thursday 3:15–4:15 pm Outdoors between Rolfe Hall and North Campus Student Center
Hannah’s Office Hours	Tuesday 10:30–11:30am and Thursday 10:15–11:15 am Outdoors between Rolfe Hall and North Campus Student Center

Course Description:

This course is an intensive introduction to some key ideas and arguments in medical ethics. We will begin with an introduction to the principles in biomedical ethics: *autonomy*, *beneficence*, *non-maleficence*, and *justice*. Then we will turn to some broader questions such as: Is loss of biological function necessarily bad? Is there a value neutral way to think about biological function? Insight into these questions will carry us through to our other topics, namely: disability, genetic screening, reproductive ethics, death and end of life decision making, euthanasia, and allocation of medical resources.

Course aims:

As a result of this class, students should gain a deeper insight into some important issues in medical ethics, while sharpening their abilities to discuss difficult ethical problems, analyze arguments, and write philosophical papers. Active engagement is encouraged and expected through weekly reading responses, papers, and participation in section, lecture, and office hours.

Texts:

All texts for this course will be made available on the course website.

Assignments and grading:

Your grade for the course will be determined as follows:

Reading responses	20%
Paper 1 (3–4 pages)	25%
Paper 2 (4–5 pages)	35%
Participation	20%

Participation:

The best way to do philosophy is by actively engaging, and so participation is very important! A good participation grade can result from participating in either (1) lecture, (2) section, or (3) the instructor's or the teaching assistant's office hours.

Papers:

You will write two papers for this class. Prompts will be assigned for each paper, with at least two possible topics for you to write on per paper. Both papers should be submitted through the course website.

Paper 1 (3–4 pages) will be assigned on **Saturday August 19th**, and it will be due on **Friday September 1st** at 11:59 pm. Paper 2 (4–5 pages) will be assigned on **Thursday September 7th**, and it will be due on **Sunday September 17th** at 11:59 pm.

Any paper submitted late, without an extension granted by the instructor or teaching assistant, will be penalized 1/3 of a letter grade for each twenty-four-hour period after the deadline. (So, if the deadline were at 3:00 pm on Monday, then you would be penalized 1/3 of a letter grade if you submitted the paper between 3:00 pm on Monday and 3:00 pm on Tuesday; you would be penalized an additional 1/3 of a letter grade if you submitted the paper between 3:00 pm on Tuesday and 3:00 pm on Wednesday; and so on.)

General advice for extensions: extensions requested several days in advance of the paper deadline are more likely to be granted. Your request must also include a new proposed deadline for your

submission. If you request an extension within 24 hours of a paper deadline, we will need to have a conversation in order for me to grant approval. It is always best to talk to me sooner rather than later.

Reading responses:

Reading responses must be submitted each week, due by 11:59 pm on Friday of that week, via the appropriate link on the course website. (So, your response for Week 2's reading, for instance, must be turned in by 11:59 pm on Friday of Week 2.) The responses will be graded on a full-credit/half-credit/no-credit basis. Responses submitted after their deadline will receive no credit. There will be 6 reading responses in total, but your response with the lowest grade will be dropped: only your 5 best reading responses will count towards your final course grade.

If you are satisfied with your grade for your first 5 reading responses, you don't have to submit the 6th one. Each of those 5 best responses is worth 4% of your course grade; collectively, they comprise 20% of that grade.

Your responses should be 1–1.5 double-spaced pages in length and should critically engage with (rather than recap or summarize) the reading—e.g. making a criticism of an argument in the reading, offering further reasons in support of an argument in the reading, posing a question about the reading, etc. Responses that do not involve critical engagement will receive no credit.

Email policy:

Having a philosophical discussion via email is much more inefficient and time consuming than most students realize. So, I don't provide a substantive response to emails asking me to explain something or to evaluate a start on a paper. If you have a substantive question (i.e., about some course content or an idea you have), it's much better to ask me or **Hannah** in lecture or office hours. Email is fine for administrative questions that require only a brief answer.

Academic Misconduct:

- Students are expected to know and to follow the University's guidelines for academic honesty. Academic misconduct can occur in a variety of ways, including (but not limited to) cheating, fabrication, and plagiarism. When in doubt about whether some academic practice is acceptable, ask your TA or the instructor for assistance. Always err

on the side of avoiding academic misconduct. Any suspected violation of university policy regarding academic conduct will be reported directly to the Office of the Dean of Students. There are no exceptions.

Resources:

- Here is a direct link to The University's Guide to Academic Integrity: <https://www.deanofstudents.ucla.edu/portals/16/documents/studentguide.pdf>
- Here is a link to the UCLA Writing Programs: <http://www.wp.ucla.edu/>
- Students needing academic accommodations based on a disability should contact the Center for Accessible Education (CAE): <http://www.cae.ucla.edu/>
- The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy is a great resource for providing helpful overviews of topics related to the course (or philosophy in general). You can find the SEP at plato.stanford.edu
- UCLA Title IX: <https://sexualharassment.ucla.edu/>
 - Please note that I am a mandated reporter

Class schedule:

WEEK 1: Introduction, paradigm cases in biomedical ethics, biological function

Lecture 1 Readings:

Beauchamp, T.L. (2003), "Methods and Principles in Biomedical Ethics"

Lecture 2 Readings:

Boorse, C. (1977), "Health as a theoretical concept"

Kingma, E. (2007), "What is it to be Healthy?"

WEEK 2: Disability and Genetic Screening

Lecture 1 Readings:

- Barnes, E. (2016), Chapter Two of *The Minority Body: A Theory of Disability*, "Bad Difference and Mere Difference"
- Davis, D.S. (1997), "Genetic Dilemmas and the Child's Right to an Open Future"

Lecture 2 Readings:

- Stramondo, J. (2020), “Disability and the Damaging Master Narrative of an Open Future”
- Stramondo, J. (2017), “Disabled by Design: Justifying and Limiting Parental Authority to Choose Future Children with Pre-Implantation Genetic Diagnosis”

WEEK 3: Reproductive Ethics

Lecture 1 Readings:

- Anderson, E. (1990), “Is Women's Labor a Commodity?”
- Satz, D. (1992), “Markets in Women's Reproductive Labor”

Lecture 2 Readings:

- Thomson, J. (1971), “A Defense of Abortion”
- Marquis, D. (1989), “Why Abortion is Immoral”

WEEK 4: Abortion (cont.), Death and end of life decision making

Lecture 1 Readings:

- Thomson, J. (1971), “A Defense of Abortion”
- Marquis, D. (1989), “Why Abortion is Immoral”

Lecture 2 Readings:

- Aviv, R. (2018), “What Does it Mean to Die?”
 - <https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2018/02/05/what-does-it-mean-to-die>
- Nagel, T. (1979), “Death”

WEEK 5: Euthanasia

Lecture 1 Readings:

- Brock, D. (1992), “Voluntary Active Euthanasia”
- Velleman, D. (1992), “Against the Right to Die”

Lecture 2 Readings:

- Velleman, D. (1999), “A Right of Self-Termination?” (only pp. 606-620)

WEEK 6: Allocation of Medical Resources

Lecture 1 Readings:

- Alexander, S. (1962), “They Decide Who Lives, Who Dies”
- Rescher, N. (1969) “The Allocation of Exotic Medical Lifesaving Therapy”

Lecture 2 Readings:

- Taurek, J. (1977), “Should the Numbers Count?”