

Syllabus
Phil3520-090: Bioethics



Spring 2021 (3 credit hours)

Instructor: Louise Pedersen and Kaitlin Pettit

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Course Type: Online

Office Hours: Flexible, online. We can talk via email or via Zoom. We usually respond to emails within 24 hours Monday-Friday. If you would like to talk to us via Zoom, email us ahead of time and request a Zoom meeting with one of us at a reasonable time (we will then send you a meeting link).

Course Description: Bioethics is the study of the ethical issues that arise in the practice of medicine, the study of human biology, and other biological research. Drawing on a variety of ethical cases drawn from the biomedical literature, we will cover both the conceptual foundations of moral theory and the application of conceptual tools developed from those principles. The course has two units:

Unit 1: Moral Theories and the Ethical Treatment of Patients. Here, we will first investigate the nature of morality in general, and ask: Are there such things as good, bad, right, and wrong? If so, do we decide them for ourselves, or are they already decided for us? Is moral obligation simply about producing the best consequences, or can an action be wrong even if it has a good outcome? Am I obligated simply to not hurt others, or do I have a duty to help others as well? This unit will also cover the four principles of bioethics: autonomy, non-maleficence, beneficence, and justice in the context of patients' rights and informed consent.

Unit 2: Bioethical Issues. In this unit, we will examine several applied ethical issues in bioethics. We will cover pandemic care, euthanasia, animal experimentation, abortion, disability, and eugenics.

Course Objectives: Upon completion of this course, the students will be able to:

- Engage with the basics of prevalent moral theories
- Evaluate philosophical arguments
- Recognize the pervasiveness of ethics and philosophy in biomedical issues
- Advance their critical thinking/writing/argumentative skills by engaging with philosophical texts on bioethics
- Develop a case study of a biomedical issue related to COVID-19

Prerequisites: There are no prerequisites for this course.

Course Materials

All readings are available on Canvas as PDFs (see Files).

Expectations: You are expected to spend roughly nine hours every week on this course. To compare, a traditional 3-credit in-class course meets three hours per week across a 15-week semester. In in-person courses, each student is also expected to spend an average of twice the in-class time performing out-of-classroom activities like reading, responding to chapter questions, researching and writing papers, etc. This brings the total weekly time investment to nine hours, or 135 hours for the semester. We expect the same kind of commitment and rigor that you put into an in-person course into our online classroom.

The course is reading and writing heavy, so it is important that you plan out your week and stick to the deadlines. Do not expect to do well in this course if you try to read all the material and answer questions about it 30 minutes before an assignment is due. Philosophy is not something that can be rushed. With that said, it is easy to do well in this course if you allocate enough time to do the readings and to thoughtfully answer the assignments.

Since this is an online class, please familiarize yourself with Canvas (if you are new to it).

Before **January 31st** (11:59pm Mountain time) you must submit the Syllabus Acknowledgement. In a regular in-class meeting, we would go over the syllabus on our first day of class, but since we are in an online environment, you will have to read it on your own, and then go to the assignment “Syllabus Acknowledgment” and state “yes” to the question that you have read and understood the syllabus. Doing this simple task is worth 5 points (counted towards your Weekly Reflection Posts). Stating “yes” to the question is like signing a contract, acknowledging that you understand the content, rules, and deadlines of the syllabus.

Assignments and Evaluation:

- **Weekly Reflection Posts (25% of final grade) [12 in total]**

Every week (week 1-13, except week 7) you will be asked to reflect on the readings and discuss your thoughts with your peers. Each week we will start off with a prompt to get the discussion going. While these posts are somewhat informal, you should still remember to use proper grammar/sentence structure, and to engage respectfully and critically with your peers.

Because of the class size, we will break the class up into three discussion groups every week (about 20 students per group). This makes for better discussions, and it will be easier for you to keep track of the conversation. This also means you will have different interlocutors every week.

Every week you are required to write a thoughtful response to the readings (at least 300 words) and to reply to two other students by Sunday (11:59 pm Mountain time). Your replies should be thoughtful, substantial, and constructive. In other words, don't just write “I agree” or “you're right” and think that counts as a reply. Go in depth and don't be afraid to, respectfully, disagree.

See Assignment Instructions under Files for complete guidelines and rubric. Each initial post is worth 6 points, and each reply is worth 2 points each (10 points total every week).

- **Flipgrid Interactions (part of Weekly Reflection Posts grade) [12 in total]**

Online courses by definition involve less in-person interaction than traditional in-person courses. This can make it difficult to feel fully engaged with the material and your classmates, leading some students to feel disconnected from their learning experience. To combat this, we're trying something new this semester: Flipgrid.

Flipgrid is an online video discussion forum, secured such that only our class will have access to the videos you post. Each Thursday (by 11:59 pm Mountain time), you are required to post a video with a question or reflection from the readings. These questions/reflections can be much more informal than the Weekly Reflection Posts: Did the reading make you think of a personal experience or something you learned in another class? Do you have a clarificatory question about a point or term used in the reading? Was there something in one of the readings that particularly got you interested or engaged? From these video posts, we want to see that you're engaging with the readings beyond just the quiz questions and discussion prompts; use the space to bring your own ideas in and show your personality.

With these video posts, we also want to provide a space for you to interact more with your peers than as a faceless persona behind a written argument. Feel free to respond to each other's videos! For each response you post, we'll give you ½ a point of extra credit, up to 5 replies each week. Any extra credit responses are due by the Sunday after the initial video is due.

See Assignment Instructions under Files for complete guidelines and rubric. Each initial post is worth 3 points and each optional, extra credit reply is worth ½ point each up to 5 replies each week.

- **Check-On-Learning Quizzes (25% of final grade)**

- Quiz 1 (covers weeks 1, 2, and 3) due Sunday, **February 7** (11:59 pm Mountain time)
- Quiz 2 (covers weeks 4, 5, and 6) due Sunday, **February 28** (11:59 pm Mountain time)
- Quiz 3 (covers weeks 8, 9, and 10) due Sunday, **March 28** (11:59 pm Mountain time)
- Quiz 4 (covers weeks 11, 12, and 13) due Sunday **April 18** (11:59 pm Mountain time)

Each quiz consists of 25 multiple choice questions (worth 4 points each). For complete guidelines see Assignment Instructions under Files.

- **Group Project Presentations (20% of final grade)**

- **Group Project 1 (on moral theories) due Friday, February 19 (11:59 pm Mountain time)**
 - Intermediary deadlines posted on Canvas
- **Group Project 2 (on euthanasia) due Friday, April 9 (11:59 pm Mountain time)**
 - Intermediary deadlines posted on Canvas

Each group (3 or 4 students) will create a joint presentation (100 points). Please start your group project well in advance of the due date. You will need to coordinate who is doing what and how you are going to complete the assignment as a team. This will take planning and cooperation. Your grade will be based on both your individual contribution and the overall team effort. For complete guidelines and grading rubric see Assignment Instructions under Files.

- **Ethics and COVID-19 Case Study Project (30% of final grade)**

For the case study project, we ask you to think of a specific ethical issue related to the COVID-19 pandemic. You should start thinking about the topic of your project early on in the semester. As you learn about bioethics and philosophy throughout the course, you should be able to come up with a novel idea that captures an ethical aspect of COVID-19. Pick something that is of interest to you. The assignment has three graded components: an abstract, peer reviews, and a case study. For complete guidelines and grading rubrics for each component see Assignment Instructions under Files.

- **Abstract and Online Peer reviews (15% of final grade):**
 - **Due Monday 4/19:** post your abstract (200-300 words) to your peer review group (your abstract will introduce the topic of your case study and your tentative line of argument) (50 points).
 - **Due Sunday 4/25:** To help your fellow students in your designated group improve their final projects, you will write peer reviews of their case study abstracts (each student will give feedback to 4-5 other students) (50 points).
- **Final Case Study (15% of final grade): Due Monday 5/3 (11:59pm Mountain time)**
 - A 4-5-page case study (100 points) that captures an ethical aspect/challenge of the COVID-19 pandemic and demonstrates mastery of skills learned throughout the course.

See Assignment Instructions under Files for complete guidelines and rubrics.

Late Policy: Late work will not be accepted. It is your responsibility to plan out your schedule and your assignments. However, if you find yourself in extenuating circumstances and contact us BEFORE the due date, we will work with you to find a solution.

Grading Scale:

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| A 93-100 | C 73-76 |
| A- 90-92 | C- 70-72 |
| B+ 87-89 | D+ 67-69 |
| B 83-86 | D 63-66 |

B- 80-82

D- 60-62

C+ 77-79

E 59 and below

Covid-19 Spring 2021 Instructional Guidelines [our classroom is virtual, so we do not have to worry about meeting up, but please do take care if you are going to be on campus this spring for other classes, the library, etc.]:

Face coverings are required in all in-person classes for both students and faculty.

It is mandatory that students self-report if they test positive for COVID-19 via this website: <https://coronavirus.utah.edu/>.

Academic misconduct: Please make sure you are familiar with the [Student Code](#). For academic misconduct, see Section I.B. Note especially the section on plagiarism, which is defined as “the intentional unacknowledged use or incorporation of any other person's work in, or as a basis for, one's own work offered for academic consideration or credit or for public presentation.” Note that “[p]lagiarism includes, but is not limited to, representing as one's own, without attribution, any other individual's words, phrasing, ideas, sequence of ideas, information or any other mode or content of expression.” The *minimum* sanction for an instance of plagiarism will be a zero on the assignment, but we reserve the right to impose a harsher academic sanction (including a failing grade in the class), and to refer plagiarism cases to the Student Behavior Committee for non-academic sanctions. You should note that we also notify your home college in cases of academic misconduct (which might result in dismissal from the program).

Content Accommodation Policy: This course deals with issues that may be sensitive for some students. Please be familiar with the University of Utah's Accommodation Policy. “Students are expected to take courses that will challenge them intellectually and personally. Students must understand and be able to articulate the ideas and theories that are important to the discourse within and among academic disciplines. Personal disagreement with these ideas and theories or their implications is not sufficient grounds for requesting an accommodation. Accommodations requested on such grounds will not be granted. It is the student's obligation to determine, before the last day to drop courses without penalty, when course requirements conflict with the student's sincerely-held core beliefs. If there is such a conflict, the student should consider dropping the class” (from the student handbook, 3b under [Policy 6-100: Instruction and Evaluation, Revision 25.](#))

Americans with Disabilities Act: The University of Utah seeks to provide equal access to its programs, services and activities for people with disabilities. If you will need accommodations in the class, reasonable prior notice needs to be given to the [Center for Disability Services](#), 162 Union Building, 581-5020 (V/TDD). CDS will work with you and the instructor to make arrangements for accommodations.

Sexual Misconduct: Title IX of the Civil Rights Act makes it clear that violence and harassment based on sex and gender (which includes sexual orientation and gender identity/expression) is a civil rights offense subject to the same kinds of accountability and the same kinds of support applied to

offenses against other protected categories such as race, national origin, color, religion, age, status as a person with a disability, veteran's status, or genetic information. If you or someone you know has been harassed or assaulted, you are encouraged to report it to the Title IX Coordinator in the Office of Equal Opportunity and Affirmative Action, 135 Park Building, 801-581-8365, or the Office of the Dean of Students, 270 Union Building, 801-581-7066. For support and confidential consultation, contact the Center for Student Wellness, 426 SSB, 801-581-7776. To report to the police, contact the Department of Public Safety, 801-585-2677.

University Safety Statement: The University of Utah values the safety of all campus community members. To report suspicious activity or to request a courtesy escort, call campus police at 801-585-2677. You will receive important emergency alerts and safety messages regarding campus safety via text message. For more information regarding safety and to review available training resources, including helpful videos, visit [#SAFEU](#)

Gender Pronoun and Name Preferences: Class rosters are provided to the instructor with the student's legal name; however, we are happy to honor your request to address you by an alternate name and/or gender pronoun. Please advise us of this preference early in the semester, so we can ensure use of your preferred name and pronouns in this space.

Wellness: Personal concerns such as stress, anxiety, relationship difficulties, depression, cross-cultural differences, etc., can interfere with a student's ability to succeed and thrive at the University of Utah. For helpful resources contact [Center for Student Wellness](#) at (801) 581-7776.

Classroom Diversity/Civility Statement: Classrooms (virtual ones included) should be spaces where people with conflicting points of view can engage respectfully with one another. Please be kind, considerate, and thoughtful towards your fellow students. For more on classroom etiquette, see the pdf under Files called "Course Etiquette." You will be held to the standards expressed in the "Course Etiquette" document in all your course interactions this semester, both video and written.

E-mail correspondence: We will typically respond to emails within 24 hours Monday through Friday (and often much quicker). However, we do ask that you follow some minimal guidelines:

- Think of the emails you send to your instructor as professional communication. Professional emails are *not* like text messages you send to your friends: they should be polite, concise, and respectful. So, no emojis or text slang: use this as an opportunity to get better at writing professional emails, because chances are you will be writing lots of these in a future job after college.
- Please use a proper greeting. This may be formal (e.g., "Dear Prof. Pedersen") or informal ("Hi Kaitlin"). You may address us in whatever way you feel comfortable (so long as it is respectful!), though our preference is that you simply call us "Louise" and "Kaitlin."
- Please sign your e-mail. All too often we get unsigned e-mails from students with inscrutable email addresses. Please identify yourself to us. These guidelines may be relaxed in obvious cases (e.g., in a string of e-mail replies). We will use similar guidelines in writing you. We are happy to answer student e-mails, and tend to respond promptly (within a day).
- Because there are two of us, we've divided up the weekly responsibilities. On the week's Canvas Page, we will identify who you should contact for questions regarding that week. Please note this identification before emailing us so that we can best respond to your questions.

- If we receive e-mails that fail to meet the guidelines above, we reserve the right to not respond.

Disclaimer: This syllabus is not a legally binding document and is subject to change in order to meet pedagogical needs. Please check the syllabus link on Canvas for the most up to date version of this document. If we make changes to the document, we will always announce it in class.

COURSE SCHEDULE

NOTE: Every week we will upload a combination of videos with announcements and written lecture notes. It is imperative that you watch and read these on a weekly basis. You should check our Canvas site every Monday morning for new videos, lecture notes, announcements, etc. All information will be linked through the Canvas Page for each week, which will show up on your Canvas To Do List.

| | Unit 1: Moral Theories and the Ethical Treatment of Patients |
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| Week 1 Jan 19-Jan 24 | <p style="text-align: center;"><i>Moral Philosophy and Bioethics</i></p> <p><u>Read:</u> Vaughn, “Moral Reasoning in Bioethics”</p> <p><u>Read ahead for next week’s discussion:</u> Utilitarianism: Rachels, Chapters 7 and 8</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Please read our welcome announcement carefully and follow the directions • Due Thursday, January 21: Flipgrid Post • Due Sunday, January 24: Introduce yourself in the pinned discussion “Introductions” • Due Sunday, January 24: Weekly reflection post and two replies • Due Sunday, January 24: Optional extra credit Flipgrid responses • Syllabus acknowledgement (due January 31st) |
| Week 2 Jan 25-Jan 31 | <p style="text-align: center;"><i>Kantian Theory</i></p> <p><u>Read:</u> Utilitarianism: Beauchamp & Childress, “Moral Theories” (p. 385-94)</p> <p><u>Read:</u> Kantian Theory: Beauchamp & Childress, “Moral Theories” (p. 394-400) <i>and</i> Rachels, Chapters 9 and 10</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Due Thursday, January 28: Flipgrid Post • Due Sunday, January 31: Weekly reflection post and two replies |

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| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Due Sunday, January 31: Optional extra credit Flipgrid responses • If you haven't already completed the Syllabus acknowledgement, please do so by January 31st |
| <p>Week 3</p> <p>Feb 1- Feb 7</p> | <p><i>Virtue Theory and Rights Theory</i></p> <p><u>Read:</u> Virtue Theory: Beauchamp & Childress, "Moral Theories" (p. 409-418) <i>and</i> Rachels, Chapter 12</p> <p><u>Read:</u> Rights Theory: Beauchamp & Childress, "Moral theories" (p. 400-409)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Due Thursday, February 4: Flipgrid Post • Due Sunday, February 7: Weekly reflection post and two replies • Due Sunday, February 7: Quiz 1 • Due Sunday, February 7: Optional extra credit Flipgrid responses |
| <p>Week 4</p> <p>Feb 8-Feb 14</p> | <p><i>The Four Principles of Biomedical Ethics</i></p> <p><u>Read:</u> Vaughn, "Moral Principles," Gillon, "Four Principles Plus Attention to Scope" <i>and</i> Beauchamp, "Methods and Principles in Biomedical Ethics"</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Due Thursday, February 11: Flipgrid Post • Due Sunday, February 14: Weekly reflection post and two replies • Due Sunday, February 14: Optional extra credit Flipgrid responses |
| <p>Week 5</p> <p>Feb 15-Feb 21</p> | <p><i>Paternalism and Informed Consent</i></p> <p><u>Read:</u> Vaughn, "Paternalism" <i>and</i> Vaughn, "Informed Consent"</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Due Thursday, February 18: Flipgrid Post • Due Friday, February 19: Group Project 1 • Due Sunday, February 21: Weekly reflection post and two replies • Due Sunday, February 21: Optional extra credit Flipgrid responses |
| <p>Week 6</p> | <p><i>Ethical Treatment of Patients</i></p> |

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| <p>Feb 22- Feb 28</p> | <p>Read: Beauchamp & Childress, “Professional-Patient Relationships”</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Due Thursday, February 25: Flipgrid Post • Due Sunday, February 28: Weekly reflection post and two replies • Due Sunday, February 28: Quiz 2 • Due Sunday, February 28: Optional extra credit Flipgrid responses |
| <p>Week 7</p> <p>Mar 1-Mar 7</p> | <p style="text-align: center;"><i>Reading Week</i></p> <p style="text-align: center;">No readings or assignments this week. Catch your breath, get caught up on your work, and plan ahead for the remainder of the semester.</p> |
| | <p style="text-align: center;">Unit 2: Bioethical Issues</p> |
| | <p style="text-align: center;">2(a): Death and Dying</p> |
| <p>Week 8</p> <p>Marc 8-Mar 14</p> | <p style="text-align: center;"><i>Euthanasia and Physician Assisted Suicide</i></p> <p>Read: Rachels, “Active and Passive Euthanasia,” and Nesbitt, “Is Killing Worse Than Letting Die?”</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Due Thursday, March 11: Flipgrid Post • Due Sunday, March 14: Weekly reflection post and two replies • Due Sunday, March 14: Optional extra credit Flipgrid responses |
| <p>Week 9</p> <p>Mar 15-Mar 21</p> | <p style="text-align: center;"><i>Abortion</i></p> <p>Read: Marquis, “Why Abortion is Immoral,” and Thompson, “A Defense of Abortion”</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Due Thursday, March 18: Flipgrid Post • Due Sunday, March 21: Weekly reflection post and two replies • Due Sunday, March 21: Optional extra credit Flipgrid responses |
| | <p style="text-align: center;">2(b): The Use of Animals in Biomedical Experimentation</p> |
| <p>Week 10</p> <p>Mar 22-Mar 28</p> | |

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| | <p><u>Read</u>: Singer, “All Animals are Equal,” <i>and</i> Cohen, “The Case for the Use of Animals in Biomedical Research”</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Due Thursday, March 25: Flipgrid Post • Due Sunday, March 28: Weekly reflection post and two replies • Due Sunday, March 28: Quiz 3 • Due Sunday, March 28: Optional extra credit Flipgrid responses |
| | 2(c): Pandemic Critical Care |
| <p>Week 11</p> <p>Mar 29-Apr 4</p> | <p><u>Read</u>: Kisner, “The Committee on Life and Death,” Kirby, “Enhancing the Fairness of Pandemic Critical Care Triage,” Tabery, “How to Prepare for the Worst-Case Scenerio,” (optional) <i>and</i> Aronson, “Ageism is Making the Pandemic Worse”</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Due Thursday, April 1: Flipgrid Post • Due Sunday, April 4: Weekly reflection post and two replies • Due Sunday, April 4: Optional extra credit Flipgrid responses |
| | 2(d): Disability and Normal Function |
| <p>Week 12</p> <p>Apr 5-Apr 11</p> | <p><u>Read</u>: Amundson, “Against Normal Function,” <i>and</i> Garland-Thomson, “Human Biodiversity Conservation”</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Due Thursday, April 8: Flipgrid Post • Due Friday, April 9: Group Project 2 • Due Sunday, April 11: Weekly reflection post and two replies • Due Sunday, April 11: Optional extra credit Flipgrid responses |
| | 2(e): Eugenics |
| <p>Week 13</p> <p>Apr 12-Apr 18</p> | <p><u>Read</u>: Savulescu, “Procreative Beneficence: Why We Should Select the Best Children,” <i>and</i> Sandel, “The Case Against Perfection”</p> |

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| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Due Thursday, April 15: Flipgrid Post • Due Sunday, April 18: Weekly reflection post and two replies • Due Sunday, April 18: Quiz 4 • Due Sunday, April 18: Optional extra credit Flipgrid responses |
| | Ethics and COVID-19 Case Study Abstract and Peer reviews |
| <p>Week 14</p> <p>Apr 19-Apr 25</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Due Monday Apr 19: Post Abstract to your group • Due Friday Apr 23: Complete peer reviews for all students in your group (4-5 each) |
| | Ethics and COVID-19 Case Study |
| <p>Week 15</p> <p>Apr 26-27</p> | <p>Classes end Tuesday Apr 27. Use this week to work on your final case study.</p> |
| | Finals Week |
| <p>Week 16</p> <p>Apr 29-May 5</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Case Study Due Monday May 3 by 11:59pm |