2013

329-10 Bioethics

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PHIL 329-10 Summer Intersession 2013

Bioethics Course Syllabus

Instructor: Daniel Dwyer, Ph.D.
Office: 220 Hinkle
Office hours: by appt. only
Class Times: 8:30-12:15 MTWRF
Room: Schmidt 3
Email: dwyerd@xavier.edu
Cell: 513-325-7031 until 6pm M-F

**Course Goals:** This Bioethics course will lead you to:

1) a solid grasp of various moral and ethical theories and their application to bioethical issues

2) reflection on cutting-edge medical practices such as: embryonic stem-cell research, cloning, euthanasia and physician-assisted suicide, artificial reproductive techniques (ART), genetic enhancement

3) consideration of the meaning of human dignity in accordance with the Catholic and Jesuit mission of Xavier University

4) and a distinctive imaginative approach to bioethical reflection through literature

By the end of the course, you should be able to make informed decisions and carry out critical deliberations, based on adequate philosophical reflection, about a wide variety of bioethical issues.

**Core Philosophy Goals and Objectives:**

Objective 1. Students completing the Core Philosophy requirement will be able to *defend* a philosophical position, explaining the principles on which it relies, and comparing it to some major alternative.

Objective 2. Students completing the Core Philosophy requirement will be able to *discuss* some fundamental questions that arise from the human condition and transcend disciplinary boundaries—such as questions about the grounds of morality, the essence of justice, the nature of reality, the possibility of certainty, the nature of beauty, or the reasonableness of religious faith.

Objective 3. Students completing the Core Philosophy requirement will be able to *compare and contrast*, or *critically explain*, one or more philosophical perspectives on the human condition, explaining some of their foundations and implications.

Objective 4. Students completing the Core Philosophy requirement will be able to *analyze and synthesize* complex ideas in a clear, logical manner.
Course Requirements

1. **Class Participation:** Class participation is essential in a course where students are expected to think critically for themselves and come to *their own conclusions* on arguments from philosophers in the Western tradition. But students are often confused about what exactly counts as participation. There are various ways to participate:

   A. By asking or answering a question in class *spontaneously*, without prompting by the professor. This is the *traditional* style of participation, and one for which you will receive the highest participation grade.

   B. By answering a question in class, *Socratic-style*: A student will be posed a question without having volunteered. You may either answer to the best of your knowledge or simply “Pass” with no shame whatsoever. If, however, you “pass,” it would be good for you to rejoin the class conversation at a later point. This way you will not feel alienated from class participation, i.e., passed over and then forgotten for the rest of the class period. The Socratic style of education minimizes stress and maximizes participation from all students in the class.

   C. **Write down a question or comment during or after class** and give it to the professor at the end of the class. Such questions will help the instructor assess the learning process in the class (e.g., if the class is going too fast, too slow, using unfamiliar vocabulary or references to unknown philosophers, etc.). Responses to these handwritten questions and comments will often be the first item on the next class’ agenda.

   D. Visiting **office hours**. These are especially useful to get to know each other and get individual attention about questions about the material *at your own pace*.

2. There will be announced or unannounced **written exercises (quizzes)** at the beginning of class that check for reading comprehension. These exercises will usually take the form of a one- to two-page answer to questions about the previous day’s reading. *Quizzes cannot be made up.* The lowest quiz grade will be dropped.

3. Use of **cell phones, texting, surfing, and the eating of food** are strictly prohibited in the classroom—infractions will affect the participation grade. Drinking beverages is perfectly fine, but restrict eating for the breaks. *Your cell phone must be turned off, not just on silence or vibrate.* Anyone using a computer must sit in the front two rows—no exceptions.

3. **Class attendance:** For every unexcused absence there will be a 7-point deduction from the final 100 point grade. Lateness to class or early departures will count as a fraction of this 7-point rule. Missing three full classes will constitute a **failure** for the course.

4. **Papers:** There are 2 papers in the class. The question prompts, due dates, and all expectations will be distributed in advance.

   - **Cheating:** Cheating, *plagiarism*, and all other dishonest conduct will be dealt with according to Xavier University’s honor code. This states: “All work submitted for academic evaluation must be
the student’s own. [...] The direct and un-attributed use of another’s efforts is prohibited as is the use of any work untruthfully submitted as one’s own. Penalties for violations of this policy may include one or more of the following: A ‘zero’ for that assignment or test, an ‘F’ in the course, and expulsion from the University” (Xavier University Catalog, 52). If you have any questions about this policy, or questions about what constitutes plagiarism, it is your responsibility to ask the professor before your papers are due.

- **Late/Missed Work:** If there is no medical emergency, then late papers will go down a full grade (e.g. a B will turn into a C) for every day (not class day) they are late.*** Quizzes cannot be made up.

4. **Reading:** Read the assigned weekly readings before coming to each class, marking up in pencil passages you think are important or difficult. Before the following class, re-read the text more slowly with a view to deeper understanding. "You haven't read a text once unless you’ve read it twice." Several students will inevitably complain that the readings are too difficult. But these are students who almost always do not follow the “read-at-least-twice” rule of thumb.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Class Participation</th>
<th>20%</th>
<th>A 95-100,</th>
<th>A- 91-94</th>
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<tr>
<td>Presentation Participation</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>B+ 87-90,</td>
<td>B 83-86,</td>
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<td>Quizzes</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>C+ 77-79,</td>
<td>C 73-76,</td>
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<td>Group Presentation</td>
<td>10%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Paper 1</td>
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<td>Paper 2</td>
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Readings Syllabus (subject to change)

- please bring *Being Human* reader to every class

### Week 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Day</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Assignment</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>M</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Peter Singer handout, video <em>A Dangerous Mind</em>, and Introduction to Utilitarianism</td>
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<tr>
<td>T</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>Mill’s <em>Utilitarianism</em>, chs. 2-4</td>
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<td>1&lt;sup&gt;st&lt;/sup&gt; presentation: IVF __________________________</td>
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| R   | 9    | Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, Book II and III.6-9 and III.10-12  
|     |      | 2<sup>nd</sup> presentation: Nic. Eth. Book III.6-9 on Courage ___________ ________________ |
|     |      | 3<sup>rd</sup> presentation: Nic. Eth. Book III.10-12 on Moderation ___________ ________________ |
| F   | 10   | Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, VII.1-10  
|     |      | 4<sup>th</sup> presentation: Physician-assisted Suicide ___________ ________________ |

### Week 2

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<th>Day</th>
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<th>Assignment</th>
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<tr>
<td>M</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>C.S Lewis, <em>The Abolition of Man</em>, ch. 3; <strong>Paper 1 due</strong></td>
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<td>5&lt;sup&gt;th&lt;/sup&gt; Presentation: Roman Catholic principles in Bioethics ___________ ________________</td>
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<td>6&lt;sup&gt;th&lt;/sup&gt; Presentation ___________ ________________</td>
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<td>7&lt;sup&gt;th&lt;/sup&gt; Presentation ___________ ________________</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
| F   | 17   | **Paper 2 due**  
|     |      | 9<sup>th</sup> Presentation ___________ ________________  
|     |      | 10<sup>th</sup> Presentation ___________ ________________ |