2013

329-91 Bioethics

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Xavier University
Department of Philosophy

Philosophy 329
Bioethics
Summer Semester 2013
Course Syllabus

Section 91: Meets TuTh 6:15 PM–9:30 PM Smith Hall G27 (3 credits)
Instructor: Daniel Shields, Ph.D.
Office: Hinkle Hall, Rm. 231
Office Hours: W 1:00 PM–4:00 PM, or by appointment
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Course Description & Objectives:

This course is an introduction to bioethics, approached as a subdivision of the field of moral philosophy, which is itself one of the major areas of philosophy. Bioethics deals with ethical issues that concern the human being’s relationship to biological life, above all those which have to do with human health care.

We will be looking at two major approaches to moral philosophy—utilitarianism and a virtue ethics/natural law hybrid—and how these general approaches to moral philosophy impact on bioethical issues in particular. At the heart of bioethical issues is the human person’s understanding of and attitude towards his own natural, biological life. Utilitarians and natural law theorists/virtue ethicists have radically different understandings of nature, and this impacts their evaluation of bioethical issues such as euthanasia and in-vitro fertilization.

The goal of this course is to come to an understanding of what human reason teaches us about human moral and biological life and to apply the principles learned to moral issues in health care. We are looking for an understanding, not the conveyance of information, even of information on moral obligations. Philosophy is a discipline in which human beings must come to understand for themselves the truth about the world, the human person, and God. This does not imply that there is not an objective truth about these matters, but rather that nobody else can understand for any given individual; he or she must arrive at conclusions for him or herself.

This course is part of Xavier University’s Core Curriculum. In particular it is one of the courses of the Ethics/Religion and Society (E/RS) sequence. The following goals and objectives from among those of the University’s Core are relevant to this class:

GOAL 1: Students will be effective communicators in writing and orally.
1. Students will organize and express their ideas in writing and orally.
2. Students will formulate clear and arguable theses, supported by evidence drawn from appropriate sources.
3. Students will utilize an effective writing process guided by audience, purpose, cultural context, and disciplinary standards.

GOAL 2: Students will be critical thinkers

1. Students will analyze and interpret texts.
3. Students will evaluate the strength of an argument or claim and its evidence.
4. Students will discuss fundamental questions that arise from the human condition, 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.
5. Students will evaluate the use of science and mathematics in society and everyday life in an informed manner

GOAL 3: Students will be creators of new knowledge and expression.

1. Students will utilize their imagination and creativity, individually and collectively, to innovate and generate new perspectives to problems.

GOAL 4: Students will be able to understand and appreciate the arts, humanities and science disciplines, and reflect on connections among these studies.

2. Students will articulate and engage with great ideas in the history of Western thought through the writings of great philosophers.
8. Students will compare and contrast the aims and methodologies of the humanities, fine arts, sciences, and mathematics.

GOAL 5: Students will be integrated individuals who articulate a coherent, ethical perspective on the world and their place in it.

1. Students will recognize the societal, ethical and moral dimensions of discourse, art, information, science and technology.
2. Students will relate their knowledge and skills in a reflective and constructive way to their life experiences and the challenges confronting today’s world.
3. Students will use information and resources responsibly in their communication and research.

GOAL 7 (E/RS): Students will be intellectually, morally and spiritually educated individuals capable of critical reflection on ethical and/or religious questions of social significance from the perspective of multiple disciplines with unique methods

1. Students will analyze rationally competing claims about individual and political
justice within foundational philosophical texts.
4. Students will reflect critically on ethical and/or religious questions of social significance through the method of another discipline or through a second course in philosophy, theology or literature.

**Required Texts:**


**Recommended Text:**


**Requirements:**

(1) Reading Assignments: Reading the assignments carefully is the primary requirement of the course. Please bring the reading assignments to class with you.

There will be pop quizzes at the beginning of every class period. The questions will cover basic ideas from the readings. They will be open book, but you will have limited time. If you have not done the reading carefully, you will not be able to find the answer in the time provided. If you have done the reading, you should be able to. Although you should be in an attendance and on time for every class, if you happen to miss a pop quiz, you will have the opportunity of making it up, but you must talk to me about it.

Some of the readings will be posted/linked to on Blackboard (blackboard.xavier.edu). These readings are indicated on the syllabus by the term “e-handout.” Please print them out, read them, and bring them to class. Some of the material posted on Blackboard is copyrighted and only students in this class section may access or print them, and any printed copies must be destroyed at the end of the semester.

(2) Attendance: Attending class is required, and I will take roll at the beginning of every class. **1 class may be missed without penalty.** For the first absence, no distinction is made between excused and unexcused absences. A **second absence, however, will result in the reduction of 5 points out of 100 from the final grade if not excused.** Given the accelerated nature of this course, I will only give an excuse for a serious reason, and for each absence you will have to take a make-up quiz, and meet me for a short summary of the class material you missed. In general, more than 2 absences of any kind, excused or not, will result in failure of the course.
If you have a valid reason for missing class, such as an illness, please notify me as soon as possible, so that I may determine whether the absence can be excused and schedule a time to meet for the make-up quiz/class summary.

If there is an extraordinary reason for missing more than 2 classes, such as a serious illness, please discuss it with me as soon as possible so that we may determine whether the course can be completed or not. Withdrawal from the course may be necessary, but that will be determined on a case by case basis.

Student athletes should be especially careful not to miss any classes except those which their athletic events require. Otherwise, they may quickly find themselves over the allowed number of absences.

Please come to class on time and do not leave until class is over. For every 2 times a student comes in after I have taken roll, or leaves before class is over, 1 absence will be counted.

Anytime class falls on a day when a student is religiously obligated not to attend class (for example, if it is considered work in one’s religion and class falls on a work-restricted day) the student will receive an excused absence if he or she notifies me of the religious obligation. More than 3 absences will still generally not be allowed. Please plan ahead, so that you do not have too many absences already when a work-restricted religious day occurs.

(3) Class Participation: You will be graded on your active participation in class. I will ask you questions in class, and if you have a question about the material, ask about it in class. There will also be time for classroom discussions. Don't be shy, and utilize my office hours. If you come to my office with a real philosophical question, or even just to share some philosophical thought, you will receive points towards your participation grade. Emailing me with questions/comments will also count towards your participation grade.

(4) Paper: An 8–10 page paper will be assigned in this class. This paper will involve research on a particular bioethical issue of your choice. One of your sources must be Catholic Health Care Ethics: A Manual for Practitioners, unless you request and receive permission from me to substitute it with another source. You must also compare the view found in that book with another view. You will have to start researching very soon, since the course is only six weeks long.

The primary requirement for this paper is coherence and structure of thought—i.e., having a thesis and supporting it rationally—but you will also be graded for citation of sources, correct grammar, punctuation, spelling, and style. Please submit a hard copy of your paper in class on the day it is due. In cases of hardship only, if you are unable to attend class that day, you may submit your paper as a Microsoft Word document to my email address (shieldsd@xavier.edu) by the time the class period in which they are due starts (e.g., if class starts at 6:15 PM and the paper is due that day, email me your paper no later than 6:15 PM.) For every class-period or portion thereof that the paper is late I will subtract one letter grade. For example, if you turn in your paper after it is due but before the next class period, and you turn in a B paper, you will receive a C.

Since you will be graded on grammar, punctuation, and spelling, I recommend you take advantage of the Writing Center. They can help you with the mechanics of writing a paper, although not with the philosophical content. If you have any questions
about that, or what it means to have and support a thesis, please see me after class or during my office hours.

Please format your papers according to the Chicago Manual of Style (CMS).

(5) Final Exam: There will be a final exam. The final exam will be comprehensive. **Do not miss the exam.** If it is absolutely necessary to miss it, you must talk to me about it ahead of time, and I will make a decision as to whether you can re-schedule. The only exception would be an unexpected emergency. Otherwise, you will receive an F on the exam.

Accommodations will be made for students with learning disabilities. Please visit the Learning Assistance Center (Suite 514 in the Conaton Learning Commons, phone: 513-745-3280, online: http://www.xavier.edu/lac/student-disability-services.cfm) for more information.

**Policies:**

The use of any electronic devices, such as smart phones, cell phones, laptops, e-readers, iPod’s, tablets, etc., is not allowed in this class, unless there is a documented need, such as a learning disability. (Learning disabilities will be fully accommodated as long as I have the proper documentation.) Please turn all electronic devices completely off; do not put them on vibrate. Do not let your phone ring in class, and do not text. The use of electronic devices in the classroom is distracting to oneself and others, and hinders one from learning. If a phone rings or vibrates in class, or if I see a student texting, surfing, or otherwise using an electronic device, I may subtract 2 points from his grade for each offense. If you have any questions about what is acceptable, ask.

Please obtain physical copies of the required books. Do not bring e-books to class.

**Campus Resources:**

When needed, be sure to take advantage of some of the student support services offered by Xavier (this list is far from exhaustive):

The Writing Center: Room 400 in the Conaton Learning Commons (Phone: 513-745-2875, Online: http://www.xavier.edu/writing_center/)

Learning Assistance Center (tutoring or disability services): Suite 514 in the Conaton Learning Commons (Phone: 513-745-3280, Online: http://www.xavier.edu/lac/)

Psychological Services Center: Sycamore House, at 3818 Winding Way, next to Schmidt Fieldhouse (Phone: 513-745-3531, Online: http://www.xavier.edu/psychologicalservices/services-to-xavier-students.cfm)

**Grading Policies:**

**Pop Quizzes** 25%
Class Participation  20%
Paper  25%
Final  30%

A  93-100  4.00   Excellent
A-  90-92  3.67
B+  87-89  3.33
B   83-86  3.00   Good
B-  80-82  2.67
C+  77-79  2.33
C   73-76  2.00  Satisfactory
C-  70-72  1.67
D+  67–69  1.33
D   63-66  1.00  Passing
D-  60–62  0.67
F  < 60  0.00  Failure

Academic Dishonesty:

“The pursuit of truth demands high standards of personal honesty. Academic and professional life requires a trust based upon integrity of the written and spoken word. Accordingly, violations of certain standards of ethical behavior will not be tolerated at Xavier University. These include theft, cheating, plagiarism, unauthorized assistance in assignments and tests, unauthorized copying of computer software, the falsification of results and material submitted in reports or admission and registration documents, and the falsification of any academic record including letters of recommendation.

All work submitted for academic evaluation must be the student’s own. Certainly, the activities of other scholars will influence all students. However, the direct and unattributed 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. The dean of the college in which the student is enrolled is to be informed in writing of all such incidents, though the teacher has full authority to assign the grade for the assignment, test, or course. If disputes of interpretation arise, the student, faculty member, and chair should attempt to resolve the difficulty. If this is unsatisfactory, the dean will rule in the matter. As a final appeal, the academic vice president will call a committee of tenured faculty for the purpose of making a final determination.”

Please be aware that you also may not resubmit work, or parts of work, that you have submitted for another class without explicit permission from me to do so. In other words, do not cut and paste from papers you have written in the past. This is sometimes referred to as “self-plagiarism” and sometimes as “inappropriate use of one’s own work.” It is considered a form of academic dishonesty, and will be treated as such.

Class Schedule:

5/14 – Syllabus; Mill, *Utilitarianism*, ch. 2, excerpt (e-handout); Peter Singer, “All Animals are Equal . . .” (e-handout); *Singer: A Dangerous Mind* (video).
5/16 – MacIntyre, *Dependent Rational Animals*, Preface–ch. 6 (p. ix–61); possible e-handout in addition

5/21 – Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, I.7 (p. 941–944); II. 1–4, 6 (p. 952–956, 957–59);
MacIntyre, *Dependent Rational Animals*, ch. 7–8 (p. 63–98)
5/23 – MacIntyre, *Dependent Rational Animals*, ch. 9–13 (p. 99–166)


6/6 – Aristotle, *De Anima*, II. 1–2 (p. 554–559); possible e-handout (TBA)

6/11 – end-of-life issues (ordinary and extraordinary means), reading TBD
6/13 – IVF, reading TBD

6/18 – catch-up; **paper due**
6/20 – Final Exam

This schedule is subject to change, as circumstances warrant. Any changes will be announced in class prior to the day of the assigned reading and on Blackboard.