BIOETHICS

WELCOME
This is a lecture and discussion class that will explore how a variety of philosophic and religious thinkers approach the issues and problems of modern dilemmas in medicine and science in a field called bioethics. We will consider a general argument for your consideration: that the arguments and the practices from faith traditions and from philosophy offer significant contributions that underlie policies and practices in bioethics.

We will use a case-based method to study how different traditions describe and defend differences in moral choices in contemporary bioethics. This class is based on the understanding that case narratives serve as another core text for the discipline of bioethics and that complex ethical issues are best considered by a careful examination of the competing theories as work themselves out in specific cases. We will examine both classic cases that have shaped our understanding of the field of bioethics and cases that are newly emerging, including the case of research done at our University. Through these cases, we will ask how religious traditions both collide and cohere over such topics as embryo research, health care reform, terminal illness, issues in epidemics and public health, and our central research question, synthetic biology research.

This class will also explore how the discipline of bioethics has emerged to reflect upon such dilemmas, with particular attention to the role that theology and philosophy have played in such reflection. We will look at both how the practice of theologians and philosophers has historically shaped the field of bioethics and at how these claims, methodology, and praxis have continued to shape and inflect bioethics. We will examine the issue of epistemic stance, of truth claims, and of how normative policies are created amid serious controversy. We will explore the nature of the relationship between religion and public policy and study how religious traditions and moral philosophy shape our view of issues as “bioethics controversies” in the first place.

GRADING
In this course, everyone will begin with an A, and will have 100 points. Your grade has four components.

1. Class participation (20 points). Your participation in class and on line will be worth 20 points, as you will need to be, and are expected to be, a full participant in debates.
2. *Reading Questions* (20 points). You will be invited to post questions about the reading (worth 1 point each) to your small group’s discussion board on Canvas. Please post them 24 hours before your group meeting.

3. *Midterm Exam* (20 points). The midterm will involve using a real case for your work, focusing upon justice, limits, and other questions from the course.

4. *Final Project* (40 points). 30 points will constitute the group oral and written component, and 10 points will constitute your contribution to the written component. The oral component grade will be shared with all the members of your group, and the 5 individual points are awarded based upon the written paper due the week after the oral presentation. While the oral project is a group effort, we expect this final paper, which will define the work of the group, to be fully footnoted and in a form proper for journal submission. Our model will be the *Penn Bioethics Journal*, an undergraduate publication.

**Office Hours and Email**

I look forward to seeing you in my virtual office.

Professor Laurie Zoloth  
2:15 – 3:15 Thursdays. Or make an individual appointment for another time (email to schedule)  
lzoloth@uchicago.edu

Our TAs are also available during office hours, for which you can sign up in Canvas. They can be reached by email as well if you need to a schedule meeting at a different time.

Ranana Dine (groups 1 & 2)  [10-11 Wednesdays  
ranana.dine@gmail.com

Miriam Attia (groups 3 & 4)  1:00 – 2:00 Thursdays  
mattia@uchicago.edu

Daniel Kim (groups 5 & 6)  
11:00 – 12:00 Fridays  
dkim327@uchicago.edu

**Class Structure**

This class is *highly interactive*. Remember to “raise your hand” via the Zoom site so I can call on you. Oral or written participation is expected and encouraged, and since each of you matters, please email both of us if you will not be in class for some reason.

Each student will be a part of a small group with two tasks, with which your TA, will assist you. Your small group will be randomly assigned during the first week.
The first group task will be textual. Each group will find a 1-2 page excerpt of an English translation of a sacred text, or a relevant primary text in philosophy to study together in addition to the assigned readings. Each will be from a different faith or philosophic tradition. Examples include the Koran, the Hebrew Bible, the New Testament, a Sutra, The Republic, Utilitarianism, etc. You may ask any professor in the University (via email of course) what they believe is such a key text. (We will help as well) Each group will be expected to make one presentation to the larger group during the quarter, leading us in a close textual analysis of your chosen text as it could be applied to the ethical problem we will consider. This reflection will be a part of the short written and oral report you will submit as a part of your final project.

The second group task is the actual production of the final project, which will involve both research on secondary sources and online interviews with experts in our department of religious studies and/or local clergy. In this project, you will be asked to act as a part of actual UChicago research in bioethics. We will be looking in depth at the problem of resource allocation during a pandemic of a scarce social good: a vaccine. What would be involved in the making, testing, and distributing such a vaccine? You will explore a problem that your university faculty is also seeking to answer: how to do basic and translational clinical research that leads to real solutions fairly and justly. You will consider the problem in light of the texts you choose to study and in light of the practical responses from makers of public policy.

Classroom Technology

The epidemic is challenging in so many ways. One challenge is using very sophisticated yet charmingly error prone technology as a vehicle for human interaction. While we cannot interact in person this quarter, we will rely on technology to help us close the gap as much as possible. Our primary hub for the course is its Canvas page. We should be able to find and do everything we need for the course here.

- Find the readings and videos for each week under the “Modules” tab. Full texts of required books and readings can be found under the “Files” tab.
- Join all Zoom lectures and discussions for the course through the “Zoom – University of Chicago Main Account” tab on the Canvas page. Meeting IDs can be seen here also.
- Access your small group homepage through your main “Groups” drop-down list. In your group homepage, you can post your Reading Questions or responses in the Discussion board. You can also access other group-specific discussions, files, and announcements here.
- Access midterms and other assignments in the “Assignments” tab. They will be posted and distributed from there.
- See all available office hours and events under the course calendar by clicking on “View Course Calendar” (at the far right of the main course page). To sign up for office hours, click on “Find Appointment” (at the far right of the calendar page).
- Look longingly at the campus via this video link https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dhQ6vw9zIFE&feature=emb_rel_pause All of the ideals named here are still a part of our course, virtual or physical.

Technology can be extraordinarily uneven sometimes, and many of us are new to some of these features, and all of us are high achievers who dislike failure in any form. Please allow yourself the simple human
reality that failure and fragility is a part of the embodied, (or in this case, the emmachined) experience. If you run into problems or questions, you can consult https://learningremotely.uchicago.edu/gettingstarted/. You’ll find a useful list of campus IT contacts there, in addition to walk-through instructions. For Zoom’s technical support, dial (773) 702-5800 Option 1, and for Canvas’, dial (844) 334-6803; but beware of long hold times. This will reassure you that you are not alone in your quest. If these resources prove unhelpful, you can also contact your TA and we will walk you through this.

Readings

We will be reading from three sorts of sources: from textbooks (see below), from articles about specific topics, and from primary texts: case studies, news articles, and policy documents. The bookstore has all textbooks and the selections and articles will be posted on Canvas.

Required Readings:


Canvas Readings

McNeil, William, Plagues and Peoples (selections on Canvas)


Recommended readings:


Real Life Cases:

As this syllabus is being posted, the worst pandemic outbreak in decades is taking place. In 2020 we will focus on COVID 19 as our extended case study. You will be grouped into small groups (virtual ones) to
present a final project about this issue. We will be attentive to aspects of the unfolding news about the virus as we work.

I will also present cases from my own clinical practice for your consideration. All names and identifiers are changed.

Note on discussion:
This is a lecture class with a strong discussion component. I expect you both to understand and be able to summarize the reading, and I expect you to be able to make and defend your own arguments about the cases and issues that we address in class.

A note on bioethics and difficult topics

Ethical dilemmas exist because people sharply disagree, and have disagreed for centuries about medicine, embodiment, reproduction, pregnancy, death, and scarcity. These topics can be and should be, deeply important and deeply moving. As scholars, we encourage debate on difficult and important topics. If you are intellectually challenged and engage in spirited debate, then we have worked well. It is my aim to encourage serious discourse about serious matters. However, if you are personally affected by these issues and wish to talk privately to me about that, then please do not hesitate to contact me via email.

Syllabus Plan

Week One: Introduction to class, selection of group assignments

Bioethics, philosophy, and religion: What are the ethical limits of science and medicine? Who should decide what is good? Why study bioethics?

Tuesday: Introduction and discussion Introduction to course Group formation

Case One: Jehovah’s Witnesses

Thinking through the case:

• Rights analysis and the claim of faith
• The role of ethics and the duties of states

Readings: Beauchamp and Childress, “Moral Norms” and “Moral Theories”

Thursday, : Discussion and lecture

• Discussion of readings
• Method, theory, and obligations in bioethics
• Method, theory, and obligations in religious studies:
  • The Undergraduate Research Project and the Real Time Ethics Case: Here we are in a Pandemic
**WEEK TWO: Science & Bioethics: Intro to Ethical Dilemmas of Research**

*Tuesday: Lecture and discussion*

**Guest Lecturers: Professors from UChicago discuss their work**

- You should plan to “hold” your first group meeting this week.
  1. Select begin work on text selection (confirm with TA)
  2. Begin to prepare a 250 word abstract about problem (an abstract is a short summary of your basic idea or hypothesis), how you think you can solve it, and a brief bibliography of articles or books you might use to think it through. This will be due in week 5 of the course.

*Thursday: Discussion*

**CASE ONE: Research Ethics** Is there any research that ought not be done? The case of WWI and Fritz Haber

**READINGS:**

1. Lysaught and Kotva: Sections 86-88
2. Pence: Chapter 11: The Tuskegee Syphilis Study, and Chapter 16: Nancy Wexler Case
3. Kuhlse
4. Beauchamp and Childress: Research

**WEEK THREE: The Law, Faith and Bioethics**

*Tuesday, January 20: Lecture and brief discussion*

**Premises of the field: making the covert apparent; particularity vs. the universal; the principle of autonomy and its discontents. Sites of contention: the end of life, the beginning of life, the limits of medicine.**

- The law, faith and bioethics
- A short history of the field via classic cases
- Dax’s case and the theory of principles and their discontents
- Principles

Reading: Beauchamp and Childress, Autonomy

*Thursday, January 22: Discussion CASE*

**CASE THREE: Mr. C says No.**

**READINGS:**

1. Lysaught and Kotva: 8, 40, 46, 51, 56, 57
2. Numbers: Jewish Bioethics
3. Christopher Reeves article (canvas)
4. Kuhlse

**WEEK FOUR: Genetics and Genomics**

*Tuesday,: Lecture*

*Genetics and Mapping: Prophecy in Science*

Reading: Beauchamp and Childress, Benefience

*Thursday,: discussion*

**CASE FOUR: Gattica, vs the RAC consideration of real cases**

**READINGS:**

1. Lysaught and Kotva:
2. Pence: Chapter 4

**WEEK FIVE: Justice and Health Care Reform**

**MIDTERM DISTRIBUTED TODAY**

*Tuesday,: Lecture and discussion*

*Justice and Choosing: The issue of allocation and distribution of scarce resources—how to choose in scarcity? What are the key bioethical issues and what are the ideas in text and policy to address them?*

- The history of health care access
- What does it mean to be uninsured?
- Theories of justice

**READINGS:**

1. Zoloth, *Ethics of Encounter*, Liberal Theories of Justice
2. Daniels, Norman, On Canvas: “From Chance to Choice”

*Thursday, February 5: discussion*

**CASE FIVE: Deciding among competing appeals**

**READINGS:**

1. Lysaught & Kotva: Sections 13, 15, 19, 25, 74
2. Zoloth, *Ethics of Encounter*, Liberal Theories of Justice and their Discontents
• MID-TERM EXAM DUE TUESDAY (LATE FEE = 5 POINTS PER DAY) •

Using a real case for your work!

Please use at least 3 authors from the textbooks to validate your arguments.

WEEK SIX: Abortion

Tuesday: Lecture and discussion
Why such a central issue in the field; history of Roe v. Wade; current disputes; the challenge of discourse; moral status issues, the 14 day rule.

• Abortion in world religion
• The violinist
• The politics of religion

Thursday: Lecture and discussion
Reading: Beauchamp and Childress, “Non-malefience” and” Narrative Theory”

CASE SIX: Normalcy, Disability and the challenges to moral status

READINGS:
1. Lysaught & Kotva: Sections 119, 120, 123
2. Numbers: Chapter 4

WEEK SEVEN: Death and Dying

Tuesday: Lecture and discussion of the
CASE SEVEN: The Old Person’s Friend

Terri Schiavo case and its aftermath
Exercise: Making an advance directive
Reading: Holland (on Canvas)

Thursday: Lecture and discussion: Physician Assisted Suicide and Life and Death in Oregon
READINGS:
1. Lysaught & Kotva: Sections 140, 142, 147, 149, 154
2. Numbers: African American Religion
3. Pence: Chapter 2 (Karen Quinlan)
**WEEK EIGHT: The Beginning of Life**

**Tuesday,: Lecture**  
Issues of Emerging Technology in Neonatology and Issue of Futility in Medicine—How Advanced in Advanced Reproductive Technology

**Thursday,: Lecture and discussion**  
**CASE EIGHT: Baby K**

**READINGS:**
1. Lysaught and Kotva:  
2. Pence: The Baby Jane Doe  
3. Veatch versus Fletcher on Baby K.

**WEEK NINE: Plagues and Peoples**

**Tuesday,: Measles**

Reading, Kuhse  
Reading Pence

**Thursday,: Lecture and discussion**  
**CASE NINE: Is the trial fair? Early Introduction of HAART**

Public Health, Global Health and Epidemics  
**READINGS:**
1. Zoloth and Zoloth A Winter’s Tale: Avian Flu and Bioethic (Canvas)  
2. Pogge, Testing our Drugs on the Poor Abroad (Canvas)  
3. Eula Biss, Innoculation (on Canvas)

**WEEK TEN: FINAL PROJECT GROUP ORAL PRESENTATIONS**

**Presentations**

Here is the final project. Your group has been asked by the NIH to give your advice about the ethical issues, historical and philosophical arguments, and religious perspectives in the development of a vaccine for COVID-19. While all agree it is imperative, what ethical issues must be considered before this significant project for humanity is pursued? What can we learn from the religious and philosophical traditions that your group specific group represents? How can the NIH ensure that the poor and vulnerable minorities who are a part of the testing and deployment of the vaccine will have their situation considered justly within this process, especially since in the United States, African American and Hispanic people are bearing the brunt of disease morbidity and mortality. Consider what your group would say about the problem of justice: how will people with no health insurance have access to the vaccine? Who should get it first? What role should the market play, if any at all, in the distributive process? In light of the tradition on which you have focused, reflect on the project of researching, developing, testing, making and distributing a new vaccine during a pandemic. Consider how the religious tradition that your group has researched would fairly allocate the benefits of treatments or technologies
and the risks of the research or applications, particularly to the persons most vulnerable. In considering the possible risks of the vaccine, and please explain how denovo technologies or untested public health applications are understood by your tradition. Explain how your tradition understands the problem of action with partial or imperfect knowledge, using central texts, a history of practical wisdom, its lived commitments, and traditions that guide your position.

The paper will be a white paper (a policy paper) addressed to the NIH about vaccines. Consider that you are the advisor on the religious or philosophical tradition of your group to the NIH as it works with the scientists and policymakers.

Your group will write 7 page double spaced page paper with footnotes (1750-2400 words). You will present your findings in an oral report to our class over the Zoom platform. In addition, you must submit a 2-page (500-600 words) short essay describing your particular role in the group project.

For graduating seniors and law students, your 600 word essay will be due the last week of class, on Week 9.