

Instructor: John Lawless
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Office: Dana 263
Hours: M 4:00-5:00 • W 12:00-1:00

In this course, we will examine some of the moral challenges that arise in the relationship between medical practitioners and patients; the moral assumptions that underlie our conceptions of health, disease, and disability; and the moral principles that should structure our research practices.

Course Goals.

We have two primary goals in this course. The first is to familiarize students with a range of important topics in medical ethics, and with the variety of perspectives and concerns that arise in these domains. However, the course is not a complete survey of all moral issues in the medical context. As a result, the second, more important goal for the course is to provide students with conceptual and practical tools with which to confront *new* ethical challenges as they arise: to think honestly about the concerns that are at stake, to articulate those concerns clearly, and to talk productively with others who might bring different perspectives, experiences, and concerns to the challenge at hand. Fundamentally, then, our goal in the class is to provide students an opportunity to practice ethical thought.

I will assess students based on three kinds of contribution to the class:

- *Three short papers.* I will evaluate your papers by attention to three criteria: first, your abilities to present particular philosophical views clearly; second, your comprehension of these philosophical views; and third, your abilities to respond creatively to these philosophical views. These skills build on one another. In particular, a strong capacity for moral thinking is nothing without a capacity to communicate one’s thoughts to others. As such, a well-written, well-structured paper is a prerequisite for a grade of B or higher. Good philosophy will boost your grade beyond that.
- *Mid-term and final exam.* These reviews will consist in a set of short essay prompts testing your comprehension of the philosophical views we have discussed in class. Students will sit the final review during the self-scheduled finals period.
- *Participation.* We take this component of your grade quite seriously. Good philosophy involves the practice of a set of skills that we cultivate best in conversation with others. As a result, your success in this course will depend on your active engagement with the material during your recitation sections. You will need to be prepared to contribute each day, and to help make the environment conducive to everyone’s participation – one that is open, respectful, and positive.

These assignments will contribute to students’ grades for the course in the following proportions:

Paper 1 (draft).....	5%
Paper 1 (commentary)	5%
Paper 1 (final).....	10%
Paper 2.....	15%
Paper 3.....	20%
Midterm Review.....	10%
Final.....	20%
Participation	15%

Your responsibilities.

- **Attendance.**

You may miss a total of three classes over the course of the semester without penalty. Any absence beyond this limit will lower your final grade a full letter for each additional day missed. (For instance, a B would become a C.) **If you find yourself in a situation that makes it difficult to attend the class consistently, please speak with me.** There are resources on campus that may be able to help.

Attendance in the course does not merely amount to your physical presence in the room. You must be *robustly present*. This seminar requires your active involvement as a thinker and conversant each and every day. Writing emerges from and is a contribution to a dialogue with others, and the quality of the writing reflects the quality of the dialogue. I am happy to offer strategies to help you embrace your responsibilities as an active member of the seminar.

- **Timely submission of assignments.**

With few exceptions, I do not accept late papers. If you find that you are in trouble, or have reached a debilitating sticking point as you draft or revise, you should contact me by email so that we can talk together about the problem you're experiencing, but you must do so no later than twelve hours before the paper is due. If you are too ill to work, or have an emergency, **please contact me.**

- **Citation of sources, acknowledgment of assistance**

I expect you to adhere to Davidson's Honor Code in all of your work. We will talk about the charge of plagiarism in the course, and I will instruct you in how to avoid this scholarly transgression. I encourage you to speak to others about your drafts: colleagues, friends, and consultants in the Writing Center. All of the writing that you do for the course must be your own, but you are welcome to get feedback and suggestions from anyone in the Davidson community.

When you turn in your final product for each project, I will ask you to affirm in writing that you have adhered to the regulation of Davidson's Honor Code. I will also ask you to include an acknowledgment footnote, where you thank the readers, tutors, librarians, friends, and others who have helped you conceive, draft, revise, and edit the essay you've written. A graceful acknowledgment is the sign of a confident writer.

Your rights.

- **A respectful environment.**

Please know that you have a right to be here, and to an environment that is conducive to academic success. These rights, like your responsibilities, are robust. Nobody should make you feel unwelcome. If you have any objections or concerns, please speak to me. I promise that I will listen carefully, and will work with you to ensure that we maintain a space that is conducive to your academic success.

- **Accommodation for religious calendars.**

Please look carefully at the syllabus during the first week of class. If any of the assignments conflict with a major religious holiday for your faith, then please let me know. I will make every effort to make the necessary accommodations.

Should there be a conflict between any class session and a religious holiday or observance, the student should let the instructor know of their personal need. Religious observance warrants a legitimately excused absence. Barring unusual circumstances, though, the student should attempt to fit these absences into the three absences allowed every student.

- **Accommodations for students with disabilities and learning differences.** Davidson College is an equal access institution, and seeks to provide reasonable accommodations for students with disabilities. To request an accommodation, or to begin a conversation about a possible request, please contact Beth Bleil, Director of Academic Access and Disability Resources, in the Center for Teaching and Learning. You may find her office in the E.H. Little Library, you may email her at bebleil@davidson.edu, or you may call her at 704-894-2129. It is best to submit accommodation requests within the drop/add period; however, requests can be made at any time in the semester. **Please keep in mind that accommodations are not retroactive, and do not carry over from semester to semester.**

Davidson Writing Center.

The college provides free consultations with the Writing Center, whose tutors are themselves practiced writers and who have been trained to help you with any aspect of your work – from forming ideas, to developing arguments, to structuring your paragraphs, to helping with grammar and style. Visit the Writing Center's webpage for more information:

<https://www.davidson.edu/offices/ctl/students/writing-center>. The Writing Center's peer consultants stand ready to act as careful and interested readers of your work.

Tentative Schedule

*Notice that we have days marked “*Discussion*” throughout the semester. We will use these days to catch up if we have fallen behind, and to discuss cases exemplifying the moral challenges that arise in the assigned texts. Throughout the semester, I may ask you to read short descriptions of these cases in advance.

Intro. The Idea of Bioethics

Aug 21 *Discussion.*

Unit 1. The Doctor/Patient Relationship

Aug 23 Goldman, “The Refutation of Medical Paternalism”

Aug 25 Schwartz, “Autonomy, Futility, and the Limits of Medicine”

Aug 28 Ackerman, “Why Doctors Should Intervene”

Topic: Physician-Assisted Suicide

Aug 30 Velleman, “Against the Right to Die”

Sep 1 *Discussion.*

Sep 4 Martin, “Physician-Assisted Suicide and Euthanasia: Weighing Feminist Concerns”

Silverstein, “I Don’t Feel Your Pain: A Failure of Empathy Perpetuates Racial Disparities”

Sep 6 *Discussion.*

★ *First paper assigned.*

Topic: Pregnancy and Childbirth

Sep 8 Little, “Abortion, Intimacy, and the Duty to Gestate,” pp. 295-304

Sep 11 Cantor and Baum, “The Limits of Conscientious Objection – May Pharmacists Refuse to Fill Prescriptions for Emergency Contraception?”

Sep 13 Goering, “Postnatal Reproductive Autonomy: Promoting Relational Autonomy and Self-Trust in New Parents”

★ *First paper draft due.*

Sep 15 Little, “Abortion, Intimacy, and the Duty to Gestate,” pp. 305-312

Sep 18 *Discussion.*

★ *First paper commentary due.*

Topic: Honesty and Trust

Sep 20 Cullen and Klein, “Respect for Patients, Physicians, and the Truth”

Sep 22 Vaughn, “Misleading the Patient for Fun and Profit”

★ *First paper due.*

Unit 2. Wellness, Medicalization, and Disability

Sep 25 Boorse, “Health as a Theoretical Concept,” pp. 542-549

Sep 27 Boorse, “Health as a Theoretical Concept,” pp. 550-563

Sep 29 Boorse, “Health as a Theoretical Concept,” pp. 563-569

Oct 2 **Midterm.**

Topic: Defining Disease

- Oct 4** Reiheld, "Patient Complains of...: How Medicalization Mediates Power and Justice," pp. 72-83
- Oct 6** Reiheld, "Patient Complains of...: How Medicalization Mediates Power and Justice," pp. 83-95
- Oct 9** **Fall Break: No class.**
- Oct 11** Nelson, "Medicine and Making Sense of Queer Lives"
- Oct 13** Feder, "Making Sense of Intersex"
- Oct 16** Feder, "Making Sense of Intersex"
- Oct 18** *Discussion.*
★ *Second paper assigned.*

Topic: Disability

- Oct 20** Scully, "Disability and Vulnerability: On Bodies, Dependence, and Power," pp. 2-11
- Oct 23** Scully, "Disability and Vulnerability: On Bodies, Dependence, and Power," pp. 11-21
- Oct 25** Brown, "Disability Representation and the Problem with 'Inspiration Porn'"
- Oct 27** McMahan, "The Morality of Screening for Disability."
- Oct 30** Sanghavi, "Wanting Babies Like Themselves, Some Parents Choose Genetic Defects"
- Nov 1** *Discussion.*
★ *Second paper due.*

Unit 3. Research Ethics*Topic: Researcher and Clinician*

- Nov 3** Hellman and Hellman, "Of Mice but Not Men: The Problems of the Randomized Clinical Trial"
- Marquis, "How to Resolve an Ethical Dilemma Concerning Randomized Clinical Trials"
- Nov 6** Appelbaum, Roth, Lidz, Benson, and Winslade, "False Hopes and Best Data: Consent to Research and the Therapeutic Misconception"
- Nov 8** *Discussion.*

Topic: Placebo controls

- Nov 10** Angell, "The Ethics of Clinical Research in the Third World"
- Nov 15** Lurie and Wolfe, "Unethical Trials of Interventions to Reduce Perinatal Transmission of the Human Immunodeficiency Virus in Developing Countries"
- Nov 17** Couch and Arras, "AZT Trials and Tribulations"
★ *Third paper assigned.*
- Nov 22** **Thanksgiving Break: No class**
- Nov 24** **Thanksgiving Break: No class**

Topic: Research and profit

- Nov 27** Angell, "Industry Sponsored Clinical Research: A Broken System"
- Nov 29** Huskamp: "Prices, Profits, and Innovation: Examining Criticisms of New Psychotropic Drugs' Values"
- Dec 1** Garattini, "Are 'Me-Too' Drugs Justified?"
- Dec 4** *Discussion.*
- Dec 6** *Conclusion.*
★ *Third paper due.*