Course Description

Issues of Life & Death examines philosophical issues related to death and dying, with a particular emphasis on ethical issues. The course is designed so that students can engage with issues at the theoretical level but also gain an appreciation for how ethical issues related to death and dying manifest in the practical world of health care. The topics and questions discussed will run the gamut from abortion, assisted reproduction, genetic manipulation and euthanasia to medically assisted suicide, organ donation, stem cell research and vaccination. Our readings will be drawn from both philosophical primary texts and secondary scholarly works in philosophical ethics, bioethics and applied ethics. As this class is an EP course, emphasis will be placed on student participation, student moderated class discussions and regular reflections in written form on the course texts. Students will also be encouraged to pursue areas of their own interest for the purpose of a final presentation and project.

Required Texts

Edited by Kuhse, Schuklenk & Singer
Wiley-Blackwell, 2015 (978-1-118-94152-2)

*All other readings will be available via Blackboard

**I will also make available via Blackboard valuable selections from A Companion to Bioethics (ed. Kuhse & Singer)
Course Objectives and Expectations

Throughout the course, you will come to:

- Consider concepts central to ethical reasoning about life, dying, and death
- Consider some of the issues that arise in bioethics, especially surrounding end-of-life decisions
- Develop the ability to critically engage with philosophical texts/debates
- Develop the skills necessary to write a philosophy paper
- Develop the ability to engage in philosophical discussion with peers

As instructor, I expect you to:

- Read the relevant material carefully before class
- Attend class
- Be on time and prepared to engage
- Complete all work on time and per instructions
- Treat myself and your peers with respect
- Seek help with the material by asking questions in class and/or seeing me in office hours
- Be aware of the University’s policy on academic integrity and conduct yourself accordingly

As students, you are entitled to expect that I will:

- Provide a constructive learning environment
- Come prepared to class
- Support your efforts to achieve the course objectives
- Provide clear instructions for course assignments
- Give you timely and useful feedback on your work
- Be available to help you during regularly held office hours
- Be responsive to accessibility needs

Suggestions for Studying Philosophy

Try to learn something from every new text rather than seeking find straightaway how easily it can be dismissed. In a sense, treat every new text as you would a person you have met for the very first time. This is the key to balancing charity with critical rigor.

Read each assignment more than once. Read a passage through quickly once in order to get the “lay of the land.” Then review the passage a second time with a focus on the details: consider outlining it, isolating its argumentative structure and taking notes on it. A third, quick review might not hurt!

If you encounter difficulties come and see me during my office hours or email me with questions!
Course Policies

(1) Attendance Students are expected to be present and on time for all classes. In accordance with University policy, only 3 absences (excused and unexcused) will be tolerated over the course of the semester. A fourth absence will result in a failing grade. Given the accelerated nature of our course, it is extremely important that you attend class regularly—catching up after having missed more than a class or two will be very difficult if not impossible.

(2) Participation It is my hope that our class will be run mostly as a discussion rather than a lecture-style course. As such, your participation is essential in making this happen! That said, I expect everyone to participate respectfully so as not to discourage or make any classmates feel uncomfortable voicing their thoughts.

(3) Laptops, et al. In order to foster an atmosphere free from distraction and conducive to class participation, cell phones, laptops, iPads, e-Readers and other such devices are not to be used during class.

(4) Plagiarism or any other type of academic dishonesty will not be tolerated. Plagiarism includes both copying verbatim from a source, paraphrasing from a source, and using ideas from a source not original to you. I am required by Fordham University to report all instances of plagiarism to the Dean, including suspected plagiarism. A student caught plagiarizing will receive, at minimum, a zero for the paper, and, at maximum, fail the course. (For further information, see: Fordham University Undergraduate Handbook)

(5) Missed Examinations or Assignments Late assignments will not be accepted. If you fail to turn in your assignment by the beginning of class on the due date, you have failed that assignment. If you think you need an extension on an assigned paper, you must discuss your reasons with me at least one (1) week in advance (and be prepared that I might say no). Missed examinations operate the same way.

(6) Disability Services. As stated in the student handbook, “Fordham University will make reasonable accommodations and provide auxiliary aids and services to assist otherwise qualified persons in achieving access to its programs, services and facilities in accordance with Section 504 of the Federal Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and Title III of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990.” If you believe that you have a disability that may negatively impact your performance in this course, please make an appointment to speak with someone at the Office of Disability Services (O’Hare Hall, Lower Level, 718-817-0655). In order to receive accommodations for your disability, you must declare yourself to the Office of Disability Services, and then bring me a letter from that office.

(7) Email I will regularly make use of e-mail in order to send official course announcements, distribute certain texts, etc. Therefore, it is of the utmost importance that you regularly check your Fordham email account.

(8) Texts in class. I ask that you please bring to class your course books or a printed copy of the text we are discussing on a given day. It is impossible to discuss a text without having it in front of us!

Final Grade Breakdown

Participation: 10%
Weekly Reflections: 20%
Final Essay and Presentation: 30%
Final Exam: 40%
# Reading Schedule

This schedule may change! Keep abreast of any changes made in class or via email. Readings marked with an * are available on Blackboard. All other readings are drawn from *Bioethics: An Anthology*.

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>May 28 (T): Introduction and Philosophical Ethics Refresher</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>b. “Ethical Theory and Bioethics,” Rachels*</td>
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<tr>
<td>c. “Bioethics: Why Philosophy is Essential for Progress,” Savulescu*</td>
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<td>d. “Religion and Bioethics,” Gregory*</td>
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<th>May 29 (W): Important Considerations</th>
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<tr>
<td>a. “Well-Being,” Crisp*</td>
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<td>b. “How Theories of Well-Being Can Help Us Help,” Tiberius*</td>
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<tr>
<td>c. “The Significance of Life’s Shapes,” Dorsey*</td>
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<tr>
<td>d. “Gender and Bioethics,” Crosthwaite*</td>
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<td>e. “Law and Bioethics,” Van der Burg*</td>
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<th>May 30 (R): Ethical Approaches</th>
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<td>a. “A Principle-Based Approach,” Childress*</td>
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<td>b. “Exceptionless Rule Approaches,” Boyle*</td>
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<td>c. “A Utilitarian Approach,” Hare*</td>
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<td>d. “A Virtue Ethics Approach,” Oakley*</td>
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<td>e. “A Case Approach,” Arras*</td>
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<th>June 3 (M): Abortion</th>
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<tr>
<td>a. “Abortion and Healthcare Ethics,” Finnis</td>
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<td>b. “Abortion and Infanticide,” Tooley</td>
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<td>c. “A Defense of Abortion,” Thomson</td>
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<td>d. “Why Abortion is Immoral,” Marquis</td>
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<th>June 4 (T): Assisted Reproduction</th>
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<tr>
<td>a. “Multiple Gestation and Damaged Babies,” Pence</td>
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<tr>
<td>b. “Assisted Reproduction in Same Sex Couples,” Greenfeld &amp; Seli</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c. “Rights, Interests and Possible People,” Parfit</td>
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<td>d. “The Ethics of Uterus Transplantation,” Castanos et al</td>
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<th>June 5 (W): Prenatal Screening, Sex Selection, and Cloning</th>
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<tr>
<td>a. “Prenatal Diagnosis and Selective Abortion: A Challenge to Practice and Policy,” Asch</td>
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<tr>
<td>b. “Sex Selection and Preimplantation Genetic Diagnosis,” <em>The Ethics Committee</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>c. “Sex Selection and Preimplantation Diagnosis: A Response,” Savulescu &amp; Duhl</td>
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June 6 (R): Killing and Letting Die

b. “Active and Passive Euthanasia,” Rachels
c. “Is Killing No Worse Than Letting Die?” Nesbitt
d. “Why Killing is Not Always Worse,” Kuhse

June 10 (M): Severely Disabled Newborns

a. “When Care Cannot Cure: Medical Problems in Seriously Ill Babies,” Campbell
b. “The Abnormal Child: Moral Dilemmas of Doctors and Parents,” Hare
c. “Rights to Life of Handicapped,” Davis
d. “Conjoined Twins, Embodied Person Hood and Surgical Separation,” Overall

June 11 (T): Voluntary Euthanasia

b. “The Note,” Hill
c. “When Self-Determination Runs Amok,” Lachs

June 12 (W) Documentary Screening

June 13 (R) Documentary Screening

June 17 (M): Resource Allocation

a. “Rescuing Lives: Can’t We Count?” Menzel
b. “Should Alcoholics Compete Equally for Liver Transplants?” Moss & Siegler
c. “The Value of Life,” Harris

June 18 (T): Obtaining Organs

c. “Ethical Issues in the Supply and Demand of Human Kidneys,” Satz
d. “The Survival Lottery,” Harris

June 19 (W): Vaccinations

a. The Ethics of Vaccination (excerpt), Giubilini
c. “Mandatory Vaccination: An Unqualified Debate,” Pierik*
e. On Immunity (excerpt), Biss
June 20 (R): Brain Death

a. “A Definition of Irreversible Coma,” Harvard Medical School
b. “Are Recent Defences of the Brain Death Concept Adequate?” Joffe
c. “Is the Sanctity of Life Ethic Terminally Ill?” Singer

June 24 (M): Presentations

June 25 (T): Presentations

June 26 (W): Presentations

June 27 (R): Final Exam