

## Philosophy 168B: Bioethics

Mount Saint Mary's University  
Fall 2016

|                                   | Chalon campus | Doheny campus       |
|-----------------------------------|---------------|---------------------|
| Course number                     | N/A           | PHI_168B_D2_16/FA   |
| Day/Time/location                 | N/A           | TH/12:50-3:50PM/TBD |
| Office hours<br>day/time/location | N/A           | TBD                 |

### Course website

available on [Canvas](#)

### Instructor Information

Dr. Philip J. Walsh

Email: [pwalsh@msmu.edu](mailto:pwalsh@msmu.edu)

Office: #H320 (Chalon) / Building 2, Room 209 (Doheny)

### Catalog Description

An examination of biomedical and research ethics and ethical dilemmas involving healthcare. Topics may include informed consent, honesty, patient rights, physician assisted death, reproductive technology, abortion, organ sales, xenotransplants, medical experimentation, justice and the allocation of resources, key legal decisions in bioethics, and the allocation of scarce resources. Prerequisite: Any other ethics course. GS-VB2

### Course Overview

This course explores ethical questions and debates surrounding how we value human life in the context of medicine and health care. We will examine issues such as doctor-patient confidentiality, euthanasia and assisted suicide, abortion, genetic engineering, human enhancement, drug use, and health care policy. Throughout our examination of these issues we will focus on concepts like “dignity”, “autonomy”, “human rights”, “personhood”, and “justice” and try to figure out how useful they are. Like all philosophy courses, we will not be able to confine ourselves to specific debates about particular cases. Rather, we will engage these debates and see how they lead us to more general reflections on what it means to be human.

### Learning Objectives

- To get a grounding in biomedical decision-making so you can comprehend, summarize, and analyze the work of the major thinkers in the field—and respond intelligently
- To develop analytical reasoning skills so you write clearly, concisely, and defensibly. To develop collaborative & organizational skills, and the ability to “think on your feet”
- To gain a greater understanding of ethical theories, professional conduct, medical codes, and global health issues
- To acquire skills at applying theoretical frameworks to real-world cases and issues raised in film.

### **Required texts and assigned viewings**

*Global Bioethics and Human Rights: Contemporary Issues*

Rowman & Littlefield Publishers (2014)

ISBN-10: 1442232145

ISBN-13: 978-1442232143

*Million Dollar Baby* (2014)

*Gattaca* (1997)

Students are responsible for viewing the films on their own time. Both films are available on either Netflix, Amazon video, or iTunes for rent or purchase.

Additional readings and viewing content will be made available online.

### **Methods of Evaluation**

1. In-class quizzes 20%
2. Midterm exam 25%
3. Final exam 25%
4. Paper 25%
5. Group presentation 5%

### **Grading scale**

|    |        |    |       |   |       |
|----|--------|----|-------|---|-------|
| A  | 93-100 | B- | 80-82 | D | 60-69 |
| A- | 90-92  | C+ | 77-79 | F | <60   |
| B+ | 87-89  | C  | 73-76 |   |       |
| B  | 83-86  | C- | 70-72 |   |       |

### **Class policies**

“A friend is one before whom I may think aloud” –Emerson

My fundamental policy in this class is to have a class environment of mutual respect where we help one another achieve our course objective. The course policies in this section are designed to help achieve that environment.

### **Cell phones, text messaging, and other distractions**

Our classroom is not a suitable place for a ringing cell phone or to check your text messages. Even for a world-class multi-tasker like you, these activities are a distraction from our class activities. In addition, our classroom is not an appropriate place to work on homework for other classes or other outside projects. Here’s a good rule to follow: If the instructor wouldn’t do it, then a student shouldn’t do it either.

### **Attendance**

Success in this course highly depends on regular attendance. You will not receive points simply for showing up, but attendance is incentivized through short, relatively easy reading quizzes. (I say “relatively easy” because they will only be easy if you actually do the reading.) Furthermore, if you miss a class and fail to provide official documentation (a doctor’s note, etc.) you will not be given the opportunity to make up anything you

missed, e.g. a quiz. If you miss class, it is your responsibility to inquire after anything you may have missed.

### **Late work policy**

Late work will be penalized one full letter grade per day late.

### **Required Readings and Viewings**

You should complete the assigned reading or viewing on the course schedule *before* class meets. My personal advice is to complete the reading before class and write down questions you have or things you don't understand. After class, go back and review the reading once more.

### **Quizzes**

I give frequent short (about 5 minutes to complete) and easy (just summary, no interpretation) in-class pop quizzes on the reading assignments. These quizzes will be easy if you do the reading. I drop the two lowest quiz grades for the semester. If you miss a quiz due to *unexcused* lateness or absence, you receive a zero for that quiz.

### **Writing a philosophy paper**

You will write one 7-8 page paper for this course, which will be broken into two stages. Writing is difficult and takes practice. We will discuss different aspects of writing well in class, so this is another reason attendance is important. We will also look at writing samples and discuss what they do well and where they fail. Both the content and the mechanics (grammar, spelling, syntax, structure, punctuation, etc.) will factor into how I grade your writing. An "A" paper is an "excellent" paper, and an excellent paper cannot have sloppy mechanical errors. We will discuss the writing assignment in more detail on a separate handout.

### **Exams**

There will be a midterm and final exam consisting of short answer questions (a few sentences) and essay questions (a few pages). See our course schedule below for exam dates.

### **Group Presentation**

You will be divided into six roughly equal groups during the first week of class. Each group will sign up for topic on the course schedule. Groups will make a 5-10 minute presentation on their assigned topic. We will cover the group presentation assignment in more detail on a separate handout.

### **Academic difficulty**

This may be your first philosophy class, and/or you may find the topic challenging and difficult. If you do have difficulties, the only way to address it is to actively seek help. Ask questions in class, see me before or after class, talk to me in my office or at the LRC, e-mail me, set up a time to meet, or all of the above. I'm here to help, but the best help comes from constant interaction. *Do not wait until the last minute to get help!*

### **Academic honesty**

As a member of this class you are also a member of the community of scholars. As a

scholar, your fundamental commitment is to truth, and academic integrity is an important part of that commitment. Academic dishonesty undermines the integrity of the educational process and cannot be tolerated. Thus, the college has developed the following “Statement On Academic Integrity” which I fully endorse.

Cheating of any kind is dishonest. This includes copying others’ essays or exams, stealing exams, buying or otherwise procuring new or used exams, paying someone else to take an exam or write an essay for which you take credit, and any other way you might receive credit for work that is not your own.

Using one essay for two different classes is also dishonest. If you have a topic appropriate for two classes, original and separate work must be done for each class.

Plagiarism is also an act of academic dishonesty. It is a serious academic offense. Plagiarism is using anyone else’s ideas and representing them as your own (i.e., not giving appropriate credit). Acts of plagiarism include the following:

- Failure to document and give credit to an original source
- Paraphrasing another person’s ideas without giving credit
- Using direct quotations without proper recognition of the source
- Using statistics, facts, or information from a source other than your own original research (i.e., not your own) without credit.

When in doubt, give credit. Submitting work (even work completed by a team or group) containing material not properly credited is a serious academic offense and a violation of the very principles of academic integrity. Every individual is ultimately responsible for ensuring the honesty and integrity of any academic or scholarly work bearing her name.

### **Academic freedom**

As a member of the community of scholars, you not only have the duty of academic integrity, but the right of academic freedom—including the right to reasonably disagree with your instructors without being penalized for this disagreement. For more information on the academic freedom which is yours as a student, see the *Student Handbook*.

### **Students with disabilities**

MSMU, in compliance with state and federal laws and regulations, does not discriminate on the basis of disability. If you are a student with a documented disability, please see Mr. Mark Forte, Director of Learning Resource Center, to make arrangements for classroom accommodations. His office is located in Building 3 in the Learning Resource Center. Additional disability related information and policies can be found in the Student Handbook on pages 12 and 27.

### **Course Schedule** (subject to change at discretion of instructor)

|      |        |  |
|------|--------|--|
| 8/25 | Week 1 | Introduction to course / Introduction to Normative Ethical Theory<br>- Course syllabus |
|------|--------|--|

|       |         |  |
|-------|---------|--|
|       |         | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Group project assigned</li> <li>- Selections from Aristotle, Kant, and Mill (Canvas)</li> </ul>   |
| 9/1   | Week 2  | Normative Ethical Theory and the challenge of global bioethics <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Selections from Aristotle, Kant, and Mill (Canvas)</li> <li>- Beauchamp: "The Compatibility of Universal Morality, Particular Moralities, and Multiculturalism", pp. 28-40</li> <li>- Essay part 1 assigned</li> </ul> |
| 9/8   | Week 3  | Dignity at the end of life <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Kamm: "A Right to Choose Death?" (<a href="#">online</a>)</li> <li>- Assigned viewing: <i>Million Dollar Baby</i></li> </ul>   |
| 9/15  | Week 4  | Truth Telling, Medical decision making, and autonomy <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Baker: "Bioethics and Human Rights: A Historical Perspective", pp. 92-101</li> <li>- Gordon: "Human Dignity, Human Rights, and Global Bioethics", pp. 68-91</li> </ul>   |
| 9/22  | Week 5  | Euthanasia and Truth Telling from the Confucian Perspective <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Wee: "Confucianism and Killing versus Letting Die" pp. 248-260</li> <li>- Fan and Li: "Truth Telling in Medicine: The Confucian View", (Canvas)</li> <li>- Essay part 1 due</li> </ul>                                    |
| 9/29  | Week 6  | Euthanasia and Truth Telling from the Confucian Perspective (con't) / Midterm Review <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Fan and Li: "Truth Telling in Medicine: The Confucian View", (Canvas)</li> <li>- Midterm review</li> <li>- Group presentations (1-3)</li> </ul>  |
| 10/6  | Week 7  | <b>MIDTERM EXAM</b>  |
| 10/13 | Week 8  | Reproductive Rights and the extension of human rights <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Sabatello: "Controlled Parenthood: Bioethics and the Notion of the Family", pp. 201-219</li> <li>- Patel: "Sex Determination and Sex Pre-Selection Tests in India", pp. 242-247</li> <li>- Essay part 2 assigned</li> </ul>     |
| 10/20 | Week 9  | Designer babies and genetic engineering <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Daniels: "Normal Functioning and the Treatment-Enhancement Distinction" (Canvas)</li> <li>- Assigned viewing: <i>Gattaca</i></li> </ul>   |
| 10/27 | Week 10 | Going too far: arguments against genetic engineering and human enhancement <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Sandel: "Against Perfection" (Canvas)</li> </ul>   |
| 11/3  | Week 11 | Healthcare in a global society   |

|       |             |   |
|-------|-------------|---|
|       |             | - Schüklenk & Hare: “Issues in Global Health Ethics”, pp. 300-318   |
| 11/10 | Week 12     | Healthcare in America<br><ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Tan: “A Virtuous Reading of Health Equity under the Affordable Care act”, pp. 329-340</li> <li>- Assigned viewing: <i>Contagion</i> (2011)</li> <li>- Essay part 2 due</li> </ul> |
| 11/17 | Week 13     | Healthcare as public safety<br><ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Boylan: “Safety and Public Health”, pp. 356-369</li> <li>- Assigned viewing: <i>Contagion</i> (2011)</li> </ul>   |
| 11/24 | Week 14     | <b>THANKSGIVING HOLIDAY – NO CLASS</b>  |
| 12/1  | Week 15     | Responding to transnational health crises / Final Review<br><ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Assigned viewing: <i>Contagion</i> (2011)</li> <li>- Group presentations (4-6)</li> </ul>  |
| 12/5  | Finals Week | <b>FINAL EXAM DATE/TIME/ROOM</b>  |