

University of California, Irvine
Summer Session One
Phil. 5: Contemporary Moral Problems
The Ethics of Human Enhancement

Location: HH 156
Meeting time: M W 1:00-3:50PM
Course website: <https://eee.uci.edu/13y/30040>
Staff:
Philip Walsh (lead instructor)
Office Hours: W 4:00-6:00PM, HIB 62
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Course Overview

This class deals with selected moral issues of current interest. Specifically, our theme will be the ethics of human enhancement. We will begin with a discussion of euthanasia and the question of when, if ever, it is permissible to take life or allow someone to die. This will lead to a discussion of the distinction between therapy and enhancement. Is there a distinction between medical treatment and enhancement? We will discuss various examples of physical and cognitive enhancement while keeping in mind questions such as: Does our right to freedom justify human enhancement? Does human enhancement raise issues of fairness, access, and equity? Do ideas like “human dignity” and “the good life” make enhancement wrong, or do they in fact necessitate it? We will examine contemporary scholarly articles as well as examples from popular media in order to figure out what it means to be human, and whether we should be actively trying to transcend human nature.

Student Learning Outcomes

After taking this course, students will be able to:

- Justify moral claims by appealing to classic normative ethical theories.
- Write short essays that clearly summarize contemporary moral issues and offer different approaches for dealing with them.
- Identify premises and conclusions of philosophical arguments in contemporary scholarly articles.

Requirements

Your **Final Grade** is to be determined as follows (percentages are of final grade):

- Three 3 page essays: first essay is worth 15%, second essay 25%, third essay 35%
 - Unless an extension has been granted in advance, late papers are to be penalized one letter grade per day late.
 - All papers shall be submitted using turnitin.com. Students must log in to turnitin.com and create a student account if they do not have one already.

Once logged in, add yourself to this course with the class ID and password.

- class ID: 6578983
- password: philosophy
- In-class pop quizzes: 25%

* See the reading schedule below for assignments and due dates.

Texts

All course reading materials will be posted on the course website. It is the student's responsibility to download these materials and bring them to class in either print or electronic form.

We will also watch three films (or excerpts of films) in this class:

Million Dollar Baby (2004)

Gattaca (1997)

Surrogates (2009)

These films will be screened in class. If you are absent the day of a screening, it is your responsibility to watch the film on your own.

Student Responsibilities

- Academic Honesty: You should be familiar with UCI's policies on academic honesty. If you have questions about exactly what constitutes plagiarism or any questions about academic honesty at all, please *ask me*.
- Students with disabilities who believe they may need accommodations in this class ought to contact the Disability Services Center as soon as possible.
- It is assumed that students will attend class regularly, read all assigned material, prepare adequately for assignments, turn in assignments on time, and be proactive about contacting the instructor if, for any reason, he or she is unable to fulfill these responsibilities.

Schedule of Readings (subject to change at instructor's discretion)

Week 1: Introduction/ Euthanasia

Monday 6/24: Introduction to ethical theories and human enhancement

- suggested readings: Darwall "Theories of Ethics,"
"Ethics of Human Enhancement: NSF Report"

Wednesday 6/26: Ethical theories (cont.)/ Euthanasia

- required readings: Darwall "Theories of Ethics"
- required viewing: *Million Dollar Baby*

Week 2: Euthanasia (cont.)/ Therapy vs. Enhancement

Monday 7/1: Euthanasia and Assisted Suicide

- required readings: Kamm- "A Right to Choose Death?"
<http://new.bostonreview.net/BR22.3/Kamm.html>

Wednesday 7/3: Wrap up Euthanasia/ Therapy vs. Enhancement

- required reading: Daniels- "Normal Functioning and the Treatment-Enhancement Distinction"
- required viewing: *Gattaca*

[paper 1 on *Million Dollar Baby* and euthanasia due Friday 7/5 on turnitin.com at 5PM]

Week 3: Genetic engineering (cont.)/ Pharmaceutical Enhancement

Monday 7/8: Genetic engineering

- required readings: we will continue discussing the Daniels reading from 7/3

Wednesday 7/10: Pharmaceutical Enhancement

- required readings: President's Council on Bioethics (2003). *Beyond Therapy: Biotechnology and the Pursuit of Happiness*. (selections).
- Suggested: Julian Savulescu interview- "Designer Babies" (podcast link posted on course site under "Online readings")

Week 4: Genetic & Pharmaceutical Enhancement (cont.)/ Biotechnology

Monday 7/15: Enhancement and Human Nature

- required reading: Sandel "Against Perfection"

[paper 2 on genetic engineering, justice, and *Gattaca* due Tuesday 7/16 on turnitin.com at 5PM]

Wednesday 7/17: Biotechnology

- suggested reading: Jebari- "Brain Machine Interface and Human Enhancement"
- required viewing: *Surrogates*

Week 5: Enhancement, Human Nature, and Flourishing

Monday 7/22: Biotechnology (cont.)

- required reading: Jebari "Brain Machine Interface and Human Enhancement"

Wednesday 7/24: Concluding Reflections

[paper 3 on *Surrogates* and human nature due Monday 7/29 on turnitin.com at 5PM]