Course Syllabus
Philosophy 265
Summer 2009
Online Course – No prerequisites and no meeting times.
Dates of Instruction: June 29, 2009 – August 12, 2009

Instructor: Jason Benchimol
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Course Description:

This course uses the tools of moral philosophy to investigate the ethical, social, and political dimensions of biomedicine. Such topics may include euthanasia and physician assisted suicide, abortion and new reproductive technologies, stem cell research, human reproductive cloning, the right to refuse treatment, and paternalism and informed consent in the doctor-patient relationship. We begin with a primer on arguments and philosophical reasoning and a brief exploration of influential moral theories, then dedicate most of our time and attention to particular issues in bioethics. The focus is on understanding and evaluating arguments, on challenging ourselves to think more clearly and carefully about bioethics and learning to express our views more clearly and carefully, and not simply asserting our opinions without argument or simply accepting the instructor’s opinions without argument.

This course has no prerequisites. It is suitable for both veterans and newcomers to philosophy. That is, background in philosophy, while helpful, is neither assumed nor required. But the course will move at a fast pace, and there will be a substantial amount of material covered. All that is required is a willingness to patiently read and digest quite a lot of rather dense philosophical material, to be prepared to respectfully engage the course material in course discussion, and to spend a good amount of time sharpening your argumentative skills.

Texts:


There are additional readings that are not in the text. **I shall indicate these clearly on the reading schedule below by marking them ECR (Electronic Course Reading).** These readings will be made available to you in an electronic course reader on the Vista site under the link “Getting Started”. 

ASSESSMENT:

Final grades will be calculated based on points earned out of a total of 300:

- Weekly Module Assessments (6 each at 30 points a piece)
- Weekly Discussion Boards (6 each at 20 points a piece)

Notes on grading:

I shall use the standard BC grade scale in order to determine final grades. (A = ≥95%; A- 90-94%; B+ = 87-89%; B = 83-86%; B- 80-82%; and so on…)

- Module Assessments become available at 12:30 a.m. two days before the assessment’s due date. You must complete the assessment by 11:59 p.m. on the due date. Be careful – you will have only one attempt. (You cannot begin the assessment and then close it, and attempt it again later.) You will have one hour to complete the assessment. I will not allow you to take the assessment after the due date for any reason, so be sure that your schedule is clear.

- Discussion boards will be graded one day after the corresponding module assessment occurs. You must generate at least one new thread for discussion in order to receive full credit. Other than this requirement, I leave discussion board participation in your own hands, but it goes without saying that more participation is always better, from the standpoint of your grade.

- Hardship withdraws and incompletes will be granted only in the most serious of circumstances and only if the student has contacted the instructor with such a request in a timely manner.

- Don’t cheat. If you do not understand what constitutes plagiarism or academic misconduct, you should seek BC policy guides on these matters as soon as possible. I have a moral obligation to report all instances of cheating that I discover. You are encouraged to read widely and to discuss ideas and problems with others, but you must credit your sources.

LIBRARY MEDIA CENTER

The Bellevue College Library Media Center has extensive resources available online for all Distance Education students. Become acquainted with the LMC homepage: http://bellevuecollege.edu/lmc/. By clicking on the Research Help link you will find copies of handouts as well as tutorial help, including the LMC Guide for BAS Students. The BCC Catalog will tell you which books and films the library owns. Full-text journal articles can be found by searching the EBSCOhost and Proquest databases, located under Periodicals / Databases.

Online access to the library is available 24 x 7, but personal help is available via telephone only when the library is open. Those hours are posted under Library Information on the homepage. The Reference Desk phone number is (425) 564-6161. At other times, you may e-mail bccref@bellevuecollege.edu. You will receive an answer as soon as the library opens again.
ACCOMMODATIONS AND SUPPORT SERVICES FOR STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

Bellevue Community College provides reasonable accommodations to students with disabilities. Students who need course accommodations because of a disability, have emergency medical information, or need special arrangements in case the building must be evacuated, should notify the instructor as soon as possible. The responsibility for determining a student’s eligibility for accommodations rests with Disability Resource Center. For more information, visit the Disability Resource Center in room B132, call (425) 564-2498 (TTY line (425) 564-4110), or go to bellevuecollege.edu/drc.

AFFIRMATION OF INCLUSION

Bellevue Community College is committed to maintaining an environment in which every member of the campus community feels welcome to participate in the life of the college, free from harassment and discrimination. We value our different backgrounds at BCC, and students, faculty, staff members, and administrators are to treat one another with dignity and respect.

For further information regarding the Bachelor of Applied science program and policies, see the BAS student handbook. For further information regarding BCC policies, programs and services, review the BCC student handbook at bellevuecollege.edu/stupro/handbook_cd2008/programs/default.html.

Topics and Readings (subject to change at the instructor’s discretion: timely advance notice of any changes will of course be given.) All readings are in our text unless otherwise noted.

Module 1: Philosophical Reasoning and Moral Theory – Materials Available Online June 29

- Online materials on Philosophical Reasoning (On Vista Site)
- “General Introduction” (pp. 1-23; 40-53)
  
  Module Assessment Due - Thursday July 9

Module 2: The Physician-Patient Relationship – Materials Available Online July 7

- Higgs, “On Telling Patients the Truth” (90-94)
- Freedman, “Offering Truth: One Ethical Approach to the Uninformed Cancer Patient” (95-101)
- Cantor & Baum (and commentaries) on Conscientious Objection ECR
- Savulescu, “Conscientious Objection in Medicine” ECR
  
  Module Assessment Due – Tuesday July 14
Module 3: Death and Decisions Regarding Life-Sustaining Treatment – Materials Available Online July 14

- Cowart and Burt, “Confronting Death: Who Chooses, Who Controls?” ECR
- Michel, “Suicide by Persons With Disabilities Disguised as the Refusal of Life-Sustaining Treatment” (335-339)
- Cantor, “Testing the Limits of Prospective Autonomy: Five Scenarios” ECR
- Dresser, “The Conscious Incompetent Patient” (363-364)

Module Assessment Due – Tuesday July 21

Module 4: Suicide, Physician-Assisted Suicide, and Active Euthanasia – Materials Available Online July 21

- Rachels, “Active and Passive Euthanasia” (395-398)
- Steinbock, “The Intentional Termination of Life” ECR
- Orentlicher, “The Supreme Court and Physician-Assisted Suicide: Rejecting Assisted Suicide But Embracing Euthanasia” (414-416)
- Ackerman, “Assisted Suicide, Terminal Illness, Severe Disability and the Double Standard” ECR
- Battin, “The Case for Euthanasia” ECR
- Gay-Williams, “The Case Against Euthanasia” ECR

Module Assessment Due - Tuesday July 28

Module 5: Enhancement – Materials Available Online July 28

- Glannon, “Genetic Enhancement” (601-605)
- Brock, “Genetic Engineering” (606-611)
- Sandel, “The Pursuit of Perfection” ECR
- DeGrazia, “Prozac, Enhancement and Self-Creation” ECR
- Slomka, “Playing With Propranolol” ECR
- Hurley, “The Moral Costs of Prophylactic Propranolol” ECR

Module Assessment Due - Tuesday August 4

Module 6: Genetic Technology and Human Reproduction – Materials Available Online August 4

- Robertson, “Liberty, Identity and Human Cloning” ECR
- Kass, “Cloning of Human Beings” (565-568)
- Robertson, “Extending Preimplantation Genetic Diagnosis: Medical and Non-Medical Uses” (577-582)
- Asch and Parens, “The Disability Rights Critique of Prenatal Genetic Testing” ECR

Module Assessment Due - Wednesday August 12