

# PHILOSOPHY P112: THE ETHICS OF LIVING AND DYING<sup>1</sup>

Porterville College, Spring 2018

## Basic Information:

Instructor: Taylor Cyr

Email: taylor.cyr@portervillecollege.edu

Course Type: online

(Virtual) Office Hours (via Google hangouts): by appointment

## Required Text:

- Vaughn, Lewis. *Bioethics: Principles, Issues, and Cases*. Oxford University Press, 3<sup>rd</sup> edition.

## Course Overview

### Description:

A philosophical yet practical approach to some of the major medical-ethical problems facing human beings today, such as: what patients should be told, the nature and importance of informed consent, the meaning and criteria for living, dying, and death including caring for the dying and allowing to die, mercy death, and mercy killing. Permeating these problems will be a study of the basis for ethical relationships among human beings through a study of what morality is, consequentialist and non-consequentialist theories of morality, and how to set up an ethical system. Special emphasis will be placed on the relationship of professional and the well to the sick, dying and bereaved.

### Course Objectives:

Students will examine views of morality and socially responsible behavior by developing and applying historically and culturally sensitive knowledge and skills to real-world ethical problems. In achieving this larger goal, students will demonstrate the ability to:

1. Analyze, compare, and evaluate a variety of theories in normative ethics or meta-ethics through critical writing.
2. Apply moral theories and concepts in writing to contemporary problems relating to ethics at the beginning or end of life – such as the meaning of death, meaning of informed consent, physician assisted suicide, euthanasia, forgoing treatment, the allocation of scarce medical resources, etc.
3. Use philosophical methods in the examination or formation of a personal moral philosophy.

## Course Requirements (% of Final Grade)

- Reading Quizzes (10%)
- Discussion Board Assignments (25%)
- Paper (20%)
- Midterm Exam (20%)
- Final Exam (25%)

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<sup>1</sup> This syllabus is subject to change (at the instructor's discretion) with advanced notice.

### **Reading Quizzes:**

- Most weeks there will be a short, multiple-choice quiz that will test basic comprehension of that week's assigned readings.
- These reading quizzes will be composed of five questions, and you will have 10 minutes to complete the quiz.
- There will be 10 of these quizzes over the course of the term, each worth 1% of the final grade.

### **Discussion Board Assignments**

- There will be five discussion board assignments over the course of the term, each worth 5% of the final grade.
- These will consist of two parts:
  - First, you will be required to complete an original post based on a prompt related to the material covered during that week. These posts must be between 500-700 words in length.
  - Second, you will be required to respond to two other students' original posts. These responses should either 1) provide an explanation of how you found some point made by the other student to be especially helpful or insightful, or 2) provide a critical comment, respectfully explaining why you disagree with some point made by the other student. These posts must be between 200-300 words.
- Specific instructions for each discussion board assignment will be posted on Canvas.

### **Midterm Exam and Final Exam:**

- The midterm exam and final exam will be similar in length and in format, though the final exam will cover the material of the entire course.
- The format of both exams will be a combination of true/false, multiple-choice, and short-answer (4-6 sentences) essay questions designed to test understanding of the material covered in the assigned readings and the lectures.
- The midterm will be worth 20% of the final grade, and the final exam will be worth 25%.

### **Paper:**

- A paper of 3-5 pages in length will be due during week 12. The paper topic will be the desirability of immortality, and more specific instructions for the paper will be given during week 10.
- The paper is worth 20% of the final grade.
- Late papers will be marked down 1/3 of a grade (e.g., from a B- to C+) for each day past their due date.

## **Course Policies**

### **Late Work:**

Late work will **not** be accepted unless otherwise noted. If something comes up and you feel that you have a reasonable excuse for late work, you must contact the instructor before the due date of the assignment, and whether the excuse counts as reasonable will be determined by the instructor.

**Academic Integrity:**

Students are expected to act with academic integrity. For details, see the Code of Conduct at <https://www.portervillecollege.edu/student-services/code-conduct>. Following Porterville College policy, if a student cheats or plagiarizes on any assignments, I will give an “F” (zero points) grade on that whole assignment and I will report the incident to the Vice President of Student Services. The student will have to meet with the Vice President to determine whether further disciplinary action is necessary. A second offense will result in being dropped from the course. Since plagiarism is cheating, you should know how to correctly cite source materials so that you do not plagiarize either **intentionally or unintentionally**.

**Respect:**

Students are expected to treat each other and the instructor with respect. This includes, among other things, being courteous in online discussion board responses, being charitable to others’ points of views, and criticizing ideas rather than persons.

**Email:**

Course announcements will be delivered via email, so students are expected to check their email at least once per day on weekdays. The instructor will respond to emails within 24 hours (and often much more quickly than that).

**Veterans Services**

The Veterans Resource Center (VRC) at Porterville College is committed to serving the needs of our student veterans by providing comprehensive services and support to assist them in making a smooth transition from the military to the classroom. If you are a student veteran or veteran dependent and need any assistance please stop by the VRC in AC-116. If you have special circumstances, such as upcoming deployments, drill requirements, or disabilities, you are encouraged to communicate these, in advance if possible, to the instructor. Thank you for your service.

**Disabilities:**

Students with disabilities requiring accommodation should inform the instructor within the first week of class and follow the guidelines outlined by the Disability Resource Center. For details, visit <https://www.portervillecollege.edu/student-services/disability-resource-center>.

**Course Schedule and Readings<sup>2</sup>**

- Week 1 (January 15-19)
  - Introduction
    - *Syllabus Quiz (Due by January 19)*
    - *Introduction Discussion Board Posts (Due by January 19)*
  - Moral Reasoning in Bioethics
    - Chapter 1 (pp. 3-30)
    - *Reading Quiz 1 (Due by January 21)*
  
- Week 2 (January 22-26)

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<sup>2</sup> Unless otherwise noted, all of the readings can be found in the assigned textbook.

- The Trolley Problem
  - Clip from NBC's *The Good Place*, Season 2, Episode 5, "The Trolley Problem" (provided on Canvas)
  - Elizabeth Yuko, "How *The Good Place* Goes Beyond 'The Trolley Problem'" (provided on Canvas)
  - Judith Jarvis Thomson, "The Trolley Problem" (provided on Canvas)
- *Discussion Board 1 (Part 1 Due by January 26; Part 2 Due by January 28)*
- Week 3 (January 29 – February 2)
  - Moral Theories
    - John Stuart Mill, "Utilitarianism" (pp. 53-56)
    - Immanuel Kant, "The Moral Law" (pp. 56-61)
    - *Reading Quiz 2 (Due by February 4)*
- Week 4 (February 5-9)
  - Paternalism and Patient Autonomy
    - Gerald Dworkin, "Paternalism" (pp. 94-103)
    - Alan Goldman, "The Refutation of Medical Paternalism" (pp. 104-109)
    - *Reading Quiz 3 (Due by February 11)*
- Week 5 (February 12-16)
  - Paternalism and Patient Autonomy (continued)
    - *Bouvia v. Superior Court*, California Court of Appeals (pp. 123-127)
    - *AMA Council on Ethical and Judicial Affairs*, "Fundamental Elements of the Patient-Physician Relationship" (pp. 127-128)
    - Lisa H. Newton, "In Defense of the Traditional Nurse" (pp. 128-136)
  - *Discussion Board 2 (Part 1 Due by February 16; Part 2 Due by February 18)*
- Week 6 (February 19-23)
  - Informed Consent
    - *In Depth: The Tuskegee Tragedy* (p. 241)
    - Ruth R. Faden and Tom L. Beauchamp, "The Concept of Informed Consent" (pp. 208-213)
    - Jay Katz, "Informed Consent--Must It Remain a Fairy Tale?" (pp. 213-223)
    - *Reading Quiz 4 (Due by February 25)*
- Week 7 (February 26 – March 2)
  - Informed Consent (continued)
    - Howard Brody, "Transparency: Informed Consent in Primary Care" (pp. 223-229)
    - Robert J. Levine, "Informed Consent: Some Challenges to the Universal Validity of the Western Model" (pp. 229-235)
    - *Canterbury v. Spence*, United States Court of Appeals (pp. 235-238)
    - *Reading Quiz 5 (Due by March 4)*
- Week 8 (March 5-9)
  - *Midterm (Due by March 8)*

- Life and Death
  - Epicurus, “Death Is Nothing to Us” (provided on Canvas)
  - Thomas Nagel, “Death” (provided on Canvas)
  - *Reading Quiz 6 (Due by March 11)*
- Week 9 (March 12-16)
  - Life and Death (continued)
    - Bernard Williams, “The Makropulos Case: Reflections on the Tedium of Immortality” (provided on Canvas)
    - John Martin Fischer, “Why Immortality Is Not So Bad” (provided on Canvas)
  - *Discussion Board 3 (Part 1 Due by March 16; Part 2 Due by March 18)*
- Week 10 (March 19-23)
  - *Discuss Paper Topic (Paper Due by April 15)*
  - Abortion
    - *Fact File: U.S. Abortions* (p. 310)
    - *In Depth: Abortion and Public Opinion* (p. 312)
    - Don Marquis, “Why Abortion Is Immoral” (pp. 336-348)
    - *Reading Quiz 7 (Due by March 25)*
- Spring Break (March 26-30)
- Week 11 (April 2-6)
  - Abortion (continued)
    - *Roe v. Wade*, United States Supreme Court (pp. 397-402)
    - Judith Jarvis Thomson, “A Defense of Abortion” (pp. 326-336)
    - Alexander Pruss, “I Once Was a Fetus: That Is Why Abortion Is Wrong (provided on Canvas)
    - *Reading Quiz 8 (Due by April 8)*
- Week 12 (April 9-13)
  - Physician-Assisted Suicide
    - *Vacco v. Quill*, U.S. Supreme Court (pp. 707-709)
    - *Washington v. Glucksberg*, United States Supreme Court (pp. 710-715)
    - James Rachels, “Active and Passive Euthanasia” (pp. 678-681)
    - *Reading Quiz 9 (Due by April 15)*
  - *Paper Due by April 15*
- Week 13 (April 16-20)
  - Physician-Assisted Suicide (continued)
    - *In Depth: Oregon’s Death With Dignity Act* (p. 632)
    - David Velleman, “Against the Right to Die” (provided on Canvas)
  - *Discussion Board 4 (Part 1 Due by April 20; Part 2 Due by April 22)*
- Week 14 (April 23-27)
  - Justice and Health Care
    - *In Depth: Unequal Health Care for Minorities* (p. 721)

- Norman Daniels, “Is There a Right to Health Care and, if So, What Does It Encompass?” (pp. 736-743)
- *Reading Quiz 10 (Due by April 29)*
  
- Week 15 (April 30 – May 4)
  - Justice and Health Care (continued)
    - H. Tristram Engelhardt, Jr., “Rights to Health Care, Social Justice, and Fairness in Health Care Allocations: Frustrations in the Face of Finitude” (pp. 749-757)
    - *Fact File: U.S. Health Care* (p. 722)
    - Raisa Berlin Deber, “Health Care Reform: Lessons from Canada” (pp. 757-764)
  - *Discussion Board 5 (Part 1 Due by May 4; Part 2 Due by May 6)*
  
- Final Exam (May 7-11; *Due by May 11*)