

**L30 PHIL 233F: BIOMEDICAL ETHICS<sup>1</sup>**  
Washington University in Saint Louis, Spring 2019  
Instructor: Dr. Taylor Cyr (tcyr@wustl.edu)

**Basic Information:**

Class Meeting Times: MW 1:10-2:30pm  
Class Meeting Location: Psychology 251

Instructor's Office: Wilson Hall 101  
Instructor's Office Hours: MW 2:30-3:30pm  
(and by appointment)

**Course Materials**

- All assigned readings (and other course materials) will be made available electronically.

**Course Overview**

**Description:**

This course aims to familiarize students with some of the central issues in biomedical ethics. At the same time, more generally, this course will provide some of the necessary tools for thinking critically, being rational, arguing for what one believes, and investigating the question of how to live morally. We will begin with a bit of moral theory, with an emphasis on consequentialist and deontological approaches. Next, we will turn to a host of issues connected with health care and the doctor-patient relationship. In roughly the second half of the course, we will turn to topics that are specifically concerned with life and death, such as euthanasia and abortion. Along the way, we will ask questions about when death is bad (if it ever is), whether immortality would be desirable, and whether life extension is a good idea.

**Learning Outcomes:**

After completing this course, students will be able to:

- Distinguish philosophical questions about medicine from non-philosophical ones
- Analyze and evaluate complex philosophical arguments

**Instructional Objectives:**

After completing this course, students will be able to:

- Critically read philosophical texts by identifying and assessing the author's reasoning
- Analyze and critique ethical arguments related to biomedical ethical issues
- Present arguments in their own words and provide their own objections to them

**Course Requirements (% of Final Grade)**

- Midterm Exam (25%)
- Final Exam (30%)
- Paper (25%)
- Reading Quizzes (20%)

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

**Midterm and Final Exam:**

- The midterm exam and final exam will be similar in length and in format and are designed to test understanding of all of the course material. The final exam is not cumulative.
- The format of these exams will be a combination of true/false, multiple-choice, shorter-answer (4-6 sentences) essay questions, and longer-answer (2-3 paragraphs) essay questions.

**Paper:**

- A paper of 4-5 pages in length is due during week 11. There will be several topics from which students may choose, and more specific instructions for the paper will be given during week 7.
- 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.

**Reading Quizzes:**

- There will be 12 unannounced reading quizzes throughout the term. These will be short, multiple-choice and fill-in-the-blank quizzes that will test basic comprehension of the assigned readings for the day of the quiz.
- At the end of the course, I will drop students' two lowest scores (i.e., only a student's 10 best reading quizzes will count toward her final grade). Make-up quizzes will not be offered.

**Course Policies****Academic Integrity:**

Students are expected to act with academic integrity. For details, visit <https://wustl.edu/about/compliance-policies/academic-policies/undergraduate-student-academic-integrity-policy/>. Plagiarism and other forms of academic misconduct will be reported to the relevant academic integrity officer and will result in an F on the assignment.

**Respect:**

Students are expected to treat each other and the instructor with respect. This includes, among other things, paying attention to what a person is saying, 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).

**Disabilities:**

Washington University is committed to providing accommodations and/or services to students with documented disabilities. Students who are seeking support for a disability or a suspected disability should contact Disability Resources at 935-4153. Disability Resources is responsible for approving all disability-related accommodations for WU students, and students are responsible for providing faculty members with formal documentation of their approved accommodations at least two weeks prior to using those accommodations. I will accept Disability Resources VISA forms by email and personal

delivery. If you have already been approved for accommodations, I request that you provide me with a copy of your VISA within the first two weeks of the semester.

**Accommodations Based upon Sexual Assault:**

The University is committed to offering reasonable academic accommodations to students who are victims of sexual assault. Students are eligible for accommodation regardless of whether they seek criminal or disciplinary action. Depending on the specific nature of the allegation, such measures may include but are not limited to: implementation of a no-contact order, course/classroom assignment changes, and other academic support services and accommodations. If you need to request such accommodations, please direct your request to [Kim Webb](#), Director of the [Relationship and Sexual Violence Prevention Center](#), or [Jen Durham Austin](#), Support Services Counselor. Both Kim Webb and Jen Durham Austin are confidential resources; however, requests for accommodations will be shared with the appropriate University administration and faculty. The University will maintain as confidential any accommodations or protective measures provided to an individual student so long as it does not impair the ability to provide such measures.

If a student comes to me to discuss or disclose an instance of sexual assault, sex discrimination, sexual harassment, dating violence, domestic violence or stalking, or if I otherwise observe or become aware of such an allegation, I will keep the information as private as I can, but as a faculty member of Washington University, I am required to immediately report it to my Department Chair or Dean or directly to Ms. Jessica Kennedy, the University's Title IX Director. If you would like to speak with directly Ms. Kennedy directly, she can be reached at [\(314\) 935-3118](tel:(314)935-3118), [jwkennedy@wustl.edu](mailto:jwkennedy@wustl.edu), or by visiting the [Title IX office](#) in Umrath Hall. Additionally, you can report incidents or complaints to the Office of Student Conduct and Community Standards or by contacting WUPD at [\(314\) 935-5555](tel:(314)935-5555) or your local law enforcement agency. See: [Title IX](#)

You can also speak confidentially and learn more about available resources at the Relationship and Sexual Violence Prevention Center by calling [\(314\) 935-3445](tel:(314)935-3445) for an appointment or visiting the 4<sup>th</sup> floor of Seigle Hall. See: [RSVP Center](#)

**Bias Reporting:**

The University has a process through which students, faculty, staff and community members who have experienced or witnessed incidents of bias, prejudice or discrimination against a student can report their experiences to the University's Bias Report and Support System (BRSS) team.

See: [brss.wustl.edu](http://brss.wustl.edu).

**Mental Health:**

Mental Health Services' professional staff members work with students to resolve personal and interpersonal difficulties, many of which can affect the academic experience. These include conflicts with or worry about friends or family, concerns about eating or drinking patterns, and feelings of anxiety and depression.

**Center for Diversity and Inclusion (CDI):**

The Center of Diversity and Inclusion (CDI) supports and advocates for undergraduate, graduate, and professional school students from underrepresented and/or marginalized populations, creates collaborative partnerships with campus and community partners, and

promotes dialogue and social change. One of the CDI's strategic priorities is to cultivate and foster a supportive campus climate for students of all backgrounds, cultures and identities.

See: [diversityinclusion.wustl.edu/](http://diversityinclusion.wustl.edu/)

## Course Schedule and Readings

### Part I: Moral Theory

- Week 1
  - 1/14: Introduction
    - *No Readings*
  - 1/16: Moral Theory
    - Judith Jarvis Thomson, “The Trolley Problem”
- Week 2
  - 1/21: *Martin Luther King Day* (no class)
  - 1/23: Moral Theory (continued)
    - John Stuart Mill, “Utilitarianism”
    - Immanuel Kant, “The Moral Law”

### Part II: Health Care and the Doctor-Patient Relationship

- Week 3
  - 1/28: Justice and Health Care
    - Norman Daniels, “Is There a Right to Health Care and, if So, What Does It Encompass?”
  - 1/30: 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”
- Week 4
  - 2/4: Triage
    - *Radiolab*, “Playing God” (podcast available [here](#))
    - John Harris, “QALYfying the Value of Life”
  - 2/6: Paternalism and Patient Autonomy
    - Gerald Dworkin, “Paternalism”
- Week 5
  - 2/11: Paternalism and Patient Autonomy (continued)
    - *Bouvia v. Superior Court*
    - Alan Goldman, “The Refutation of Medical Paternalism”
  - 2/13: Lying to Patients
    - David C. Thomasma, “Telling the Truth to Patients: A Clinical Ethics Exploration”
- Week 6
  - 2/18: Lying to Patients (continued)
    - Ruiping Fan and Benfu Li, “Truth Telling in Medicine: The Confucian View”
  - 2/20: Informed Consent
    - *Canterbury v. Spence*
    - Ruth R. Faden and Tom L. Beauchamp, “The Concept of Informed Consent”
- Week 7
  - 2/25: Informed Consent (continued)

- Jay Katz, “Physicians and Patients: A History of Silence” (from *The Silent World of Doctor and Patient*)
  - 2/27: Advance Directives
    - Linda L. Emanuel *et al.*, “Advance Care Planning as a Process: Structuring the Discussions in Practice”
    - *Discuss Paper Topics*
- Week 8
  - 3/4: Advance Directives (continued)
    - Rebecca Dresser, “Confronting the ‘Near Irrelevance’ of Advance Directives”
  - 3/6: *Midterm*
- Week 9
  - 3/11: *Spring Break* (no class)
  - 3/13: *Spring Break* (no class)

### Part III: Life and Death

- Week 10
  - 3/18: Death
    - Epicurus, “Death Is Nothing to Us”
    - Thomas Nagel, “Death”
  - 3/20: Abortion
    - *Roe v. Wade*
    - Don Marquis, “Why Abortion Is Immoral”
- Week 11
  - 3/25: Abortion (continued)
    - Judith Jarvis Thomson, “A Defense of Abortion”
  - 3/27: Abortion (continued)
    - Dan Moller, “Abortion and Moral Risk” (provided electronically)
    - *Paper Due*
- Week 12
  - 4/1: Euthanasia and Physician-Assisted Suicide
    - *Cruzan v. Director, Missouri Department of Health*
    - *Vacco v. Quill*
    - *Washington v. Glucksberg*
    - *Oregon Death with Dignity Act*
  - 4/3: Euthanasia and Physician-Assisted Suicide (continued)
    - James Rachels, “Active and Passive Euthanasia”
- Week 13
  - 4/8: Euthanasia and Physician-Assisted Suicide (continued)
    - John D. Arras, “Physician-Assisted Suicide: A Tragic View”
  - 4/10: End of Life Care
    - Atul Gawande, “Introduction” and “Assistance” (from *Being Mortal: Medicine and What Matters in the End*)
- Week 14
  - 4/15: Is Immortality Desirable?
    - Bernard Williams, “The Makropulos Case: Reflections on the Tedium of Immortality”
  - 4/17: Is Immortality Desirable? (continued)
    - John Martin Fischer and Benjamin Mitchell-Yellin, “Immortality and Boredom”

- Week 15
  - 4/22: Life Extension
    - Lisa Bortolotti, “Agency, Life Extension, and the Meaning of Life”
    - Ezekial Emanuel, “Why I Hope to Die at 75”
  - 4/24: Final Thoughts and Review
    - *No New Readings*
- Reading Week
  - 5/8 (Wednesday), 1pm-3pm: *Final Exam*