

Introduction to Bioethics

Cleveland Clinic Office of Civic Education Initiatives

Bioethics is the branch of ethics (the study of concepts involved in practical reasoning, e.g., good, right, duty, virtue, etc.) that studies problems that arise in life sciences, medicine, and biotechnology. Medical ethics, environmental ethics and animal ethics all fall under the purview of bioethics.

This course is an introduction to some of the most prevalent issues in bioethics. In this course, we will discuss the moral issues that arise regarding of the use of animals for food and research, our obligations to help those who are starving, euthanasia, abortion, stem cell research and cloning. For each topic, we will read and discuss two influential articles - one that defends the moral rightness of an action, procedure, or policy and one that defends the moral wrongness of the action, procedure, or policy.

The course consists of 14 one hour sessions. Session dates, topics and required readings are listed below. Readings will be available through the Cleveland Clinic Office of Civic Education website. Information about how to access the readings will be provided after a school has registered for the course. Students will be required to read the articles before their assigned discussion date. Class sessions will generally consist of a short lecture covering the important aspects of the position presented in the assigned reading and class discussion. Quiz/test questions will be provided to the teachers upon request. Other materials, such as links to interviews with some of the authors, will also be made available.

As a final project, students will create a poster that evaluates the ethical issues inherent in one of the research projects completed by a summer intern. Posters will be displayed during Bioethics Week at Cleveland Clinic main campus (tentatively scheduled for the third week in May). Posters will also be judged by a group of Cleveland Clinic staff members and the winning student or team will present their work at Bioethics Research Day during Bioethics Week.

The course has been created by Monica L. Gerrek, Ph.D. (philosophy) who will also oversee it. Dr. Gerrek has over 10 years of teaching experience at the college level, with extensive experience teaching introductory courses. Instructors will be Fellows in the Cleveland Fellowship in Advanced Bioethics who all have advanced degrees (J.D., M.D., and Ph.D.) and most of whom also have an M.A. in Bioethics.

Schedule for Introduction to Bioethics Sessions:

10/15: Session 1

Introduction

- a. Important definitions in bioethics
- b. Thought experiments

11/12: Session 2: Animal Ethics

Why using animals for food and research is wrong

Required Reading: "All Animals are Equal", Peter Singer

11/19: Session 3: Animal Ethics

Why using animals for food and research is not wrong

Required Reading: "Moral Standing, The Value of Lives, and Speciesism", R.G. Frey

12/3: Session 4: World Hunger

Why we have obligations to help those in need

Required Reading: "The Singer Solution to World Poverty", Peter Singer

12/10: Session 5: World Hunger

Why we do not have obligations to help those in need

Required Reading: "Feeding the Hungry", Jan Narveson

1/14: Session 6: Stem Cells

Why using human embryos for stem cell research is wrong

Required Reading: "Stem Cell Research: The Failure of Bioethics", Don Marquis

1/21: Session 7: Stem Cells

Why using human embryos for stem cell research is not wrong

Required Reading: "Individuals, Human, and Persons: The Issue of Moral Status", Helga Kuhse and Peter Singer

2/4: Session 8: Cloning

Why we ought not to permit cloning

Required Reading: "Whose Self Is It, Anyway?", Philip Kitcher
"A Life in the Shadow: One Reason Why We Should Not Clone Humans",
Søren Holm

2/11: Session 9: Cloning

Why cloning is permissible

Required Reading: "Goodbye Dolly? The Ethics of Human Cloning",
John Harris

Schedule for Introduction to Bioethics Sessions: (continued)

2/25: Session 10: Reproductive Ethics

Why abortion is moral

Required Reading: Selection from “A Defense of Abortion”, Judith Jarvis Thomson

3/4: Session 11: Reproductive Ethics

Why abortion is immoral

Required Reading: Selection from “Why Abortion is Immoral”, Don Marquis

4/8: Session 12: Euthanasia

Why euthanasia is morally acceptable

Required Reading: “The Morality of Euthanasia”, James Rachels

4/15: Session 13: Euthanasia

Why euthanasia is not morally acceptable

Required Reading: “The Wrongfulness of Euthanasia”, J. Gay-Williams

5/13: Session 14: Wrap-up

Additional required outside reading:

The following articles are required, but will not be discussed during class sessions. The purpose of these articles is to help students understand some of the issues that arise in medical research. The articles should be read as preparation for the final project. Both can be found at: <http://plato.stanford.edu>.

“The Ethics of Clinical Research”, David Wendler
<http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/clinical-research/>

“Decision-making Capacity”, Louis Charland
<http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/decision-capacity/>