

PHIL 165.003: Bioethics

Spring 2023

Course Information

Credit Hours	3
Pre-Requisites	None
Target Audience	Open to all undergraduates
Meeting Pattern	M/W/F, 1:25-2:15pm
Instructional Format	In Person
Classroom	PE 2080
Final Exam	Friday, May 5, 4:00pm

Instructor Information

Name	Gerard Rothfus
Office Location	11 Caldwell Hall
Office Hours	T/Th, 9-10:30am, or by appointment
Email	gjrothfu@unc.edu

Course Description

This course surveys (some of) the rich field of contemporary bioethics, with an emphasis on examining controversies in modern medicine surrounding the making and taking of human life. Students will wrestle with classic philosophical questions like when and why is killing wrong?, what are the extent and limits of bodily autonomy?, what duties do parents owe their offspring?, etc., and then consider how different answers to these questions bear upon topics as significant and contested as the ethics of abortion, euthanasia, assisted reproductive technologies, and public healthcare policy.

Brief Learning Objectives

This course will equip students to think critically and thoughtfully about the nature and demands of human morality as they pertain to questions involving

the making and taking of human life. Students will finish the course with a broad appreciation of the motivation and structure of the central moral perspectives prominent in contemporary bioethics. They will also gain a good sense of the relevance of these perspectives to prominent controversies in modern medicine (e.g. regarding abortion, euthanasia, etc.) as well as the dialectical state of academic debate on these topics. Finally, students who complete the course will have advanced in the skill of writing clear, lucid, and charitable argumentative papers.

Broader Course Goals and Learning Objectives

All our philosophy courses aim at the acquisition and nurturing of basic philosophical skills. One of the main goals of our philosophy curriculum is to instill and enable the development of skills that are distinct to philosophy, but which are foundational to all forms of knowledge. These basic philosophical skills involve being able to:

- Think critically
- Deploy philosophical concepts and terminology correctly, in either a historical or contemporary setting
- Represent clearly and accurately the views or argument of particular philosophers, in either a historical or contemporary setting
- Identify the premises and conclusion(s) of a philosophical argument and assess both its validity and soundness
- Apply a philosophical theory or argument to a new topic, and being able to draw and defend reasonable conclusions about that topic
- Develop an argument for a particular solution to a philosophical problem in either a historical or contemporary setting
- Write clearly, precisely, and persuasively in defense of a philosophical thesis
- Participate in respectful, critical, and reflexive dialogues about difficult philosophical positions
- Read, interpret, and evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of different philosophical texts and the philosophical positions presented them

In addition, PHIL165 satisfies our value theory requirement in the philosophy major and minor, and as such aims at developing the following learning outcomes:

- being familiar with some of the leading normative theories in philosophy, such as utilitarianism, deontology, and virtue ethics

- being able to identify and explain the various contexts in which philosophical questions of justification arise
- being able to assess ethical values in terms of the philosophical and non-philosophical reasons offered
- being able to recognize different ethical perspectives and the distinctive approaches these perspectives bring to questions of value
- being able to evaluate ethical justifications for different ways of organizing civic and political communities
- being able to analyze and evaluate the differences between personal ethical decisions and those bearing on the public and civic domains

Specifically, through this course students will gain:

1. A working understanding of core bioethics methods. Included in this understanding will be appreciation for the strengths, weaknesses, similarities and differences between these perspectives.
2. An appreciation for the underlying ethical concepts and issues relevant to many different research and clinical endeavors and practices such as notions of moral status, rights, and social justice.
3. Argument building skills in addressing specific practical moral problems in bioethics and analytic capacity in approaching bioethics texts.
4. Critical leadership skills including the development of peer feedback and session design.
5. Facility in identifying the ethically salient impact of social, historical, and cultural factors in health and health care with a particular focus on the ways in which power, differences, and inequalities have shaped biomedicine.
6. Ability to recognize the relationship between inequality and social, economic, and political power and to evaluate the dynamics of these kinds of inequality in medical contexts.

Making Connections Gen Ed

This course satisfies the Philosophical and/or Moral Reasoning (PH) component of the Making Connections Gen Ed Curriculum.

This requirement is described by the university as:

One course in Philosophical and/or Moral Reasoning is required. The course must address philosophical questions—that is, fundamental questions about central areas or aspects of human experience or endeavor. The course must also

teach methods of reasoning, analysis, and interpretation appropriate to such inquiry.

1. Philosophical questions often concern important topics such as knowledge, truth, reality, meaning, consciousness, identity, freedom, beauty, happiness, religion, social and political norms, obligation, justice, virtue, the good, and other topics when explored with philosophical complexity. The course need not focus on a single topic, since development of philosophical knowledge and skill is often well served by comparison, or by considering philosophical topics in combination. In courses that treat the social dimensions of philosophical reasoning, however, a significant portion (at least one-fifth) of the course should address questions of morality and values.
2. Philosophical inquiry may be undertaken in conjunction with sociological, anthropological, scientific, political, historical, literary, and other kinds of analysis. Courses fulfilling the philosophical requirement will focus on understanding and critically assessing the truth, adequacy, defensibility, or value of the ideas being explored. Such courses ask students to be open to discovery, to allow their own convictions to be refined, and to understand the range and specificity of philosophical thinking.
3. Courses that treat philosophers primarily as historical figures or as the authors of texts generally do not fulfill the Philosophical and/or Moral Reasoning requirement but rather may meet the criteria for the Historical Analysis (HS) or Literary Arts (LA) Approaches.

IDEAs in Action Gen Ed

This course is part of the IDEAs in Action General Education curriculum, satisfying the focus capacity, **Ethical and Civic Values**.

In courses satisfying this capacity, students learn how different perspectives can influence our idea of what is ethical and how to think critically about how we make and justify private and public decisions and evaluate the actions of public leaders.

Learning Outcomes

1. Explain the contexts in which questions of justification arise.
2. Assess ethical values in terms of reasons offered
3. Recognize different ethical perspectives and the distinctive approaches these perspectives bring to questions of value, evaluating ethical justifications for different ways of organizing civic and political communities.

4. Analyze the differences between personal ethical decisions and those bearing on the public and civic spheres.

Questions for Students

1. How can people think fruitfully, individually and together, about how they should live their lives?
2. What is required to judge a standard or value as worthy of support?
3. How should we distinguish between prejudices and reasonable grounds for value judgments?
4. What considerations – stories, reasons, testimony, documents, data, etc. – can justify our values and commitments, whether personal or social?

Recurring Capacities

1. Writing, totaling at least 10 pages in length or the intellectual equivalent.
2. Presenting material to the class, smaller groups, or the public through oral presentations, webpages, or other means.
3. Collaborating in pairs or groups to learn, design, solve, create, build, or research.
4. These elements – referred to as “recurring capacities” – will help you repeatedly practice crucial skills for future study, life, and career success.

Collaboration and Participation

Since this course satisfies a Focus Capacity of the IDEAs in Action Curriculum, it is expected that the course include both **collaborative** and **presentational** components. These requirements will be met via various course assignments including a collaborative peer review exercise in which students will present substantive feedback on one another’s written work in small groups.

Course Materials

There is no required text for the course as all readings will be made available online via the course website.

Course Structure

The course will be organized around three weekly lecture/discussion periods, where various topics in bioethics will be explored and discussed in person. You are strongly urged to do the suggested readings before each lecture in order to be better prepared to engage, ask questions, make suggestions in discussion, etc.

I will also hold office hours on Tuesdays and Thursdays from 9-10:30am. Feel free to come to office hours and ask any questions you may have about the course! If you are unable to make this time any week and would like to discuss the course, you are very much encouraged to set up an appointment for another time. In these office hours, I am happy to go over past readings or discuss questions about upcoming assignments, new material, writing strategies, etc. Whether in or out of office hours, please feel free to reach out to me any time!

Expected Time Dedicated to the Class

On average, students should expect to spend about 12 hours per week on seminar discussions and course assignments.

Course Assignments and Grading

Your grade will be determined according to the table below. (Note: All assignment due dates are recorded in the Course Outline.)

Midterm Paper	15%
Final Paper	25%
Peer Review Exercise (Collaboartion/Presentation Exercise)	10%
Final Exam	25%
Argument Outlines	15%
Participation	10%

Midterm Paper

Your short midterm paper will require you to write a philosophical response to one of the authors we read during the first part of the course. You will select one of the readings and write a **4 to 5 page** response to the reading that summarizes and explains a view held or an argument made by the author and then either (a) criticizes the author's view or argument (by, respectively, presenting an argument challenging the author's view or raising and defending an objection to their argument) or (b) defends the author's view or argument (by, respectively, presenting a new argument for the view or supplying new support for the argument's premises).

I will make use of this general rubric in grading both the midterm and final papers: <http://www.jimpryor.net/teaching/guidelines/grades.html>

Final Paper

Your final paper will require you to write a philosophical essay arguing for or against a significant position in contemporary bioethics. There will be three stages to producing this paper: (i) writing an outline, (ii) writing a draft, and (iii) writing the final product. Each of these stages will contribute to your final paper grade in the following proportions: 10% for the outline, 20% for the rough draft, and 70% for the final version. The final paper must be **6 to 8 pages** long and will be assessed according to the general rubric linked above. We will discuss good philosophical writing practices and tips for handling the final paper as the course goes on. I will supply a list of possible topics to write on, though you may feel free to suggest your own as well!

Peer Review Exercise

After completing the rough draft stage of the final paper, we will engage in a peer review exercise. Students will be randomly partitioned into groups of 3 or 4 and will exchange paper drafts with their group members. Your task is to offer charitable and constructive feedback to each of your group members with the aim of helping them improve their final paper. After having had the opportunity to read your peers' papers, we will set aside one class period in which you will verbally present your feedback to your peers, accompanied by roughly **1 page** of thoughtful written comments on each reviewed paper. We will go over further details of this process as the assignment draws nearer.

Final Exam

Our final exam will be held on **May 5 at 4pm**. It will consist of short essay questions asking you to summarize and explain the arguments of the various authors discussed in the course. Grading will be based upon how clearly, accurately, and charitably you can recall the relevant arguments. You will not be required to develop any original arguments or insights on the final exam. (That's for the papers!)

Argument Outlines

Starting with (when our properly bioethical readings begin), before every class period, you will be required to submit a short (**no more than 1 page and usually less**) outline of the central argument presented in the course reading for the day. This must be sent to my email by midnight the night before class to receive credit. Your outline must be presented in numbered format, with the author's central conclusion and premises clearly indicated. Supporting arguments for the author's premises and subpremises should be included and

indented beneath the premises they support. For example, if author S argues that Cleopatra killed Xerxes on the grounds that only Cleopatra and Helen could have done so and it couldn't have been Helen because she was seen in Crete at the time, you might outline the argument as:

1. Either Cleopatra or Helen killed Xerxes.
2. Helen did not kill Xerxes.
 - Helen was in Crete at the time of the killing.
 - Helen was seen by a witness in Crete.
 - The killer of Xerxes could not have been in Crete at the time.
3. Thus, Cleopatra killed Xerxes.

The goal is to lay bare the overall logical structure of the arguments we encounter throughout the course. Grading will be based on completion, thoroughness, charity, and accuracy in summarizing the authors' arguments. Your three lowest outline scores will be dropped. We will discuss this aspect of the course more in class, but feel free to reach out to me with any questions about argument outlines!

Participation

Participation credit can be earned by (i) attending lectures, (ii) thoughtfully participating in class discussions, and (iii) attending office hours. Students are expected to attend lectures, though two classes may be missed without penalty to a student's participation score. Students are encouraged to participate actively in course discussions by asking questions, raising objections, or presenting their own ideas. It is very natural to feel apprehensive or intimidated about speaking during class. (I often felt this way in my philosophy classes!) If you have any concerns about classroom participation, please feel free to come talk with me about it during office hours, both because this is an additional way to earn participation credit outside the classroom and because maybe we can find ways to make classroom discussion seem less formidable.

Every voice is welcome in our classroom and students should feel free to raise any questions or thoughts they may have regarding course material during our class discussions. However, every student is expected to respect the bounds of kindness and respect for their peers during these discussions. (Avoid interrupting, rude language, insults, etc.) Conducting oneself with honesty and compassion is essential to good participation in the discussion and debate of controversial moral topics.

Grade Scale

A: 94-100	A-: 90-93	B+: 87-89	B: 83-86	B-: 80-82
C+: 77-79	C: 73-76	C-: 70-72	D+: 67-69	D: 60-66
F: <60				

If you have any questions about your grade at any point in the course, please don't hesitate to ask!

Late Policy

Late papers (including drafts and outlines) will be downgraded by ten points for every 24 hours past their due dates. (This excludes papers that are late due to university-approved or otherwise serious reasons brought to my attention in a timely manner.)

Attendance Policy

University Policy: As stated in the University's Class Attendance Policy, no right or privilege exists that permits a student to be absent from any class meetings, except for these University Approved Absences:

1. Authorized University activities
2. Disability/religious observance/pregnancy, as required by law and approved by Accessibility Resources and Service and/or the Equal Opportunity and Compliance Office (EOC)
3. Significant health condition and/or personal/family emergency as approved by the Office of the Dean of Students, Gender Violence Service Coordinators, and/or the Equal Opportunity and Compliance Office (EOC).

Class Policy: Aside from the exceptions referenced above, attendance is expected of all students and will contribute toward your grade via your participation score. Note, however, that as mentioned above, two classes may be missed for any reason without penalty to a student's participation score.

Grade Appeal Process

If you feel you have been awarded an incorrect grade, please discuss with me. If we cannot resolve the issue, you may talk to our departmental director of undergraduate studies or appeal the grade through a formal university process based on arithmetic/clerical error, arbitrariness, discrimination, harassment, or personal malice. To learn more, go to the Academic Advising Program website

Honor Code

All students are expected to follow the guidelines of the UNC Honor Code. In particular, students are expected to refrain from “lying, cheating, or stealing” in the academic context. If you are unsure about which actions violate the Honor Code, please see me or consult studentconduct.unc.edu.

Acceptable Use Policy

By attending the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, you agree to abide by the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill policies related to the acceptable use of IT systems and services. The Acceptable Use Policy (AUP) sets the expectation that you will use the University’s technology resources responsibly, consistent with the University’s mission. In the context of a class, it’s quite likely you will participate in online activities that could include personal information about you or your peers, and the AUP addresses your obligations to protect the privacy of class participants. In addition, the AUP addresses matters of others’ intellectual property, including copyright. These are only a couple of typical examples, so you should consult the full Information Technology Acceptable Use Policy, which covers topics related to using digital resources, such as privacy, confidentiality, and intellectual property. Additionally, consult the Safe Computing at UNC website for information about data security policies, updates, and tips on keeping your identity, information, and devices safe.

Syllabus Changes

The professor reserves the right to make changes to the syllabus including project due dates and test dates. These changes will be announced as early as possible.

Accessibility Resources and Services

The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill facilitates the implementation of reasonable accommodations, including resources and services, for students with disabilities, including mental health disorders, chronic medical conditions, a temporary disability or pregnancy complications resulting in barriers to fully accessing University courses, programs and activities.

Accommodations are determined through the Office of Accessibility Resources and Service (ARS) for individuals with documented qualifying disabilities in accordance with applicable state and federal laws. See the ARS Website for contact information: <https://ars.unc.edu> or email ars@unc.edu.

Counseling and Psychological Services

UNC-Chapel Hill is strongly committed to addressing the mental health needs of a diverse student body. The Heels Care Network website is a place to access the many mental resources at Carolina. CAPS is the primary mental health provider for students, offering timely access to consultation and connection to clinically appropriate services. Go to their website <https://caps.unc.edu/> or visit their facilities on the third floor of the Campus Health building for an initial evaluation to learn more. Students can also call CAPS 24/7 at 919-966-3658 for immediate assistance.

Title IX Resources

Any student who is impacted by discrimination, harassment, interpersonal (relationship) violence, sexual violence, sexual exploitation, or stalking is encouraged to seek resources on campus or in the community. Reports can be made online to the EOC at <https://eoc.unc.edu/report-an-incident/>. Please contact the University's Title IX Coordinator (Elizabeth Hall, titleixcoordinator@unc.edu), Report and Response Coordinators in the Equal Opportunity and Compliance Office (reportandresponse@unc.edu), Counseling and Psychological Services (confidential), or the Gender Violence Services Coordinators (gvsc@unc.edu; confidential) to discuss your specific needs. Additional resources are available at safe.unc.edu.

Course Outline

Note: all assignments are due by the start of class on the days listed.

Week:	Topic:
Jan 9	Introduction I <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Syllabus review, What is bioethics?
Jan 11	Introduction II <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Philosophical method and writing, Logic • “Finding, Clarifying, and Evaluating Arguments” by E.J. Coffman
Jan 13	Introduction III <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Outlining arguments (cont.)
Jan 16	MLK Day: No Class
Jan 18	Moral Theory I <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Value theory • “What Makes a Person’s Life Go Best?” by Derek Parfit
Jan 20	Class Canceled
Jan 23	Moral Theory II <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consequentialism • “Consequentialism” by Walter Sinnott-Armstrong
Jan 25	Moral Theory III <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deontology • “Deontological Ethics” by Michael Moore
Jan 27	Moral Theory IV <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Virtue Ethics • “Virtue Ethics” by Rosalind Hursthouse and Glen Pettigrove
Jan 30	Moral Theory VI <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Moral methodology and reflective equilibrium • <i>A Theory of Justice</i> (selections) by John Rawls • “Introduction” from <i>Philosophical Papers</i> by David Lewis

Week:	Topic:
Feb 1	<p>Euthanasia I</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduction to the euthanasia and assisted suicide debates • “Attitudes and Practices of Euthanasia and Physician-Assisted Suicide in the United States, Canada, and Europe” by Emmanuel et al.
Feb 3	<p>Euthanasia II</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is there a moral difference between active and passive euthanasia? • “Active and Passive Euthanasia” by James Rachels
Feb 6	<p>Euthanasia III</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is there a moral difference between active and passive euthanasia? • “Is Killing No Worse than Letting Die?” by William Nesbitt
Feb 8	<p>Euthanasia IV</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is euthanasia morally licit? An affirmative case • “Euthanasia” by Philippa Foot
Feb 10	<p>Euthanasia V</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is euthanasia morally licit? A negative case • “A Philosophical Case Against Euthanasia” by John Finnis
Feb 13	Well-Being Day: No Class
Feb 15	<p>Euthanasia VI</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is there a right to die? An affirmative case • “The Right to Choose Death?” by Frances Kamm
Feb 17	<p>Euthanasia VII</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is there a right to die? A negative case • “A Right of Self-Termination?” by David Velleman
Feb 20	<p>Euthanasia VIII</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Summary of the euthanasia debate

Week:	Topic:
Feb 22	<p>Abortion I</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does the right to bodily autonomy justify abortion? An affirmative case • “A Defense of Abortion” by Judith Jarvis Thomson
Feb 24	<p>Abortion II</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does the right to bodily autonomy justify abortion? A negative case • “Fetuses, Orphans, and a Famous Violinist: On the Ethics and Politics of Abortion” by Gina Schouten
Feb 27	<p>Abortion III</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does the human fetus have a right to life? A negative case • “On the Moral and Legal Status of Abortion” by Mary Anne Warren
Mar 1	<p>Abortion IV</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does the human fetus have a right to life? An affirmative case • “Why Abortion Is Immoral” by Don Marquis
Mar 3	<p>Abortion V</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does the human fetus have a right to life? Another negative case • “Abortion and Infanticide” by Michael Tooley • Midterm Paper Due!!
Mar 6	<p>Abortion VI</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does the human fetus have a right to life? Another affirmative case • “I Was Once a Fetus: That Is Why Abortion is Wrong” by Alexander Pruss
Mar 8	<p>Abortion VII</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Summary of the abortion debate
Mar 10	<p>Procreation I</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Should children be genetically selected/engineered? An affirmative case • “Procreative Beneficence: Why We Should Select the Best Children” by Julian Savulescu

Week:	Topic:
Mar 13	Spring Break: No Class
Mar 15	Spring Break: No Class
Mar 17	Spring Break: No Class
Mar 20	<p>Procreation II</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Should children be genetically selected/engineered? A negative case • “The Case Against Perfection” by Michael Sandel • Final Paper Topic Selection Due!!
Mar 22	<p>Procreation III</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The non-identity problem or the ‘paradox of future individuals’ • “Five Plausible Premises and One Implausible Conclusion” by David Boonin
Mar 24	<p>Procreation IV</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The non-identity problem or the ‘paradox of future individuals’ • “When intuition is not enough. Why the Principle of Procreative Beneficence must work much harder to justify its eugenic vision” by Rebecca Bennett
Mar 27	<p>Procreation V</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do children have a right to be raised by their biological parents? An affirmative case • “Family History” by David Velleman • Final Paper Outline Due!!
Mar 29	<p>Procreation VI</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do children have a right to be raised by their biological parents? A negative case • “Family, Ancestry and Self: What is the Moral Significance of Biological Ties?” by Sally Haslanger
Mar 31	<p>Procreation VII</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is gamete donation morally permissible? A negative case • “Gamete Donation and Parental Responsibility” by Tim Bayne

Week:	Topic:
Apr 3	<p>Procreation VIII</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is gamete donation morally permissible? A negative case • “Rethinking the Moral Permissibility of Gamete Donation” by Melissa Moschella • Final Paper Rough Draft Due!!
Apr 5	<p>Procreation IX</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Summary of the procreation debates
Apr 7	<p>Holiday: No Class</p>
Apr 10	<p>Animal Ethics I</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is speciesism immoral? An affirmative case • “Speciesism and Moral Status” by Peter Singer • Final Paper Rough Draft Due!!
Apr 12	<p>Animal Ethics II</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is speciesism immoral? A negative case • “What’s Wrong with Speciesism?” by Shelly Kagan
Apr 14	<p>Peer Review Exercise</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Peer Review Reports Due!!
Apr 17	<p>Animal Ethics III</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do non-human animals have rights? A positive case • “The Case for Animal Rights” by Tom Regan
Apr 19	<p>Animal Ethics IV</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do non-human animals have rights? A negative case • “Animals” by David Oderberg
Apr 21	<p>Animal Ethics V</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is animal pain very morally significant? A Negative case • “Do Animals Feel Pain in a Morally Relevant Sense?” by Calum Miller

Week:	Topic:
Apr 24	<p data-bbox="600 383 839 414">Animal Ethics VI</p> <ul data-bbox="639 439 1394 551" style="list-style-type: none"> <li data-bbox="639 439 1366 470">• Is animal pain very morally significant? An affirmative case <li data-bbox="639 490 1394 551">• “Non-Human Animals Feel Pain in a Morally Relevant Sense” by James Simpson
Apr 26	<p data-bbox="600 604 850 636">Animal Ethics VII</p> <ul data-bbox="639 658 1102 689" style="list-style-type: none"> <li data-bbox="639 658 1102 689">• Summary of the animal ethics debate
Apr 28	<p data-bbox="600 743 802 775">Course Review</p> <ul data-bbox="639 795 908 826" style="list-style-type: none"> <li data-bbox="639 795 908 826">• Final Paper Due!!
May 5	<p data-bbox="600 882 831 913">Final Exam, 4pm</p>