

BIOMEDICAL ETHICS
Summer Session II 2017
Syllabus

Professor: Dana Kay Nelkin

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Course Description: In this course, we will explore four important issues in biomedical ethics that raise fundamental questions about our obligations concerning life and death, and about what makes life valuable. We will begin with the issue of what sorts of control we ought to have over our future lives—in particular, what sorts of advance medical directives (“living wills”) ought to be respected and how much control patients ought to be given in medical decision-making. In the process of answering this question, we will explore what role autonomy ought to play in our lives, what makes a person the same over time, and what makes life good for a person. In the process, we will set out a framework that we can bring to bear when considering all sorts of moral questions. We will then turn to a set of issues raised by both the possibility of genetic engineering (including recent advances in gene drives) and the ability to employ a variety of performance “enhancements.” In what ways, if any, can doing these things be different, morally speaking, from taking medicine to prevent or cure diseases? Which, if any, such procedures should the state be required to provide? This last question raises the more general issue of distributive justice in health care, and we will turn to some important readings of representative views on this topic. Finally, we will turn to a set of more specific related questions, including whether there are limits to what should be for sale, such as human organs and participation in medical experiments as subjects. The class will provide an opportunity for you to learn about the issues directly under discussion, and it will also give you practice in honing your reasoning skills and give you tools to bring to a wide variety of moral issues you might encounter in the future.

Course Readings: All course readings are available through the class website.

DATE	READINGS
8/7 (M)	Ronald Dworkin, <i>Life's Dominion</i> , excerpt
8/9 (W)	Rebecca Dresser, "Dworkin on Dementia: Elegant Theory, Questionable Policy", Agnieszka Jaworska, "Respecting the Margins of Agency..."
8/14 (M)	Deborah Kaplan, "Prenatal Screening and its Impact on Persons with Disabilities", Jonathan Glover, "Future People, Disability, and Screening"
8/16 (W)	Michael Sandel, "The Case Against Perfection", Caplan et al., "No time to waste—the ethical challenges created by CRISPR"
8/21 (M)	MIDTERM EXAM (80 minutes) Mark Stein, "A Utilitarian Approach to Health Care"
8/23	Robert Nozick, <i>Anarchy, State, and Utopia</i> (excerpt), Norman Daniels, "Justice, Health, and Health Care"
8/28	Deborah Satz, <i>Why Some Things Should Not Be For Sale</i> excerpts
8/30	Trudo Lemmons and Carl Elliot, "Guinea Pigs on the Payroll", Trisha Philips, "Exploitation in Payment to Research Subjects"
9/4	Labor Day Holiday
9/6	TBA

Course Requirements:

- Midterm (25%)
- Take-home Final, uploaded to Turnitin on the TritonEd site (50%)
- Reading Responses of 100-200 words, uploaded to Turnitin on the TritonEd site before the start of each class (top 6 out of 8 will be averaged) (25%)
- Up to 5% extra credit may be earned through section and class participation.

Please note: Late assignments will not be accepted without a valid excuse, given in advance if at all possible.

Notes:

- If OSD accommodations are needed, please notify me as soon as possible during the first week of class.
- Laptops, phones and other electronic devices may not be used in class **except by permission of the instructor.**
- The Academic Honor Code must be observed in this course.
- If you find yourself needing help with any aspect of the course, or would simply like to explore some ideas further, please don't hesitate to see me in office hours or make an appointment to talk.
- Please note that the policies and readings described above are subject to minor change.