

# Medical Ethics

PHIL-260ME  
Mount Holyoke College  
Spring 2017

## GENERAL INFORMATION

- + Instructor: Arden Ali
- + Office location: 213A Skinner Hall
- + Office phone: (413) 538-2725
- + Office hours: Wednesday, 9:00am-11:00am
- + Email: [ardenali@mtholyoke.edu](mailto:ardenali@mtholyoke.edu)
  
- + Class times: Tuesday & Thursday, 11:30pm-12:45pm
- + Class location: Reese 316

## COURSE DESCRIPTION

These courses ask questions about the ethical and/or conceptual problems pertaining to a practice, such as law, medicine, or caring for the natural environment. Such courses are suitable for philosophy majors as well as for students who are new to philosophy but who are interested in the relevant practice.

Over the last century, advancements in medical practice have introduced new ethical questions and made old problems more pressing. Given the possibility of painless death, is it wrong for physicians to assist terminally-ill patients who wish to end their life? Should parents exercise control over the genetic makeup of their children? How should we distribute scarce medical resources? This course gives students the tools needed to think critically about these questions and arrive at better and more thoughtful answers to them.

## TEXT

- + There is no required textbook for this course. All readings will be posted on Moodle. Please bring a copy of the relevant assigned readings to class each day.

## REQUIREMENTS

- + Attendance and Participation: You are required to attend every class session. You are also required to participate during discussion by asking questions, explaining material, helping other students, or simply voicing your confusion. Repeated failures to attend class or participate will impact your final grade.
- + Written Work: Three essays; one 2-3 page essay and two 4-5 page essays
- + Online Reading Responses: You are required to post a comment on the course Moodle forum once per week. If your comment concerns Tuesday's reading, it should be posted by 8:00am on Tuesday. If it concerns Thursday's reading, it should be posted by 8:00am on Thursday. These posts should be at least one paragraph and show critical engagement with the text. You will be given feedback about your posts at scheduled intervals throughout the semester.

- Examination: There is no final examination for this course.

## **COURSE POLICIES**

- Class preparation: You should complete all of the week’s readings before our class session. You should bring a copy of any papers assigned for that day.
- Communication: I send course updates via email. Please check your Mount Holyoke email account regularly. Email is also the best way to contact me outside of class.
- Electronics policy: Please do not use laptops, cell phones, tablets, or other electronic devices during class, unless you are running software for an approved classroom accommodation or using the device to refer to course readings.
- Submission of work: Essay prompts will be posted on Moodle. Please submit a hardcopy of your essay at the beginning of the class session on the specified due date. (The final paper may be placed in my department mailbox.)
- Extension: One 24-hour extension on a written assignment will be granted ‘no-questions-asked.’ To use this extension, email me before due date/time to inform me that you need an extension. The assignment must be turned in 24-hours later in my department mailbox (located in Skinner Hall 217)
- Late/Missing Work: In general, essays will not be accepted after their due date/time unless an arrangement has been made before the due date. Talk to me if you fall behind, preferably long before the paper is due. No credit will be awarded for late online reading responses.
- Accommodations: To request accommodations for a disability, contact AccessAbility Services, located in Wilder Hall B4, at (413) 538-2646 or [accessability-services@mtholyoke.edu](mailto:accessability-services@mtholyoke.edu). If you are eligible, they will give you an accommodation letter, which you should give to me as soon as possible. We will work together to make sure all of the course content is accessible to you.

## **GRADING**

• Attendance and Participation:	15%
• Reading Responses	15%
• Essay 1 (short)	20%
• Essay 2	25%
• Essay 3	25%

## **GETTING HELP**

- If you are having any difficulties in the course, talk to me! Come to office hours (no appointment needed) or send me an email to set up a different time to talk.
- The English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) Program provides support for students whose first language is not English. For more information, visit <http://mtholyoke.edu/esol>.
- The Counseling Service (<http://mtholyoke.edu/counseling>) offers safe and confidential support for mental health concerns. Don’t struggle alone; reach out for help when you need it.

## **ACADEMIC RESPONSIBILITY**

- \* Pages 34–37 of the *Student Handbook* describe the College’s policies with regard to academic honesty. It is your responsibility to review and adhere to these guidelines.
- \* It is also your responsibility to complete *The Proper Use of Sources Tutorial* provided by the Dean of the College: <http://www.mtholyoke.edu/lits/ris/Plagiarism/>
- \* Academic dishonesty, e.g. plagiarism or cheating, may result in a failed mark on assignments, failure in the course as a whole, or more serious disciplinary measures.

**SCHEDULE.** The most up-to-date schedule is posted on Moodle. All readings posted on Moodle as well.

**Week 1** Introduction to the course; moral relativism  
January 24th: Midgely, ‘Trying Out...’  
January 26th: Gensler, ‘Cultural Relativism...’

#### BEGINNING AND ENDING LIFE

**Week 2** Tooley on abortion and infanticide  
January 31st: Tooley, ‘Abortion and Infanticide’  
February 2nd: Reread Tooley, ‘Abortion and Infanticide’

**Week 3** Thomson’s defense of abortion  
February 7th: No class  
February 9th: Thomson, ‘A Defense of Abortion’

**Week 4** The argument against abortion  
February 14th: Reread Thomson, ‘A Defense of Abortion’  
February 16th: Marquis, ‘Why Abortion is Immoral’

**Week 5** Euthanasia and physician-assisted suicide  
February 21st: Rachels, ‘Active and...’ & Quill, ‘Death and Dignity...’  
February 23rd: Foot, ‘Killing and Letting Die’ & Nesbitt, ‘Is Killing...?’

**Week 6** Euthanasia and physician-assisted suicide  
February 28th: Callahan, ‘A Case against Euthanasia’  
March 2nd: Velleman, ‘A Right of Self-Termination?’ **[Essay 1 due]**

#### CONCEPTIONS OF HEALTH

**Week 7** Disability  
March 7th: Levy, ‘Deafness, culture...’ & Goering, ‘Rethinking Disability...’  
March 9th: Savulescu and Kahane, ‘A Welfarist Approach...’

**Week 8** Spring Break

March 14th: No class  
March 16th: No class

**Week 9** Disability, continued

March 21st: Barnes, 'Disability, Minority, and Difference'  
March 23rd: McMahan, 'Causing Disabled People to Exist...'

**Week 10** Human enhancement

March 28th: Sandel, 'The Case Against Perfection'  
March 30th: Kamm, 'Is There a Problem with Enhancement?'

#### MEDICAL RESOURCES

**Week 11** The market for organs

April 4th: Richards, 'The case for...' & Brennan, et al. 'Markets Without...'  
April 6th: Satz, 'The Moral Limits of Markets...'

**Week 12** The distribution of organs

April 11th: No reading [Bring a draft of essay 2 to class]  
April 13th: Harris, 'The Survival Lottery' [**Essay 2 due**]

#### PROFESSIONAL ETHICS

**Week 13** Paternalism and informed consent

April 18th: Goldman, 'The Refutation of Medical Paternalism'  
April 20th: Katz, 'Physicians ...' & Faden & Beauchamp, 'The Concept of...'

**Week 14** Refusal of treatment

April 25th: Brock, 'Conscientious ...' & Savulescu, 'Conscientious...'  
April 27th: Course conclusion

May 2nd: No class [**Essay 3 due in my mailbox**]