

164 Medical Ethics Syllabus

Spring 2012

Instructor	Josh DiPaolo
Time	TuTh 8-9:15
Location	Bartlett 206
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Office	Bartlett 361
Office Hours	9:30am-11am Th & By ap- pointment.
Course Website	spark.oit.umass.edu

1 Course Description

When we begin to think deeply about various medical practices, a number of fascinating ethical issues arise. This course examines in depth three such issues: Abortion, Allocation of medical resources, and Death. Is abortion morally permissible? What is the moral way to allocate scarce resources when lives are at stake? Is death actually a bad thing?

In addition to these topics, you will also learn a number of foundational ethical concepts and distinctions. Perhaps more importantly, this course will help you develop philosophical skills, ones necessary to excel in college. For instance, you will learn how to extract an argument from a text, and to critically evaluate it rigorously. Learning these skills will not necessarily come easily or naturally. You will have to learn some basic logic, and to evaluate semi-formal arguments line by line. Many students find this method rewarding because it helps them think clearly. However, some students may find this method difficult or cumbersome. **When deciding whether to take this class, please think carefully about whether this method suits you.**

Thus, in this course you will:

1. Become familiar with ethical concepts and theories.
2. Learn how those theories and concepts apply to medical issues.
3. Learn how to distinguish between and evaluate normative and non-normative claims.
4. Develop your ability to reconstruct and critically evaluate arguments.
5. Develop your ability to write clearly about difficult material.

2 Readings

There is no textbook for this class. All potential textbooks are ridiculously expensive. To save you money, I will place all readings on Spark, categorized by their schedule topic. You're welcome!

3 Course Requirements

Attendance/Participation	5%
Logic Quiz	7%
Writing Assignments	20%
Exam 1	34%
Exam 2	34%

3.1 Attendance/Participation

Attendance and participation is mandatory. You are granted 3 excused absences. You will lose 1/2 a percentage point from your final grade for each unexcused absence. Contact me if you know that you will exceed your allotted excused absences and you believe you have a good excuse. I will have final say on whether you have a good excuse. This policy is *paternalistic*; regular attendance is essential to doing well in the course. Much of what you'll be evaluated on will come from lecture and discussion, rather than from the texts. Thus, I've instituted this policy to give you incentive to do something that is a necessary condition for your success.

This is not a memorize and regurgitate course. The quality of this course will depend on the quality of your participation. You are expected to come to class having read the assigned material and ready to participate in discussions.

3.2 Logic Quiz

In order to understand class material, to do well on the writing assignments, and to think clearly about the issues in this course and future courses, it will be helpful for you to know some basic logic. To make sure you do learn the basics, you will be quizzed on what we learn in the first couple days of class. I promise that understanding logic will facilitate your success in the rest of the course. Again, my decision to require this quiz is paternalistic.

3.3 Writing Assignments

There will be 4 writing assignments due throughout the course. For each assignment, a prompt will be posted on Spark and your answer should typically be around one (single spaced) page in length. But don't let the brevity fool you; your task will be rigorous. Generally, I will give you two passages to choose from and you will reconstruct and evaluate the argument from the chosen passage. Excelling at this task is one of the most important goals of this course.

Writing assignments are due by the end of class on the day listed on the schedule. They must be typed in a standard format (e.g. 12 point font, single or double spaced, etc.). Notice each assignment is worth 5% of your grade. With rare exceptions, late assignments will not be accepted.

3.4 Exams

There will be 2 exams in this course. The second exam is not strictly speaking cumulative, though you will be expected to be familiar with logic and basic concepts from the first part of the course. The format of the exams is unusual, so let me explain the format and then my reasoning behind it.

Format. A week before the exam, I will provide you with six essay style questions. On the day of the exam, I will randomly choose two of these questions and those two questions will constitute the exam. You have two options. **Option 1:** Study for the exam in the normal way and take an

in class exam. **Option 2:** Type up answers to the questions beforehand and hand in the answers to the two chosen questions at the beginning of the class on test day.

Reasoning. My reasoning is two-fold. First, some people crumble under the pressure of timed, in class exams, whereas others excel in this format. Knowing this, I want to give you the best chance to succeed on the exams. By knowing your strengths, you can maximize your grade on the exams by choosing wisely. Second, I can discern little reason to make you take an in class philosophy exam. A philosophy class should emphasize understanding, not memorization and rigor, not speed. Using this format is my attempt to emphasize and deemphasize, respectively, these features.

3.5 Important Dates

2/7	Logic Quiz
2/15	Cancelled Class
2/23	Assignment 1 Due
3/8	Exam 1
3/15	Assignment 2 Due
4/2	Assignment 3 Due
4/17	Monday Schedule
4/26	Assignment 4 Due
Finals Week	Exam 2

4 Grading

Most parts of these requirements are wholly objective, though some will require you to provide your opinion. In these cases, you will not be graded based on the content of your opinion, but rather based on the support and argumentation you provide for it. This is not because philosophical questions have no correct answer—most do. Instead, it's because I don't expect you to discover that answer after having only considered these questions for several weeks.

It's important that you understand why you received the grade you did, especially early in the semester. So if you ever feel like you don't understand, stop by my office with the assignment and we can discuss it.

5 Communication

5.1 Office Hours

Though I won't spend office hours going over things you missed due to absence, I am happy to spend the time going over whatever else you like. I enjoy spending time with students who are interested in learning about philosophy. Some of the topics and concepts we will learn about will be very difficult. Don't expect to understand everything the first time. Don't be afraid to come talk to me about stuff you don't understand. Even if you don't need extra help, feel free to stop by to chat about anything from class or relating to philosophy.

*Note: My office is not wheelchair accessible. Please let me know if you would like me to make special accommodations regarding meetings.

5.2 Contact Policy

Aside from my office hours, I am most easily reached at the email address above. I check my email frequently and will respond promptly within 24 hours to most inquiries. Please note, while I will most likely read your email within a couple hours of its being sent, I may not reply immediately. If you do not receive a reply within 24 hours, please talk to me in class or send another email as a reminder.

6 Laptop Policy

Laptops are permitted in class, but must be used for class purposes. I reserve the right to prohibit laptop use if I feel that laptops are not being used for class purposes and to count students as absent for violating the laptop policy.

7 Academic dishonesty and Respect

You are required to familiarize yourself with the UMass academic honesty policy found here: http://www.umass.edu/dean_students/codeofconduct/acadhonesty/.

Just be honest. At this level, cheating is irrational; the costs severely outweigh the benefits.

Also, the issues we will discuss will be somewhat controversial. Remember to be respectful of each other. I will do the same. Please tell me if you feel I've been disrespectful in any way at all. I assure you, I would never deliberately disrespect you and I would feel terrible if you felt I did.

8 Special Needs

Any student who requires special arrangements for attending class or doing assignments please speak with me as soon as possible.

9 Disclaimer

I reserve the right to alter this syllabus at any time.

10 Tentative course schedule

Date	Topic	Reading	Work
1/24 Tu	Course Intro & Logic Intro	None	
1/26 Th	Logic, Subjectivism, & Relativism	None	
1/31 Tu	Moral Theories: Deontology	Vaughn 30-36 (esp. 30-32, 34-36)	
2/2 Th	Moral Theories: Deontology & Consequentialism	Vaughn 30-36 (esp. 32-34)	
2/7 Tu	Moral Theories: Consequentialism	No new reading.	Logic Quiz
2/9 Th	Moral Theories: Virtue Ethics	Vaughn 39-40	
2/14 Tu	Abortion	Thomson "A Defense of Abortion"	
2/15 Th	CLASS IS CANCELLED.	No new reading.	
2/21 Tu	Abortion	Continue Thomson.	
2/23 Th	Abortion	Marquis "An Argument that Abortion is Wrong"	Assignment 1 DUE
2/28 Tu	Abortion	Tooley "Abortion and Infanticide"	
3/1 Th	Abortion	Continue Tooley. Hursthouse "Virtue Theory and Abortion"	(Handout Exam Qs)
3/6 Tu	Abortion	Continue Hursthouse.	
3/8 Th	Exam 1		Exam 1
3/13 Tu	Allocation	Rescher "Allocation of Exotic Medical Livesaving Therapy"	
3/15 Th	Allocation	Continue Rescher.	Assignment 2 DUE
3/20-3/22	SPRING BREAK	SPRING BREAK	SPRING BREAK
3/27 Tu	Allocation	Moss & Slegler "Should Alcoholics Compete Equally for Liver Transplantation?"	
3/29 Th	Allocation	Harris "The Value of Life"	
4/2 Tu	Allocation	Continue Harris.	Assignment 3 DUE
4/5 Th	Allocation	Harris "Survival Lottery"	
4/10 Tu	Death	Epicurus "Letter to Menoeceus"	
4/12 Th	Death	Fischer & Brueckner "Why is Death Bad?"	
4/17 Tu	MONDAY SCHEDULE	MONDAY SCHEDULE	MONDAY SCHEDULE
4/19 Th	Death	McMahan "Death and the Value of Life"	
4/24 Tu	Death	Continue McMahan.	
4/26 Th	Death	Williams "The Makropolis Case"	Assignment 4 DUE
5/1 Tu	Catch up & Wrap up		(Handout Exam Qs)
??	Exam 2 during finals week.		Exam 2