

**Bioethics**  
Hollenbeck 332  
11:30am-12:45pm

**Course description:**

Seminar on contemporary issues and debates in bioethics. Topics may include abortion, genetic engineering, reproductive technologies, euthanasia, autonomy, paternalism, use of human subjects in research, access to health care, allocation of scarce resources and environmental ethics. May be writing intensive. Every year.

**Textbook:**

Steinbock, Bonnie and Menzel, Paul. *Bioethics: What Everyone Needs to Know*.  
Oxford University Press, 2023.

Readings listed below are from the above text, unless otherwise noted.  
Additional required and recommended readings and materials will be  
provided via Moodle.

**Instructor:** Kelley Annesley

**Email:** [annesleyk@wittenberg.edu](mailto:annesleyk@wittenberg.edu)

**Office Hours:**

Wednesdays 12-2, Hollenbeck 323  
& by appointment

**Course Schedule:**

*\*\*\*Note: The course schedule is tentative, and is subject to change, including assignment deadlines. When it is updated, I will send out an updated schedule via email and provide an updated schedule on Moodle. I also provide a link to the Google Doc version of the syllabus on our course Moodle page. I recommend checking this version of the syllabus every week to easily ensure you are working from the most updated version.*

**The Professional-Patient Relationship**

Tuesday 8/29: *Intro to Course, Syllabus, and Philosophical Argument*

**Homework due:** First Day Survey

Thursday 8/31: *Ethical Argumentation, Introduction to Bioethics*

**Reading due:** Chapter 1, "What Are The Philosophical Foundations of Bioethics?"

**Homework due:**

Informal Assignment 1: Note at least one question you have about the reading, and/or about philosophical methodology in bioethics (or more broadly). This will serve as the springboard for our in-class discussion.

Tuesday 9/5: *Paternalism, Autonomy, and the Doctor-Patient Relationship*

**Reading due:**

- Chapter 2, "How Has The Shift From Paternalism to Autonomy Shaped Bioethics?"

Thursday 9/7: *Informed Consent*

**Reading due:**

- Brody, "Transparency: Informed Consent in Primary Care." and "The Values Underlying Informed Consent," **Available via Moodle**, in a single file

**Homework due:**

Informal assignment 2: What arguments, if any, can you think of *against* the need for informed consent from patients? Imagine and describe a case where we might think a physician is morally justified in treating a patient without informed consent.

Tuesday 9/12: *The Doctor-Nurse Relationship, Nursing Ethics*

**Reading due:**

- Newton, "In Defense of the Traditional Nurse." **Available via Moodle.**
- Kuhse, "Advocacy or Subsistence for the Sake of Patients?" **Available via Moodle.**
- Recommended: Grady, "Cultivating Synergy in Nursing, Bioethics, and Policy." **Available via Moodle.**

### Death and Assisted Dying

Thursday 9/14: *Euthanasia & Physician Assisted Suicide*

**Reading due:**

- Arras, Excerpt from "On the Slippery Slope in the Empire State: The New York State Task Force on Physician-Assisted Death." **Available via Moodle.**
- Brock, Excerpt from "Voluntary Active Euthanasia." **Available via Moodle.**
- Recommended reading: Chapter 6, "Is Physician-Assisted Dying an Ethical Choice?"

Tuesday 9/19: *Euthanasia & Physician Assisted Suicide con't.*

**Reading due:**

- Foot, "Euthanasia." **Available via Moodle.**
  - **Required: 87-89, 93-94, 100, 105-end. Recommended: whole article**
- Re-read Arras, "On the Slippery Slope in the Empire State..."

**Homework due:**

Informal Assignment 3: What is the best argument against the moral permissibility of PAS? What is the best argument in favor of the moral permissibility of PAS? Are euthanasia and PAS morally different? Why or why not?

Thursday 9/21: *DNR Orders, Advance Directives, Treatment for Incompetent Adults*

**Reading due:**

- Chapter Three: "Do Advanced Directives Protect Patient Autonomy?"
- Wicclair, "Medical Futility: A Conceptual and Ethical Analysis." **Available via Moodle.**
- **Recommended:** Tomlinson & Brody "Ethics and Communication in DNR Orders"

Tuesday 9/26: *Argument & Writing Workshop I*

**Homework due:** Paper 1 draft due

Thursday 9/28 *Defining Death*

**Reading due:**

- Chapter 5, "How Should Death Be Defined and Determined?"

- Truog and Miller, "The Dead Donor Rule and Organ Transplantation" **Available via Moodle.**

### **Stem Cell Research & Questions Surrounding Abortion**

10/3: *Developing New Treatments and Embryonic Stem Cell Research*

**Reading due:**

- <https://stemcells.nih.gov/info/basics/stc-basics>
- McMahan, "Killing Embryos for Stem Cell Research." **Available via Moodle.**

**Homework due:**

Informal assignment 4: Being as concise as possible, address the following questions. Why might we think that using embryonic stem cells for research and treatment is morally wrong? Why might we think that using embryonic stem cells for research and treatment is not morally wrong? Take note before class discussion– on which side of this issue do you find yourself, and why?

10/5: *The Problem of Abortion*

**Reading due:**

- Chapter 7, "Is Abortion an Ethical Choice?"
- Harris, "The Moral Agency of Abortion Providers." **Available via Moodle.**
- Further reading TBA in accordance with need

**Homework due:** Paper 1

### **Treatment vs. Enhancement & Contested Treatments**

10/10: *IVF, IVG, and Pre-implantation Genetic Diagnosis*

**Reading due:**

- Chapter 9, "What Ethical Issues are Raised by Assisted Reproductive Technology?"
- <https://www.nytimes.com/2021/02/01/health/sperm-donor-fertility-meijer.html>
- Robertson, "Extending Pre-implantation Genetic Diagnosis: Medical and Non-Medical Uses." **Available via Moodle.**
- President's Council on Bioethics, "Selecting Embryos for Desired Traits." **Available via Moodle.**

10/12: *Reproductive Risk, Prenatal Diagnosis, and Selective Abortion*

**Reading due:**

- Kass, "Implications of Prenatal Diagnosis for the Human Right to Life." **Available via Moodle.**
- Purdy, "Genetics and Reproductive Risk: Can Having Children Be Immoral?" **Available via Moodle.**

10/17: **No class, Fall Break**

10/19: *Gene Therapy & The Ethical Implications of CRISPR*

**Reading due:**

- Chapter 13, "Is it Ethical to Genetically Modify Humans?"
- <https://www.npr.org/2023/06/08/1178695152/china-scientist-he-jiankui-crispr-baby-gene-editing>

**Homework due:**

- Informal assignment 5: Consider: what is the best argument you can see in favor of the moral permissibility (or obligation) to genetically modify humans? What is one argument that seems persuasive against the moral permissibility of genetic modification?
- Paper 2 draft

10/24: *Genetic Enhancement*

**Reading due:**

- Bortolotti, "Do We Have an Obligation to Make Smarter Babies?" **Available via Moodle.**
- Sandel, "Mastery and Gift." **Available via Moodle.**
- Brock, "Genetic Engineering." **Available via Moodle.**

10/26: *Neurological Enhancement*

**Reading due:**

- Mills, "One Pill Makes You Smarter: An Ethical Appraisal of the Rise of Ritalin," **Available via Moodle.**
- Dees, "Better Brains, Better Selves." **Available via Moodle.**

10/31: *Disability and Contested Therapies*

**Reading due:**

- Crouch, "Letting the Deaf be Deaf: Reconsidering the Use of Cochlear Implants." **Available via Moodle.**
- Tucker, "Deaf Culture, Cochlear Implants, and Elective Disability." **Available via Moodle.**

**Homework due:**

- Informal assignment 6: Summarize: what is the disagreement between Crouch and Tucker? Which argument do you find more persuasive right now, and why? And, what is one clarifying question you would ask each author?

11/2: *Writing & Argument Workshop II*

**Homework due:**

- Informal assignment 7: TBD– writing reflection in accordance with need

### **Research Ethics**

11/7: *Research Ethics*

**Reading due:**

- Chapter 4, "When is Experimentation on Human Subjects Unethical?"
- Glantz, Annas, Grodin, and Mariner, "Research in Developing Countries: Taking Benefit Seriously." **Available via Moodle.**
- Brody, "Ethical Issues in Clinical Trials in Developing Countries." **Available via Moodle.**

**Homework due:**

Informal assignment 8: In your view, when does the benefit to populations both in and outside of developing countries morally outweigh the issues discussed by the authors assigned for today (if ever)?

11/9 *Research Ethics: Women and Pregnant People*

**Reading due:**

- Little et. al, "Research with Pregnant Women: A Feminist Challenge." **Available via Moodle.**
- Merton, "Ethical Obstacles to the Participation of Women in Biomedical Research." **Available via Moodle.**

**Homework due:**

- Paper 2 due

11/14: *Research Ethics: What do we do with unethically gathered information?*

**Reading due:**

- Weindling on the Nuremberg Code. **Available via Moodle.**
- <https://www.washingtonpost.com/lifestyle/2023/07/26/mutter-museum-controversy-philadelphia/>

### **Feminist Perspectives**

11/16: *Feminist Approaches to Bioethics*

**Reading due:**

- Purdy, "A Feminist View of Health." **Available via Moodle.**

**Homework due:**

Informal assignment 9: Knowing that we all have different backgrounds and levels of familiarity with these concepts, reflect once you've completed today's readings: what is a feminist approach in philosophy? Why is it helpful or important to take a feminist approach to bioethics specifically?

11/21: *An Application of Feminist Bioethics*

**Reading due:**

- "Why Are We Still Dismissing Girls' Pain?" NYT Op/Ed, **Available via Moodle.**
- Further reading TBD in accordance with student interest

**Homework due:** Paper 3 draft

**11/23: No class, Thanksgiving Break**

11/28: *Intersectional Perspectives in Clinical Ethics, Writing Workshop*

**Reading due:**

- Fredericks and Baker, "Primary Healthcare for Queer Women and Trans People: Confronting Heteronormativity and Cisnormativity." **Available via Moodle.**

**Homework due:**

- Informal Assignment 10: TBD– reflective assignment on writing process, in accordance with need

### **Social Justice and Health Care Policy / Topic TBD in Accordance with Student Interest**

11/30: *Justice, Rights, and Societal Obligations*

**Reading due:**

- Buchanan, "Justice: A Philosophical Review."
- Nielsen, "Autonomy, Equality and Just Health Care System."

12/5: *Rights to Health Care*, Required out-of-class peer feedback workshop

**Reading due:**

- Norman Daniels, "Is There a Right to Health Care and, if so, What Does it Encompass?" **Available via Moodle.**

**Homework due:**

- Informal assignment 11: TBD in accordance with chosen topic

12/7: **Last day of class:** *Health Care Reform in the U.S.*

**Reading due:**

- Peter Singer, "Why We Must Ration Health Care," **Available via Moodle.**
- Norman Daniels et. al., "Access, Cost and Financing: Achieving an Ethical Health Reform," **Available via Moodle.**

**Homework due:** Paper 3 due 12/11 @ 8am

## Course Policies

### Course Learning Objectives:

Upon completing this course, students will be able to...

- 1) Feel comfortable thinking critically and asking critical ethical questions
- 2) Write strong, well-supported arguments in a concise, clear, philosophical style
- 3) Understand and appreciate the motivating questions and potential answers in important debates and disagreements in biomedical ethics
- 4) Apply concepts from various philosophers and philosophical subfields related to biomedical ethics to new contexts
- 5) LO10: Students will analyze problems, issues, or representations using knowledge, theories and/or methods appropriate to the humanities.
- 6) LO2: Students will write effectively, considering audience and purpose.

### Attendance and participation:

Attendance and participation are key components of this discussion-based course. Significant absences and/or lack of participation will impede your ability to engage with the content of the course. Absences will of course be excused in case of illness or emergency. If you miss more than five classes without an extenuating circumstance, you will receive a 0 in the attendance and participation category.

**\*\*If you're infectious ill, please do not attend class!**

Participation in this course is not measured merely by the amount of time spent speaking in class or the number of classes during which you speak; active listening, preparation for class, and participating in discussions are all required for full marks in the participation and attendance category. If you have any concerns about participating adequately in class, please feel free to contact me.

### Expectations for Time Outside of Class:

In this course, per Wittenberg policy, students should expect to spend **at least twice as much time out of class doing work for each course as they spend in class**. For this class, that means you should plan to spend at least five hours a week doing assigned readings, informal assignments, and working on class-related drafting and final papers. Readings are assigned for almost every course period, and readings are a large part of the work of the course. You need not approach each reading aiming to completely understand on your first read, but reading the material first will help you to follow along in-class and contribute to class discussion.

**Additional Direct Instruction:** Students will also engage in an average of one hour a week of out-of-class direct instruction, in the form of meeting with me during office hours, discussing writing feedback with your instructor and peers, viewing recorded content, and participating in our bioethics reading group.

### Informal assignments:

The purpose of informal assignments is to give you practice writing concisely in a philosophical style, and to help you to gather your thoughts prior to class to help facilitate class discussion. They are graded on a complete/incomplete basis—if you complete the assignment and turn it in via Moodle before the deadline, you will receive full credit.

**Respect:**

I expect that we will discuss issues on which we disagree, as well as discuss issues where our views are closely held and personally important to us. It is absolutely crucial that our disagreements are respectful. Respectful engagement with our peers includes actively listening, refraining from distracting behaviors in class, taking others seriously, and respecting each others' time.

**Inclusivity:**

Please know that this classroom respects and welcomes students of all backgrounds and abilities, and that I invite you to talk with me about any concern or situation that affects your ability to complete your academic work successfully.

**Content warning:**

Please note that we will be discussing some controversial and potentially upsetting material as a part of this course, including, but not limited to, abortion. If you have any concerns about this content or anything else on the syllabus, please contact me as soon as possible.

**Late work:**

Late informal assignments and in-class writing will not be accepted, except in cases of emergency or otherwise unavoidable absences. If this applies, you must contact me in order to have the late penalty waived, and to make up the work missed in class.

For papers, each day the assignment is late results in a 1/3 grade penalty. (For example, if the paper earned an A, but is turned in after the deadline, but on the day of the deadline, it will earn an A-. If the paper is two days late, it will earn a B+... etc.) If you suspect that you cannot turn in an assignment by the deadline, it is crucial that you reach out to me ahead of time to arrange an extension. Except in cases of true emergencies, it is unlikely that late penalties for work turned in after the deadline will be waived without a previously arranged extension.

**Revision policy:**

The first and second paper in the course can be revised, after receiving feedback, for a new grade. There is no cap on the grade you can earn in a revision (ie. even if you receive an F the first time it is turned in, as long as the paper is revised to a level that earns an A, your grade will be replaced with an A). Revising and resubmitting a paper does not guarantee a changed grade. Your grade cannot be lowered after revising and resubmitting.

**Discussion leadership:**

I reserve the right to mandate discussion leadership, but it is always open to you to volunteer for discussion leadership as a method of participation! On their designated day, students will volunteer to kick off class discussion of one (or more!) of the articles assigned. On the day you lead discussion, be sure to be prepared to walk your classmates through the most important parts of the article, review the argument of the piece, and prepare questions to kick start our discussion of the topic. Please feel free to meet with me in advance of your discussion leader day to go over any questions you may have about the material, or how to successfully lead a discussion.



### **Academic Honesty:**

Any form of academic dishonesty is unacceptable in this course; it will not be tolerated. This includes (but is not limited to) plagiarizing by failure to include proper citations on a written work, cheating on exams/assignments, and acquiring and/or using pre-written essays as a tool (regardless of the source of the pre-written essay. So, this includes work that is generated in part or in whole by a large language model or other writing algorithm). To ensure that you never run afoul of this policy, one helpful principle is to never cede your role as the author of any paper or homework you turn in in this course (we will discuss further in class). To ensure that you know what exactly will be counted as academic dishonesty, I encourage you to review the university's policy on academic integrity. All academic work submitted at Wittenberg will carry the honor statement: "I affirm that my work upholds the highest standards of honesty and academic integrity at Wittenberg, and that I have neither given nor received any unauthorized assistance."

### **Electronic Devices:**

Devices will be allowed for *proper use* in class. You have a good sense already about what counts as proper use in class. Because this class is small and discussion-based, your improper use of electronic devices will distract your classmates, and impair your ability to participate in class and understand course material. Improper use of electronics during class, especially cell phones, **will result in a deduction of your participation/attendance grade.**

I also reserve the right to instate a ban on **all** electronic devices in the case of widespread improper use. In the case of a blanket ban on devices, exceptions will be granted for those with confirmation of need through COMPASS, or individual permission granted after a conversation with me. I'm happy to talk through any questions about device use on an individual basis!

### **Instructor Communication:**

I welcome it! Please feel free to get in touch with me via email any time. I aim to respond to all emails within 24 hours, Monday-Friday. If I do not respond to your email in this window, feel free to email me again. I will also sometimes respond to email over the weekend, but do not guarantee a response on Saturdays or Sundays.

**Note:** I do not guarantee a response to emails regarding assignments within 24 hours of that assignment's due date.

### **Grading scheme:**

Participation and attendance: 20%

Informal assignments: 10%

Paper 1: 15%

Paper 2: 25%

Paper 3: 30%

Your final grade in this class will be assigned using letter grades A-E:

93 - 100 = A	73 - 76 = C
90 - 92 = A-	70 - 72 = C-
87 - 89 = B+	67 - 69 = D+
83 - 86 = B	63 - 66 = D
80 - 82 = B-	60 - 62 = D-
77 - 79 = C+	Below 60 = E

Letter grades are converted to numerical scores using the following scheme:

A = 97	
A- = 92.5	C- = 71
B+ = 88	D+ = 68
B = 85	D = 64.5
B- = 81	D- = 61
C+ = 78	E = 58
C = 74.5	No submission = 0

### **Signature Assignment:**

In this class, our culminating project (paper 3) will be an in-depth argumentative paper on an issue related to biomedical ethics. Students will be expected to take a side on a debated topic in biomedical ethics, and defend a thesis by developing an original argument, using philosophical sources as evidence. As part of the signature assignment, students will engage in an iterative process of drafting and revision, supported by instructor and peer feedback. In workshops across the semester, we will discuss strategies for writing for a philosophical vs. non-expert audience, and writing for different purposes and in different modes (ie. communicating biomedical arguments to philosophers vs. policymakers).

### **Syllabus Revision Policy:**

The instructor reserves the right to change ***any content on the syllabus and/or course policies, including grading scheme and course assignments at any time during the semester.*** Changes will be announced in class, and a new syllabus/course policy document will be distributed via email and via Moodle if and when they are made.

### **On Campus Resources:**

#### **Accessibility and ADA Accommodation**

Your learning in this course is important to me. I invite you to talk with me about ways to ensure your full participation in and access to this course. Please be aware that Wittenberg is committed to providing reasonable accommodations for students with documented disabilities. If you are eligible for course accommodations because of a disability, you must register with the Accessibility Services Office, located in the COMPASS: Sweet Success Center in Thomas Library. After you register, please forward me your accommodation letter from Academic Services and arrange a meeting to discuss your learning needs privately in a timely manner. Early identification at the start of the term is essential to ensure timely provision of services as accommodations are not retroactive. If you have questions or would like more information about services for students with disabilities, please contact the Accessibility Services office at [accessibilityservices@wittenberg.edu](mailto:accessibilityservices@wittenberg.edu).

#### **Counseling Services:**

Please check out the following website to see what is available to you in terms of on-campus counseling services:

<https://www.wittenberg.edu/administration/healthwellness/tiger-counseling-services>. The

counseling center is a fantastic resource for many different issues related to university life.

**Writing Center:**

The writing center is an excellent place to get more support on your writing projects, like the papers we will be working on in this class. For more information, and to make an appointment for writing assistance, check out the following link:

<https://www.wittenberg.edu/administration/writingcenter>