

## BIOETHICS | PHILOSOPHY 309

Fall 2015

*Mondays and Wednesdays 12:00-1:15p.m.*

*Engineering 1110*

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### **Objectives**

In this class we will:

1. consider ethical questions and concerns that arise in science, medicine, public and global health, and health policy;
2. study and employ the rich resources of moral philosophy—ethical theories, concepts, and principles—for guidance in (1) identifying, (2) analyzing, and (3) deciding how best to respond to these and related concerns;
3. enhance our capacities to explore and address ethical issues in other domains.

### **Course materials**

1. Skloot, R. 2010. *The Immortal Life of Henrietta Lacks*. New York: Broadway Paperbacks.
2. Vaughn, L. 2013. *Bioethics: Principles, Issues, and Cases*. New York: Oxford University Press.
3. Required readings available on Blackboard (B)

### **Course requirements**

1. Come to class for the full session with the assigned readings, having carefully read them.
2. Scan a major national or international newspaper or news service, selectively read articles concerning the biological sciences, medicine, public health and global health, and take some time to think about ethical questions. Let us know of your findings and thoughts in class.
3. Write and present a brief commentary on the Henrietta Lacks case.  
Written submissions due **September 21**. Each one is worth 10 points. *Please see Appendix 1.*
4. Complete a research project in five parts:  
Part 1: Proposal. Due **September 23**. Worth 10 points.  
Part 2 : Outline with references. Due **October 14**. Worth 20 points.  
Part 3: Presentation. Due **November 2, 4, or 9**. Worth 10 points.  
Part 4: Research Paper. Due **November 18**. Worth 25 points.  
Part 5: Presentation. Due **December 9 or 14**. Worth 10 points.  
*Please see Appendices 2-3.*
5. Participation in class. Due every session. Worth 10 points.

## **Course policies**

1. All students should adhere to the university's honor code:  
<http://www.gmu.edu/academics/catalog/9798/honorcod.html>.
2. Everyone should utilize GMU email accounts.
3. Assignments are subject to change.
4. Everyone should arrive for class on time and stay until the end.
5. Everyone is responsible for coming to class having carefully read the readings assigned for that day, with the readings in hand.
6. Eating, and the use of mobile phones and laptop computers are not permitted in class.
7. If you miss class please consult classmates for announcements and other information.
8. All submitted work must be typed and double-spaced unless otherwise announced.
9. Writing assignments must be submitted in hard copy either in class or my office mailbox. Email submissions must be approved in advance of the due date except in cases of documented emergency.
10. Assignments not submitted directly to me must be signed by another faculty member or Ms. Cho, the Philosophy Department's Office Manager, noting the date and time.
11. Late assignments will lose points equivalent to a full letter grade for each full day late except in cases approved in advance or in the event of a documented emergency.
12. Plagiarized work will receive a failing grade on the assignment and will result in a referral to the Honor Council. Students are expected to know how to properly document sources and avoid plagiarism.
13. Everyone is encouraged to read the Philosophy Department's guidance on writing. Available at: <http://philosophy.gmu.edu/forundergraduates>. See the links for Standards of Good Writing for Philosophy and Writing Guide for Philosophy.
14. You might want to work with, and may be referred to, the GMU Writing Center staff.
15. Please be aware that George Mason offers resources for counseling, disabilities, and sexual assault and harassment. Contact the Office of Disability Services, Counseling and Psychological Services, or Student Health Services for information.

## **SCHEDULE**

### **August 31**

#### **Introduction to the Course**

### **September 2**

#### **Introductions continued**

### **September 9**

#### **The History of Bioethics**

##### **Readings:**

1. Vaughn, Chapter 1, Ethics and Bioethics; Ethics and the Moral Life
2. Begin Skloot, *The Immortal Life of Henrietta Lacks*

**September 14**

**The Case of Henrietta Lacks**

Reading:

1. Skloot, *The Immortal Life of Henrietta Lacks*

**September 16**

**The Case of Henrietta Lacks**

Reading:

1. Skloot, *The Immortal Life of Henrietta Lacks*

**September 21 HENRIETTA LACKS COMMENTARY DUE**

**The Case of Henrietta Lacks**

Reading:

1. Complete Skloot, *The Immortal Life of Henrietta Lacks*

**September 23 RESEARCH PAPER PROPOSALS DUE**

**Henrietta Lacks** wrap up

**September 28**

**The Birth of Bioethics: Scandals in Medicine and Research**

*Film: In the Shadow of the Reich: Nazi Medicine*

Reading:

1. Vaughn, Chapter 6, The Science of Clinical Trials

**September 30**

**The Birth of Bioethics: The Ethical Response**

Readings:

1. Vaughn, Chapter 6: *The Nuremberg Code*
2. Vaughn, Chapter 6: World Medical Association, Declaration of Helsinki

**October 5**

**The Birth of Bioethics: Selected U.S. Scandals**

Readings:

1. U.S. Supreme Court, *Buck v. Bell* (B)
2. Vaughn, Chapter 6: Brandt, Racism and Research: The Case of the Tuskegee Syphilis Study

**October 7**

**The Birth of Bioethics: The Ethical Response**

Readings:

1. Vaughn, Chapter 6: National Commission for the Protection of Human Subjects of Biomedical and Behavioral Research, *The Belmont Report: Ethical Principles and Guidelines for the Protection of Human Subjects of Research*
2. Vaughn, Chapter 1, Moral Principles in Bioethics: Autonomy, Beneficence, Utility, Justice

### **October 13**

#### **Ethical Theory and Bioethics: Utilitarianism**

Readings:

1. Vaughn, Chapter 2, The Nature of Moral Theories; Influential Moral Theories: Utilitarianism
2. Vaughn, Chapter 2: Mill, Utilitarianism

### **October 14 *OUTLINES WITH SELECTED REFERENCES DUE***

#### **Ethical Theory and Bioethics: Kantian Deontology**

Readings:

1. Vaughn, Chapter 2, Influential Moral Theories: Kantian Ethics
2. Vaughn, Chapter 2: Kant, The Moral Law

### **October 19**

#### **Core Principles and Concepts: Respect for Persons, Autonomy, Informed Consent**

Readings:

1. Vaughn, Chapter 5, Autonomy and Consent; Conditions of Informed Consent
2. Gauthier, Philosophical Foundations of Respect for Autonomy (B)
3. Vaughn, Chapter 5: Faden and Beauchamp, The Concept of Informed Consent

### **October 21**

#### **Research resources at Mason, Andrew Lee, Gateway Library**

### **October 26**

#### **Ethical Theory and Bioethics: Virtue Ethics**

Reading:

1. Vaughn, Chapter 2, Influential Moral Theories: Virtue Ethics
2. Vaughn, Chapter 2: Mayo, Virtue and the Moral Life

### **October 28**

#### **Ethical Theory and Bioethics: Care Ethics and Feminist Ethics**

Readings:

1. Vaughn, Chapter 2: The Ethics of Care; Feminist Ethics
2. Sherwin, A Relational Approach to Autonomy in Health Care (B)

### **November 2 *PRESENTATIONS, round 1***

#### **Core Principles and Concepts: Truth-telling**

Readings:

1. Vaughn, Chapter 4, Paternalism and Deception
2. Vaughn, Chapter 4: Lipkin: On Telling Patients the Truth
3. Vaughn, Chapter 4: Cullen and Klein: Respect for Patients, Physicians, and the Truth

### **November 4 *PRESENTATIONS, round 1***

#### **Core Principles and Concepts: Privacy and Confidentiality**

Readings:

1. Vaughn, Chapter 4: Rachels: Why Privacy Is Important
2. Vaughn, Chapter 4: Siegler: Confidentiality in Medicine: A Deceptic Concept

**November 9 PRESENTATIONS, round 1**

**Core Principles and Concepts: Paternalism**

Readings:

1. Vaughn, Chapter 3, Shades of Autonomy and Paternalism
2. Vaughn, Chapter 3: Dworkin, Paternalism

**November 11**

**Mandating Ultrasounds? Vaccines? Justified Paternalism in Patient Care & Public Health**

Readings:

1. Verweij and Dawson, Ethical Principles for Collective Vaccination Programs (B)
2. TBA
3. Minkoff and Ecker, When Legislators Play Doctor (B)

**November 16**

**Care, Health Care, and Families**

Readings:

1. Levine, The Loneliness of the Long-term Caregiver (B)
2. Gillick, The Critical Role of Caregivers in Achieving Patient-Centered Care (B)

**November 18**

**Care, Health Care, and Families**

Reading:

1. Nelson, Just Expectations: Family Caregivers, Practical Identities, and Social Justice in the Provision of Health Care (B)

**November 23 RESEARCH PAPERS DUE**

**Health Inequities in the US: Access to Health Care and Social Determinants of Health**

Readings:

1. Vaughn, Chapter 11, In Depth: Unequal Health Care for Minorities
2. TBA

**November 30- December 2**

**Global Health Inequities and Responsibilities**

Reading:

1. Hunter and Dawson, Is There a Need for Global Health Ethics? For and Against (B)

**December 7**

**No class meeting**

**December 9**

**Presentations, round 2**

**December 14 , 10:30 a.m.-1:15 p.m.**

**FINAL PRESENTATIONS**

**APPENDIX 1: *ETHICAL COMMENTARIES ON HENRIETTA LACKS CASE***  
**(Worth 5 points and 10 points. Written commentaries are due September 21)**

Here your work is to identify and describe a key element of the story that raises ethical questions, and explain why it seems to be ethically troubling. You will write a short commentary and also present your comments in class.

**For commentaries in class:**

Please note that these presentations will be very brief and informal. You won't read what you are submitting in written form. You will plan what you want to say, and in a few sentences, explain your concerns to us. Having some notes is recommended.

**For written commentaries, please follow this basic structure:**

1. Briefly introduce the book and the overall story (just for the written commentary). From there, identify one or two elements of the story you find compelling because they raise questions or concerns about how scientists, doctors, and others involved in health and health care should treat people as they do their work as professionals. This might involve specific policies or the absence of specific policies, the practices, actions; behaviors of individuals and groups; social, cultural, or institutional assumptions and expectations that affected the way research was done and/or the patient care provided. You might connect elements that seem to have the same source or that raise similar kinds of ethical concerns.
2. Explain as best you can what seems troubling ethically.
3. Conclude.

Please include quotations to illustrate your points. Please be sure to include page numbers.  
Recommended length: 3 paragraphs (12-inch font, Times New Roman, 1.25" margins max.).

References: The only required reference is the book.

***EVALUATION FOR WRITTEN COMMENTARY***

1. Introduction of the concern(s) and their ethical importance (2)
2. Clarity and thoroughness of the description of the concern(s) (2)
3. Discussion of their ethical significance (2)
4. Conclusion (1)
4. Syntax and diction, spelling and punctuation, paragraphing (2)
6. Referencing (1)

***EVALUATION FOR CLASS COMMENTARY***

1. Clarity and thoroughness of the description of the concern(s) (2.5)
3. Discussion of their ethical significance (2.5)

## **APPENDIX 2**

### **RESEARCH PROJECT**

Your project will explore and critically analyze an ethical issue or philosophical problem related to one or more of the class topics or a topic of your choice. A helpful way to think of this process is to consider it as participating in a conversation, with other interested, interesting, and informed people who come from different perspectives. The issues you are considering here have been or are matters of great debate among citizens, philosophers, policy makers and other professionals. Your work is to do research and contribute to these moral conversations.

Please feel encouraged to set up an appointment to help formulate and develop your ideas. In some cases I will give extra encouragement.

### ***PROPOSAL: ABSTRACT*** **(Worth 10 points. Due September 23)**

Your **proposal** consists of an abstract wherein you describe your project. There are many ways to go about this. You may focus on an ethical concept or principle, for example, how it should be understood and how it might guide future health care or health policy or practice. For example, how might the principle of solidarity guide public health policy? How might it guide thinking about ethical vaccination policies? Or, what do different understandings of justice have to say about obligations to address global health inequities? You may also examine a particular policy or practice in the life sciences, patient care, health care policy, public health practice or policy, or global health practice or policy, and identify and analyze specific ethical concerns. For example, what are the ethical considerations surrounding pre-natal genetic diagnosis? Or, what are the ethical implications of restrictions on abortion, specifically for fetuses diagnosed with Down's Syndrome? Or, what obligations do nurses and/or doctors have in a public health emergency? What obligations do public health officials and health care institutions have to first responders? Do policy makers, health care institutions and professionals have obligations to patients' family members? What kinds and why? Do well-off countries have obligations to provide health services for migrants and/or refugees? Why or why not?

Your **ABSTRACT** should explain:

- 1) whether your topic falls within research ethics, patient care ethics, public or global health ethics, or perhaps some combination;
- 2) why there has been (if there has been) and should be ethical attention given to these questions or concerns;
- 3) your specific questions or concerns.

Recommended length: a paragraph, single spaced.

### ***ABSTRACT EVALUATION***

1. topic area (3)
2. why ethically significant according to others (3)
3. your ethical questions or concerns (3)
4. syntax, diction, spelling, punctuation (1)

***OUTLINE WITH SELECTED REFERENCES***  
**(Worth 20 points. Due October 14)**

Your **OUTLINE** should present the basic structure for your research paper and presentations. Not all the elements required for the paper are included in your outline. This is just the initial presentation of your topic. In most cases it should follow this basic structure:

*Introduction*

- 1a. Identify & “motivate” the problem:  
What issue do you intend to discuss? Why is it morally pressing?

*Ethical concerns and arguments identified in the literature*

1. Present what others have said about the issue in the literature you have reviewed:  
What are their positions? What reasons do they give for them?  
Capture the richness of the debate and specific lines of ethical argument you find in the literature. This will include the philosophy and bioethics literature, and depending on your topic, also literature in medicine, nursing, public health, etc. Do not focus on just one line of argument. Instead, give ethical positions that differ equal presentation.

*Your ethical concern(s) and tentative argument*

1. Present your view and defend it with strong reasons. What are your pressing ethical concerns?
2. What, in your view, should be done to address them, or at least begin to address them?

*Objections*

1. Identify at least one possible objection to your view.
2. Respond to these tentatively, explaining why the position you defend is the better one.

*Implications*

1. What do you think are the possible implications of your view? How should policy, practice, or research be different in light of your argument? This is not a policy class, so we are not looking for major detail here. Offer some general recommendations given what you know about the status quo and the possibilities for reform.

***Be explicit in your use of appropriate ethical concepts and theories throughout!!!!***

Recommended length: 2 pages, with subheadings and brief sentences for each element.

References: at least **four** references from the scholarly ethics literature when possible, annotated, with complete citations. You should also include references from relevant academic and professional journals (including global health, public health, medical, nursing, health policy journals as appropriate, and philosophy journals), along with philosophy and bioethics books related to your topic.



## ***OUTLINE EVALUATION***

1. Introduction (2)
2. Presentation of a range of ethical perspectives on issue (4)
3. Presentation of your tentative position and moral reasons (4)
4. Objections and clarification of why the moral reasons you offer are more persuasive (2)
5. Discussion of implications for policy & practice (1)
6. Integration of ethical theories and concepts (2)
7. Organization of the argument (2)
8. Syntax, diction, punctuation, paragraphing (1)
9. References (2)

## ***RESEARCH PAPER***

**(Worth 25 points. Due November 18)**

Your **RESEARCH PAPER** is the full presentation of your research and ethical argument. It should follow the structure above, but expanded, and with additional elements:

### *Introduction*

1. Identify & “motivate” the problem:  
What issue do you intend to discuss & why is it morally pressing?
2. Tell your readers your thesis:  
What position do you intend to argue for and how will you do this?
3. Give a concise summary of how the paper will be organized to get to your conclusion.

### *Background information*

1. Present any relevant background information (case law, statistics, existing or developing law, policy) to help orient the reader to the issue, its scope and significance.

### *Ethical concerns and arguments identified in the literature*

1. Present what others have said about the issue in the literature you have reviewed. What are their arguments and what reasons do they give for them?

### *Your ethical concerns and argument*

1. Present your view in as much detail as possible.
2. Defend it with as many strong moral reasons as you can.

### *Objections*

1. Identify at least one and ideally, two or three possible objections to your view.
2. Respond to these, explaining why the position you defend is the better one.

### *Implications*

1. Explain the implications of your view for our understanding of and approach to the issue. How should policy, practice, or research be different in light of your argument?

### *Conclusion*

1. Describe what you have done in this paper.  
Continued on page 11.....

***Be explicit in your use of appropriate ethical concepts and theories!!!!!!!!!!***

Recommended length: 5-7 pages (12-inch font, Times New Roman, 1.25" margins max).

References: Your final paper must contain a minimum of **four** references from the scholarly ethics literature. It should also contain references from relevant academic and professional journals (including global health, public health, medical, nursing, health policy journals as appropriate, and philosophy journals), along with philosophy and bioethics books related to your topic.

### ***RESEARCH PAPER EVALUATION***

1. Introduction: statement of issue, why it's morally pressing, thesis (2)
2. Presentation of a range of ethical perspectives on issue (3)
3. Presentation of your position and support with strong moral reasons (4)
4. Integration of ethical theories and concepts (3)
5. Clarification of why your moral reasons are more persuasive than those given by others (2)
6. Discussion of implications for policy & practice (2)
7. Organization of the argument (3)
8. Syntax, diction, punctuation, paragraphing (2)
9. Conclusion (2)
10. Referencing (2)

### ***PRESENTATION 1 EVALUATION***

1. Introduction: statement of issue, why it's morally pressing (1)
2. Presentation of others' arguments (2)
3. Presentation of your tentative position and moral reasons (2)
4. Objections and response (1)
5. Discussion of possible implications for policy & practice (2)
6. Integration of ethical theories and concepts (2)

### ***PRESENTATION 2 EVALUATION***

1. Introduction: statement of issue, why it's morally pressing, thesis (1)
2. Presentation of others' arguments (2)
3. Presentation of your position and moral reasons (2)
4. Objections and response (1)
5. Discussion of likely implications for policy & practice (2)
6. Integration of ethical theories and concepts (2)

### APPENDIX 3: RESOURCES FOR RESEARCH PROJECT

The library has collected resources for bioethics students here:

<http://infoguides.gmu.edu/c.php?g=257290&p=1718620>

**The following bioethics and public health ethics journals include articles that count as scholarly ethics literature:**

*Bioethics*

*Developing World Bioethics*

*Hastings Center Report*

*International Journal of Feminist Approaches to Bioethics*

*Journal of Bioethical Inquiry*

*Journal of Clinical Ethics*

*Journal of Health Policy, Politics and Law*

*Journal of Law, Medicine, and Ethics*

*Journal of Medical Ethics*

*Journal of Medicine and Philosophy*

*Journal of Public Health Ethics*

*Kennedy Institute of Ethics Journal*

**These journals - some philosophy and some health sciences - also contain useful scholarly articles. Articles that focus explicitly on ethics count as scholarly ethics literature:**

*American Journal of Public Health*

*British Medical Journal*

*Bulletin of the World Health Organization*

*Ethics*

*Globalization and Health*

*Health Affairs*

*Journal of the American Medical Association*

*The Lancet*

*New England Journal of Medicine*

*Nursing Ethics*

*Philosophy and Public Affairs*

*Science*

*Social Science and Medicine*

**Other excellent resources that can count as scholarly ethics literature:**

\**Encyclopedia of Bioethics*, 4th edition (available online through the GMU library)

\**Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (available online)

\*Publications and reports of governmental or non-governmental organizations and agencies engaged in research and policy work in global health and/or ethics. For example: Centers for Disease Control, World Health Organization, Nuffield Council on Bioethics.