GEORGE MASON UNIVERSITY
DEPARTMENT OF PHILOSOPHY

PHIL 309 – Bioethics
Fall 2017

Syllabus

Contents

Instructor: Derek Boyd

Office Hours: Wednesday 4:30 – 5:30 PM and Thursday 1:30 - 2:30 PM (and by appointment) on Collaborate "Ultra". These are my office hours for all of my classes. I will be in my office on Collaborate during this time, so please join many if you have any questions. If I cancel office hours on a day I will notify you by email.

Email: dboyd5@gmu.edu

Virtual Office Hours: By appointment via Blackboard Collaborate. I am available Monday at 9 am to Friday at 5 pm for student inquiries. During this 5 day period, I will respond to student inquiries within 24 hours.

Course Description: Is it morally permissible to enhance a human being through genetic modification, to produce a new human being by cloning a living one, to end the life of an innocent person, or sell a kidney for profit? In this course, we examine these issues and others, as well as ask to what extent moral theory as it exists today can rationally ground a stance on these issues. There are no prerequisites for the course.

 (Credits: 3).

Learning Outcomes:

At the end of this course, students will be able to:

1. Analyze and critique moral arguments by assessing their formal structure and evaluating the strength of their premises.
2. Compare and contrast opposing moral positions, and the arguments given in support of them, on a number of issues in the bioethics-literature.
3. Construct moral arguments of one's own by offering deontological and/or consequentialist reasons in defense of a moral issue.
4. Theorize and apply deontological and consequentialist reasoning to new moral topics, as they may arise.

Course Prerequisites: There are no formal prerequisites. No previous experience in philosophy or life-science is required.

Course Expectations:

1. Working online requires dedication and organization. Proper preparation is expected every week. You are expected to log in to the course each week and complete the assignments and activities on or before the due dates.
2. Students must check their GMU email messages on a **daily** basis for course announcements, which may include reminders, revisions, and updates.
3. It is expected that you will familiarize yourself with and adhere to the Honor Code. Student members of the George Mason University community pledge not to cheat**,** plagiarize**,** steal**,** and/or lie in matters related to academic work.
4. It is essential to communicate any questions or problems to me promptly.

Online Learning Community: This online course is taught via Blackboard Courses (Log into http://mymason.gmu.edu, select the Courses Tab, and the course can be found in the Course List).

This course is offered completely online. Each week begins on Monday and ends on Friday.

In our online learning community, we must be respectful of one another. Please be aware that innocent remarks can be easily misconstrued. Sarcasm and humor can be easily taken out of context.

When communicating, please be positive and diplomatic. I encourage you to learn more about Netiquette.

Technology Requirements:

Hardware:
You will need access to a Windows or Macintosh computer with at least 2 GB of RAM and to a fast, reliable broadband Internet connection (e.g., cable, DSL). For optimum visibility of course material, the recommended computer monitor and laptop screen size is 13-inches or larger. You will need computer speakers or headphones to listen to recorded content and a microphone for live audio sessions using course tools like Blackboard Collaborate.

For the amount of computer hard disk space required to take an online course, consider and allow for the space needed to: 1) install the required and recommended software and, 2) save your course assignments.

For hardware and software purchases, visit Patriot Computers.

Software:
Web browser (See Blackboard Support for supported web browsers)

Blackboard Courses (Log into http://mymason.gmu.edu, select the Courses Tab)

Blackboard Collaborate (select from the course menu)

Adobe Acrobat Reader (free download)

Flash Player (free download)

Microsoft Office (purchase)

Note: If you are using an employer-provided computer or corporate office for class attendance, please verify with your systems administrators that you will be able to install the necessary applications and that system or corporate firewalls do not block access to any sites or media types.

Required Text & Readings: All reading and other course materials are available on Blackboard (**http://mymason.gmu.edu**).

Performance-based Assessments:

1. **Discussion Board:** For most weeks, students are required to make at least two postings to the discussion board, although you are welcome and encouraged to make more than two postings. Postings will be done in groups of four or five. I will assign students to groups randomly and will switch up the membership of the groups periodically. Your first post for the week should be in response to the question I will assign to your group. Typically, an adequate response to the week's question will call on you to have a basic grasp of the assigned reading for the week. Your first post for the week should be done independently of input from the other group members and you will not be able to read their responses until the end of the day on Wednesday. You are required to post your first response by Wednesday at 11:59 PM (at least for those weeks in which posting is required). Your second post of the week should be in response to one of your group-member's postings. The goal of discussions is to allow you to explore an issue or aspect of the reading with fellow students. Your second post is due by the following Friday at 11:59 PM.

   Please try to keep postings between 100 and 200 words.

   Exam questions will resemble discussion questions, so a good way to study for exams is to read through and at least think about all of the week's discussion questions. At the end of the week, you will be able to read through all of your classmates' posts and I encourage you to continue the process into the weekend and post wherever you like on the Discussion Board. Following through on discussions is a great way to improve your grasp on sometimes difficult reading material.

2. **Exams:** Exams will be made available at the end of every third week on Sunday at 6 AM and you will have until the following Monday by 11:59 PM to complete the exam. You may take the exam at any time during this period. Exams will consist of 11 multiple-choice questions and two short essay questions. Exam questions will be drawn from a pool of questions, so no two exams will likely be identical. Exam questions will be randomized—including the essays—and there is no backtracking, so you must answer each question in the order in which it appears. None of the five exams are cumulative, so there is no comprehensive final exam for the course.

   Your lowest exam will be dropped. If you don't take one of the exams, then that exam will be dropped. If you don't take two of the exams, then one of them will be dropped and the other one will count as 0. During an exam weekend, exams will be available on Sunday at 6 AM and must be competed by 11:59 PM on the following Monday.

3. **Paper**: Students are required to write 3 - 4 page paper on a topic provided by me. Paper guidelines and topics are posted on Blackboard. **Due: April 14ᵗʰ (submit to SafeAssign by 11:59 PM).**

4. **Projects:** Students are required to give and record two group presentations on Blackboard Collaborate. Group-presentation guidelines will be posted to Blackboard.

Grading: students will be evaluated in the following areas:

- Discussion Board (10%).
- Exams (60%).
- Paper (10%).
- Group Collaborate presentations (20%).

Course-grade rubric: Course-grades will be determined according the formula below, if no curve is deemed necessary. The numbers reflect the percentage of total points a student may earn by the end of the semester. There are a total of 500 possible points.

100 =A+>97, 97>A>93, 93>A->90, 90>B+>87, 87>B>83, 83>B>80, 80>C+>77, 77>C>73, 73>C->70, 70>D+>67, 67>D>63, 63>D->60, 60>F.

Late papers and missed exams: Late papers will be graded down by a third of a grade for each day that they are late. Exams will not be accepted past the due dates (which is always the Monday following the Sunday on which the exam becomes available).

Study guides: Study guides will be made available for each of the exams several weeks before an exam. The study-guide questions are intended to help you focus on the most important parts of the readings and lectures, and should be a reliable guide to how well prepared you are for an exam.

Collaborate Review Sessions: A collaborate review session will be held prior to each exam. During the sessions we will review the study guide in preparation for the coming exam. The dates and times of the review sessions will be announced at the beginning of the week before an exam. The review sessions will be recorded.

Rubrics:

Discussion Board
Online Discussion Protocols and Discussion Rubrics.

(1) Instructions:

Discussions for the week will open on Blackboard on Saturday at 6 AM. Submit your initial post no later than Wednesday before midnight EST, and your second post no later than Friday before midnight EST. However, I encourage you to engage your classmates (in all groups) and post as many times as you like, even into the weekend and the following week.

(2) Discussion protocols:

You should try your best to get your postings in before the due dates. Postings that come after the due dates are of less value to the class, as late postings may not catch the attention of students before they post their second response.
Discussion postings should be a minimum of 100 words and a maximum of 200 words. I encourage you to: • Address the questions as much as possible (don't let the discussion stray). • Describe the relevant argument or position in your own words, limiting quotations, unless context makes it necessary. • Build on others' responses to create threads.
Avoid discussion postings that are limited to 'I agree' or 'great idea', etc. If you agree (or disagree) with a posting then say why you agree by supporting your statement with concepts from the readings or by bringing in a related example or experience.
Feel free to include related prior knowledge (e.g., work experience, prior coursework, readings), but be mindful of the 200 word cap.
Use proper netiquette (i.e., the culture of communicating digitally). Learn more

about Netiquette.

(3) Grading rubric for evaluating discussions:

Discussion Board Rubric				
Criteria	**Expected**	**Sufficient**	**Insufficient**	**Not Evident or Not Completed**
Timely discussion contributions	Both postings were adequate and meeting the due dates.	First posting was adequate, second posting sub-adequate but meeting the due dates.	Both postings sub-adequate or missing the due dates.	No postings.
Responsiveness to the question, thoughtfulness of answer demonstration of an understanding of the assigned readings	Thoughtful replies demonstrating that the basic ideas in the readings were understood and incorporated into your responses and meeting the due dates.	First posting thoughtful and demonstrating that the basic ideas in the readings, but second posting sub-adequate or not meeting the due dates.	Both postings have questionable relationship to the group question or reading material.	No evidence of effort or understanding.
Points	5	3-4	1-2	0

Schedule (from Spring 2017):

Learning Module Topics	Readings	Videos	Assignments and Assessments
WEEK 0 (1/16) **Course Welcome**	Course Welcome in Blackboard About the Instructor and Getting Started**.** **NOTE**: Please contact me if you are experiencing any difficulties in accessing course content.	Orientation Video.	Introduce yourself on Collaborate. Orientation Quiz.
WEEK 1 (1/23) **Introduction to Bioethics**	-"Evaluating Arguments." -Chapters 1 & 2 of James Rachels, *The Elements of Moral Philosophy*, 4th ed. (McGraw Hill: 2003).	"Should College Football Be Banned?"	You are required to post only once for this week by Wednesday at 11:59 PM.
WEEK 2 (1/30) **Abortion**	-Judith Thomson, "A Defense of Abortion," *Philosophy and Public Affairs* (Vol. 1, No. 1, 1971). -Don Marquis, "Why Abortion is Immoral," *Journal of Philosophy* (Vol. 86, No. 4, 1989).		Discussion questions (initial post by Wednesday at 11:59 PM, second post by Friday at 11:59 PM).
WEEK 3 (2/6) **Killing and Letting Die**	-Chapter 7 of James Rachels, *The End of Life* (Oxford University Press: 1986).		Discussion questions (initial post by Wednesday at 11:59 PM, second post by Friday at 11:59 PM). **Exam 1 (available on Blackboard on Sunday (2/12) at 6 AM and due by Monday (2/13) at 11:59 PM)**

WEEK 4 (2/13) **Utilitarianism**	-Chapters 7 & 8 of James Rachels, *The Elements of Moral Philosophy*, 4th ed. (McGraw Hill: 2003). [Same author, different reading]		Discussion questions (initial post by Wednesday at 11:59 PM, second post by Friday at 11:59 PM).
WEEK 5 (2/20) **Animal Welfare**	-Peter Singer, "Utilitarianism and Vegetarianism," *Philosophy and Public Affairs* (Vol. 9, No. 4, 1980).		Discussion questions (initial post by Wednesday at 11:59 PM, second post by Friday at 11:59 PM).
WEEK 6 (2/27) **Deontological Ethics**	-Chapter 9 of James Rachels, *The Elements of Moral Philosophy*, 4th ed. (McGraw Hill: 2003).		Discussion questions (initial post by Wednesday at 11:59 PM, second post by Friday at 11:59 PM). **Exam 2 (available on Blackboard on Sunday (3/5) at 6 AM and due by Monday (3/6) at 11:59 PM).**
WEEK 7 (3/6) **Deontological Ethics (continued)**	-Chapter 10 of James Rachels, *The Elements of Moral Philosophy*, 4th ed. (McGraw Hill: 2003).		**Optional:** Discussion questions (initial post by Wednesday at 11:59 PM, second post by Friday at 11:59 PM).
WEEK 8 (3/13) **Spring Break**			
WEEK 9 (3/20) **Biomedical Enhancement**	Chapters 1 & 2 of Allen Buchanan, *Better Than Human* (Oxford University Press: 2011).		Discussion questions (initial post by Wednesday at 11:59 PM, second post by Friday at 11:59 PM). **1st Group Presentation Due (3/26)**

WEEK 10 (3/27) **Biomedical Enhancement**	-Chapters 3 & 4 of Allen Buchanan, *Better Than Human* (Oxford University Press: 2011).		Discussion questions (initial post by Wednesday at 11:59 PM, second post by Friday at 11:59 PM).
WEEK 11 (4/3) **Biomedical Enhancement**	-Chapters 5 & 6 of Allen Buchanan, *Better Than Human* (Oxford University Press: 2011).		Discussion questions (initial post by Wednesday at 11:59 PM, second post by Friday at 11:59 PM). **Exam 3 (available on Blackboard on Sunday (4/9) at 6 AM and due by Monday (4/10) at 11:59 PM).** **Exam 3 will cover Chapters 1-4 of Buchanan (not Chapters 5 &6) and Chapter 10 of Rachels.**
WEEK 12 (4/10) **Human Cloning**	-Michael Tooley, "Moral Status of Cloning Humans" from *Human Cloning* edited by James M. Huber & Robert F. Almeder (Totowa, NJ: Humanities Press, 1998), pp. 77-100.		Discussion questions (initial post by Wednesday at 11:59 PM, second post by Friday at 11:59 PM). **Paper Due: Friday, April 14th (submit to SafeAssign by 11:59 PM).**
WEEK 13 (4/17) **Kidney Sales**	Janet Radcliffe-Richards et. al., "The Case for Allowing Kidney Sales," from *Intervention and Reflection* edited by Ronald Munson (Boston, MA: Wadsworth, 2012). -Kishore D. Phadke and Urmila Anandh, "Refuse to Support the Illegal Organ Trade," from *Intervention and Reflection* edited by Ronald Munson (Boston, MA: Wadsworth, 2012).		Discussion questions (initial post by Wednesday at 11:59 PM, second post by Friday at 11:59 PM). **Exam 4 (available on Blackboard on Sunday at 6 AM and due by Monday at 11:59 PM).**
WEEK 14 (4/24)			Discussion questions (initial post by Wednesday at 11:59 PM, second post by Friday at 11:59 PM).

TBD			
WEEK 15 (5/1) **TBD**			**Optional:** Discussion questions (initial post by Wednesday at 11:59 PM, second post by Friday at 11:59 PM). **2nd Group Presentation Due (5/5).**

Students Expectations:

Academic Integrity
Students must be responsible for their own work, and students and faculty must take on the responsibility of dealing explicitly with violations. The tenet must be a foundation of our university culture. [See http://academicintegrity.gmu.edu/distance].

Honor Code
Students must adhere to the guidelines of the George Mason University Honor Code [See http://oai.gmu.edu/honor-code/masons-honor-code/].

MasonLive/Email (GMU Email)
Students are responsible for the content of university communications sent to their George Mason University email account and are required to activate their account and check it regularly. All communication from the university, college, school, and program will be sent to students solely through their Mason email account. [See https://thanatos.gmu.edu/masonlive/login].

Patriot Pass
Once you sign up for your Patriot Pass, your passwords will be synchronized, and you will use your Patriot Pass username and password to log in to the following systems: Blackboard, University Libraries, MasonLive, myMason, Patriot Web, Virtual Computing Lab, and WEMS. [See https://thanatos.gmu.edu/passwordchange/index.jsp].

University Policies
Students must follow the university policies. [See http://universitypolicy.gmu.edu].

Responsible Use of Computing
Students must follow the university policy for Responsible Use of Computing. [See
http://universitypolicy.gmu.edu/1301gen.html].

University Calendar
Students must follow the university policies. [See http://catalog.gmu.edu].

Students with Disabilities
Students with disabilities who seek accommodations in a course must be registered with the George
Mason University Office of Disability Services (ODS) and inform their instructor, in writing, at the
beginning of the semester [See http://ods.gmu.edu]

Religious Holidays
A list of religious holidays is available on the University Life Calendar page
(http://ulife.gmu.edu/calendar/religious-holiday-calendar/). Any student whose religious observance
conflicts with a scheduled course activity must contact the Instructor at least 2 weeks in advance of
the conflict date in order to make alternative arrangements.

Students are expected to follow courteous Internet etiquette.

Student Services:

University Libraries
University Libraries provides resources for distance students. [See http://library.gmu.edu/distance].

Writing Center
The George Mason University Writing Center staff provides a variety of resources and services (e.g., tutoring,
workshops, writing guides, handbooks) intended to support students as they work to construct and share
knowledge through writing. [See http://writingcenter.gmu.edu]. You can now sign up for an Online Writing
Lab (OWL) session just like you sign up for a face-to-face session in the Writing Center, which means YOU
set the date and time of the appointment! Learn more about the Online Writing Lab (OWL) (found under
Online Tutoring).

Counseling and Psychological Services
The George Mason University Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS) staff consists of professional
counseling and clinical psychologists, social workers, and counselors who offer a wide range of services (e.g.,
individual and group counseling, workshops and outreach programs) to enhance students' personal experience
and academic performance [See http://caps.gmu.edu].

Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA)
The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act of 1974 (FERPA), also known as the "Buckley Amendment,"
is a federal law that gives protection to student educational records and provides students with certain rights.
[See http://registrar.gmu.edu/privacy].