

**GEORGE MASON UNIVERSITY
DEPARTMENT OF PHILOSOPHY**

**PHIL 309 – Bioethics
Spring 2018**

Syllabus

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Instructor: Derek Boyd

Office Hours: MW 2:00 – 3:00 PM on Blackboard Collaborate (or by appt.). You are also welcome to visit me in person at my office during these hours (or by appt.) at 462 Robinson B.

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: This course is an introduction to contemporary issues in bioethics. For most topics, we will consider moral arguments for and against various practices, and students will be

encouraged to draw their own conclusions regarding the moral permissibility of these practices. In addition, we will study utilitarianism and Kantian ethics—two highly influential moral theories—with the aim of understanding how they can give us guidance when it comes to framing a moral issue, and how to think about the different issues in bioethics, in particular. (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 for each week. Postings will be done in groups of four or five. I will assign students to groups randomly and will switch up the groups every two or three weeks. Your first post for the week should be in response to the question I 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 other group members and you will not be able to read their responses until the end of the day on Wednesday (except for the first week). You are required to post your first response by Wednesday at 11:59 PM (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 on Friday by 11:59 PM.

Please try to keep postings between 100 and 200 words.

Exam questions will resemble study guide questions and Discussion Board 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 posts through the weekend and post wherever you like on the Discussion Board. I will be following discussion posts and making comments here and there. I summarize some of the more important points made in discussions, or point to some common confusions, in the weekly reviews.

- 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 multiple-choice, multiple-answer, and short essay questions. Exam questions will be drawn from a pool of questions, so no two exams likely will 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. There exams are not cumulative and there is no cumulative, comprehensive final exam for the course.

Each exam counts for 15% of your final grade (75 points), but your lowest exam score will be dropped. If you don't take one of the exams (for any reason), 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 completed by 11:59 PM on the following Monday

3. **Paper(s):** Students are required to write two 2-3 page essays OR one 4-5 page essay on a topic chosen from a list of topics. Papers are to be submitted to SafeAssign on Blackboard. Paper guidelines and topics will be made available later in the term.
4. **Presentations:** Students are required to give and record a presentation on Blackboard Collaborate. Presentation guidelines and demonstration presentation will be posted to Blackboard.

Grading: students will be evaluated in the following areas:

- Discussions (10%)—only your top ten scores count toward you final grade.
- Exams (60%)—your lowest score is dropped.
- Paper (15%).
- Presentation (15%).

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:

Learning Module Topics	Readings	Videos	Assignments and Assessments
<p>WEEK 1 (1/22)</p> <p>Introduction to Bioethics</p>	<p>Course Welcome to Blackboard</p> <p>About the Instructor and Getting Started.</p> <p>NOTE: Please contact me if you are experiencing any difficulties in accessing course content.</p> <p>“Evaluating Arguments.”</p> <p>Chapter 1 of James Rachels, <i>The Elements of Moral Philosophy</i>, 4th ed. (McGraw Hill: 2003).</p>	<p>“Should College Football Be Banned?”</p>	<p>Student Introductions.</p> <p>Introduce yourself on Blackboard Collaborate (5 points extra-credit). Make sure to review your recording in ‘Recordings’ on Collaborate. It usually takes about an hour for recordings to post.</p> <p>You are required to post only once for this week by Friday at 11:59 PM.</p>
<p>WEEK 2 (1/29)</p> <p>Abortion</p>	<p>-Judith Thomson, “A Defense of Abortion,” <i>Philosophy and Public Affairs</i> (Vol. 1, No. 1, 1971).</p> <p>-Don Marquis, “Why Abortion is Immoral,” <i>Journal of Philosophy</i> (Vol. 86, No. 4, 1989).</p>		<p>Discussion questions (initial post by Wednesday at 11:59 PM, second post by Friday at 11:59 PM).</p>
<p>WEEK 3 (2/5)</p> <p>Killing and Letting Die</p>	<p>-Chapter 7 of James Rachels, <i>The End of Life</i> (Oxford University Press: 1986).</p>		<p>Discussion questions (initial post by Wednesday at 11:59 PM, second post by Friday at 11:59 PM).</p> <p>EXAM 1 (open on Blackboard on Sunday (2/11) at 6 AM and due by Monday (2/12) at 11:59 PM)</p>
<p>WEEK 4 (2/12)</p> <p>Utilitarianism</p>	<p>-Chapters 2, 7 & 8 of James Rachels, <i>The Elements of Moral Philosophy</i>, 4th ed. (McGraw Hill: 2003). [Same author, different text]</p>		<p>Discussion questions (initial post by Wednesday at 11:59 PM, second post by Friday at 11:59 PM).</p>

WEEK 5 (2/19) Animal Welfare	-Peter Singer, "Utilitarianism and Vegetarianism," <i>Philosophy and Public Affairs</i> (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 (2/26) Deontological Ethics	-Chapter 9 of James Rachels, <i>The Elements of Moral Philosophy</i> , 4 th ed. (McGraw Hill: 2003).		Discussion questions (initial post by Wednesday at 11:59 PM, second post by Friday at 11:59 PM). EXAM 2 (open on Blackboard on Sunday (3/1) at 6 AM and due by Monday (3/2) at 11:59 PM).
WEEK 7 (3/5) Deontological Ethics (continued)	-Chapter 10 of James Rachels, <i>The Elements of Moral Philosophy</i> , 4 th ed. (McGraw Hill: 2003).		Discussion questions (initial post by Wednesday at 11:59 PM, second post by Friday at 11:59 PM). SHORTER PAPER 1 DUE (3/9)
WEEK 8 (3/12) Spring Break			
WEEK 9 (3/19) Kidney Sales	Janet Radcliffe-Richards et. al., "The Case for Allowing Kidney Sales," from <i>Intervention and Reflection</i> edited by Ronald Munson (Boston, MA: Wadsworth, 2012). -Kishore D. Phadke and Urmila Anandh, "Refuse to Support the Illegal Organ Trade," from <i>Intervention and Reflection</i> 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). PRESENTATION DUE (10/27)
WEEK 10 (3/26) Biomedical Enhancement	Chapters 1 & 2 of Allen Buchanan, <i>Better Than Human</i> (Oxford University Press: 2011).		Discussion questions (initial post by Wednesday at 11:59 PM, second post by Friday at 11:59 PM). EXAM 3 (open on Blackboard on Sunday (4/1) at 6 AM and due by

			Monday (4/2) at 11:59 PM).
WEEK 11 (4/2) Biomedical Enhancement	-Chapters 3 & 4 of Allen Buchanan, <i>Better Than Human</i> (Oxford University Press: 2011).		Discussion questions (initial post by Wednesday at 11:59 PM, second post by Friday at 11:59 PM).
WEEK 12 (4/9) Biomedical Enhancement	-Chapters 5 & 6 of Allen Buchanan, <i>Better Than Human</i> (Oxford University Press: 2011).		Discussion questions (initial post by Wednesday at 11:59 PM, second post by Friday at 11:59 PM).
WEEK 13 (4/16) Human Cloning	-Michael Tooley, "Moral Status of Cloning Humans" from <i>Human Cloning</i> 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). EXAM 4 (open on Blackboard on Sunday (4/22) at 6 AM and due by Monday (4/23) at 11:59 PM).
WEEK 14 (4/23) Partial Autonomy and Informed Consent	-Onora O'Neill, "Partial Autonomy and Informed Consent" in <i>Journal of Medical Ethics</i> , Vol. 10, no. 4, 1996 (173-178).		Discussion questions (initial post by Wednesday at 11:59 PM, second post by Friday at 11:59 PM). SHORTER PAPER 2 DUE (4/27) LONGER PAPER DUE (4/27)
WEEK 15 (4/30) Feeding People and Saving Nature	<i>Darwin's Nightmare</i> (YouTube). No reading for this week.		Discussion questions (initial post by Wednesday at 11:59 PM, second post by Friday at 11:59 PM). EXAM 5 (open on Blackboard on Sunday (5/3) at 6 AM and due by Monday (5/4) at 11:59 PM).

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.

Sexual Misconduct and Interpersonal Violence

George Mason University is committed to providing a learning, living and working environment that is free from discrimination, and we are committed to a campus that is free of sexual misconduct and other acts of interpersonal violence in order to promote community well-being and student success. We encourage students who believe that they have been sexually harassed, assaulted or subjected to sexual misconduct to seek assistance and support. [University Policy 1202 Sexual Harassment and Misconduct](http://universitypolicy.gmu.edu/policies/sexual-harassment-policy/) (<http://universitypolicy.gmu.edu/policies/sexual-harassment-policy/>) speaks to the specifics of our process, our resources, and the options available to you.

Confidential student resources are available on campus at the Student Support and Advocacy Center (<http://ssac.gmu.edu/>), Counseling and Psychological Services (<http://caps.gmu.edu/>), and Student Health Services (<http://shs.gmu.edu/>).

All other members of the University community (including faculty, except those noted above) are **not** considered confidential resources and are **required** to report incidents of sexual misconduct to the University Title IX Coordinator. For a full list of resources, support opportunities, and reporting options, contact Dr. Jennifer Hammat, Title IX Coordinator, at <http://diversity.gmu.edu/title-ix>, at 703-993-8730, or in the Compliance, Diversity, and Ethics office in the Aquia Building, Suite 373.

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>].