PHIL 6600: Ethics in Health Care

Ralph Baergen, PhD MPH

Spring 2015

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Office Hours: Mon, Tues, Wed 11-12 am. I’m often in my office, so feel free to call or stop by outside of my official office hours. Email is usually the quickest, most reliable means of getting in touch with me.

Required Text

There is no textbook for this class. All assigned readings will be posted to Moodle.

Course Description & Goals

This class is intended for students in a wide variety of healthcare professions, including (but not limited to) advanced-practice nursing, pharmacy, public health, and healthcare administration. The ethical issues we will consider include interactions between individual patients and clinicians as well as systems-level and “big picture” issues. You will be introduced to some of the dominant ethical theories and principles that have been developed in the Western philosophical tradition, and taught to apply them in various settings. By the end of the course, students should be able to identify ethical issues and apply ethical theories and principles to them.

Course Requirements

This is an asynchronous, online course; there are no set days or times when everyone must be online. However, you must not fall behind on the assigned readings or miss deadlines for graded work. You are expected to participate in on-line discussions of the course material.

You will write 3 short papers (approx. 4 – 6 pages, double-spaced) on topics assigned during the class. There will be more than 3 topics presented, so you do not need to write on every topic. If you decide to write more than 3 papers, only the top 3 grades will be used to calculate your course grade.

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<tr>
<th>Short Papers: 3 @ 20% ea</th>
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<tr>
<td>Final Paper:</td>
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<td>TOTAL:</td>
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Netiquette: When posting comments (or interacting with others in any other way), adhere to the same standards one ought to follow in everyday situations. Treat one another politely and respectfully.

- No “flaming” (emotional or insulting ranting). If you’re all worked up about something, walk away from the keyboard, take a deep breath, and think carefully before responding.
  - If someone “flames” you, do not respond.
- Do not attack anyone’s intelligence, moral character, etc. Politely pointing out errors is perfectly acceptable. This is part of learning. The focus should be on presenting a rational position supported by evidence.
• No “ALL CAPS RAGE.”
• Try to avoid profanity.

Letter grades will be assigned as follows:

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<th>Grade</th>
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<td>A</td>
<td>95 – 100%</td>
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<td>A-</td>
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<td>B+</td>
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Course Schedule

ETHICAL THEORY

Week 1 (Jan 12-16): Introduction to Ethics; Consequentialist Theories

- Moral Realism & Relativism
- Efficiency vs. Justice
- Efficiency vs. Patient Choice
- The Rule of Rescue


Week 2 (Jan 19-23): Deontological Theories; Moral Rights


Week 3 (Jan 26-30): Moral Virtues; Feminist Ethics

CLINICAL ISSUES

Week 4 (Feb 2-6): Paternalism in Healthcare


Essay Topic 1: A hospital anti-smoking policy Due Wed Feb 18
Week 5 (Feb 9-13): Medical Futility


**Essay Topic 2:** A demand for futile treatment *Due Wed. Feb 25*

Week 6 (Feb 16-20): Duty to Treat & Conscientious Refusals to Treat

- The Duty to Treat
- The “Usual Compromise” and its Critics

**Essay Topic 3:** A refusal to treat or to refer *Due Wed. Mar 4*

**SYSTEMS-LEVEL ISSUES**

Week 7 (Feb 23-27): Medical Ethics vs. Business Ethics: Why Do Clinicians & Administrators See Ethics Differently?


**Essay Topic 4:** Unpaid bills at the hospital pharmacy *Due Wed Mar 11*

Week 8 (Mar 2-6): The Ethics & Limits of Prevention & Screening

- Costs & limits of screening
- Screening asymptomatic people
- Prenatal screening
- Genetic screening

**Essay Topic 5:** Genetic screening for BRCA1 and BRCA2 *Due Wed Mar 18*
Week 9 (Mar 9-13): Vaccinations: Strategies, Risks, & Refusals

- Which risks are acceptable?
- When should refusals be honored?
- HPV vaccines
- Firing Hospital Employees for Refusing Vaccinations


Week 10 (Mar 16-20): Allocating Scarce or Expensive Healthcare Resources


Essay Topic 6: Forced transfer to custodial care *Due Wed. Apr 1*

Week 11 (Mar 23-27): Spring Break – No Classes

Week 12 (Mar 30-Apr 3): Evidence-Based Medicine


Week 13 (Apr 6-10): Disparities in Health Status & in Access to Care


Week 14 (Apr 13-17): Humanitarian Aid Programs

- MSF & the Red Cross
- Military involvement in aid programs
- The Murder of Vaccination Program Staff in Pakistan & Afghanistan

CONCEPTUAL ISSUES


**Essay Topic 7:** Evaluating a case of medicalizing the normal  *Due Wed Apr 29*

Week 16 (Apr 27 – May 1): Closed Week: Complete your final paper

*Final Papers Due: Friday, May 1, 5 pm.*