

Public Health Ethics

Spring 2015

Syllabus

Course numbers: Medical History & Bioethics 515 / Philosophy 515

Time: Tuesdays & Thursdays 9:30-10:45am

Location: 4235 Nancy Nicholas Hall

Credits: 3

Prerequisites: At least junior standing. Graduate and Professional students are welcome.

Instructor: J. Paul Kelleher, Ph.D.

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Office: 1430 Medical Sciences Center (MSC), 1300 University Ave.

Office hours: Tuesdays and Thursdays, 11:00am-12:00pm; and by appointment.

Course Description:

This course focuses on ethical issues implicated in a population-level approach to disease prevention and health promotion. Students will explore prominent theoretical approaches to public health ethics and will engage with several ethical tensions. Issues discussed include: the use of coercive or intrusive public health interventions that restrict individual freedom, infringe upon individual privacy, and/or invite individual harm (or risks of harm); the justification of paternalistic measures in societies or sub-populations that seemingly indulge in pleasurable yet unhealthy behaviors; the need to choose between the identifiable victims we can save with expensive measures here and now and the more numerous unidentifiable victims we could save in the future with the same monetary investment; the trade-offs between maximizing aggregate health benefits and addressing the special needs of vulnerable social sub-groups and individuals; ethical issues in international pharmaceutical research; ethical issues involving vaccination, screening, and surveillance; and ethical issues raised by the ongoing Ebola epidemic.

Course Objectives

By the end of this course the student will be able to:

- understand the conversation about public health ethics as an enterprise incorporating moral philosophy, bioethics, and evidence-based social science
- identify and clarify diverse moral norms and principles that underlie diverse convictions about public health ethics
- subject these norms and principles to dispassionate critical reasoning aimed at evaluating the force of underlying reasons for and against them
- write clear and concise essays subjecting a issues of public health ethics to dispassionate ethical analysis

Attendance & Participation

Quick version: What we do in class is as important as the readings you do outside of class. For this reason, attendance is largely mandatory. If that is a problem for you, then no hard feelings, but this class might not be for you.

Attendance Details:

You are entitled to miss four (4) classes without penalty. After that, each additional missed class will reduce your final grade by five points each.

Any absence beyond your four “freebies” can be nullified by following these two steps for each:

1. Email me before the missed class to tell me that you’ve missed four classes already, and that you must miss another. (Emails after the missed class will be accepted only in cases of emergency.) Use the subject line “Penalized absence (Public Health Ethics)”.
2. Within two weeks of the absence, write a précis of at least 500 words on the reading(s) discussed during your absence and either bring that précis to my office hours for discussion, or else make a separate appointment with me to discuss it.

There will be a sign-in sheet circulated at the beginning of each class. Be sure that you sign your name, or you will be charged for an absence mistakenly. Amendments to the record are not permitted after a class has ended.

It is your responsibility to keep track of how many classes you’ve missed.

Assignments and Grading

First paper: 20% (due early in the semester)

Second paper: 40% (due at the semester’s midpoint)

Term Paper: 40% (due on the last day of class)

The table for converting your final composite (weighted) numerical grade into final letter grades is as follows:

Points	<60	60-68.9	69-74.9	75-80.9	81-86.9	87-92.9	93 and above
Semester Grade	F	D	C	BC	B	AB	A

You must hand in all assignments in order to pass this course. You may not elect to opt out of an assignment and receive an F on it. Your essays must be uploaded to the dropbox on the course’s learn@UW site by the due date. **Late assignments will almost certainly be penalized.** Any non-emergency extensions must be requested prior to the due date, and will be granted only in rare circumstances. Although you are encouraged to discuss your papers with friends and classmates, you are responsible for writing your own essays.

Readings:

Introduction

1. Russ Shafer-Landau, "Introduction," in *Fundamentals of Ethics*; Joe Lau, "Identifying Arguments," in *An Introduction to Critical Thinking and Creativity: Think More, Think Better*

Health and Human Rights

2. John Arras and Elizabeth Fenton, "Bioethics and Human Rights"

The Ethics of Clinical Research in Low Income Countries

3. Marcia Angell, "The Ethics of Clinical Research in the Third World"; Peter Lurie and Sidney Wolfe, "Unethical Trials of Interventions to Reduce Perinatal Transmission of the Human Immunodeficiency Virus in Developing Countries"
4. Ezekiel Emanuel, "Global Justice and "Standard of Care" Debates"
5. Jennifer Hawkins, "The Surfaxin Trial"
6. Jennifer Hawkins, "Exploitation and Placebo Controls"
7. Thomas Pogge, "Testing Our Drugs on the Poor Abroad"

When and Why (if ever) is Government The Answer?

8. Jonny Anomaly, "Public Health and Public Goods"
9. Jonny Anomaly, "Is Obesity a Public Health Problem?"
10. Onora O'Neill, "Broadening Bioethics"
11. Ben Saunders, "Minimum pricing for alcohol: a Millian perspective"
12. Jessica Flanigan, "Public Bioethics"
13. T. H. Green, "Lecture on Liberal Legislation"
14. Dan Beauchamp, "Community: the Neglected Tradition of Public Health"
15. Meena Krishnamurthy, "Political Solidarity, Justice and Public Health"
16. Richard Thaler and Cass Sunstein, *Nudge*, pp. 17-39
17. Kelly Brownell et al., "Personal Responsibility and Obesity"
18. Sarah Conly, "Coercive Paternalism in Health Care: Against Freedom of Choice"
19. Cass Sunstein, "It's for Your Own Good!"
20. Jeremy Waldron, "It's All for Your Own Good"
21. Kristin Voigt, "'If you smoke, you stink.' Denormalisation Strategies for the Improvement of Health-related Behaviours: the Case of Tobacco"

Scarcity and Public Health Priority-setting

22. Ruth Macklin and Ethan Cowan, "Given Financial Constraints, It Would Be Unethical To Divert Antiretroviral Drugs From Treatment To Prevention"
23. Norman Daniels, "Reasonable Disagreement about Identified vs. Statistical Victims" (one-page excerpt)
24. Tony Hope, "Why undervaluing "statistical" people costs lives"

Vaccination Ethics

25. James Childress, "Immunization: Protection Through Vaccination"
26. Angus Dawson, "Vaccination and the Prevention Problem"
27. Jessica Flanigan, "A Defense of Compulsory Vaccination"
28. John Lantos et al., "Why We Should Eliminate Personal Belief Exemptions to Vaccine Mandates"
29. Doug Open and Doug Diekema, "Why We Should Not Eliminate Personal Belief Exemptions to Vaccine Mandates"
30. Ana Iltis, "Vaccines: Parental Autonomy, Moral Choices, and Public Argument"