PHIL 63S: Introduction to Bioethics

Syllabus (subject to revision—always updated online at course webpage)

Meeting Time and Location: Building 160, Room 127, Tues/Thurs 2:15-3:30  
Instructor: RJ Leland  (rjleland[at]gmail.com)  
Office: 90-92C (2nd floor building 90)  
Office Hours: Tuesday 12:15-1:15, Thursday 3:30-4:30, or by appointment  
Course Site (updated syllabus, link to textbook, extra readings): http://stanford.edu/~rjleland/WWW/Bioethics.html

Course Description:
We will explore ethical questions that arise in health care and the biological sciences. We will consider the following issues (perhaps together with others): allocation of health-care resources, the responsibilities of doctors to patients, the distinction between killing and letting die, medically-assisted suicide, abortion, and the use of technologies for genetic screening and manipulation. Throughout, our focus will be on moral questions about how decisions in these domains should be made.

Objectives:
In this class you will:
• learn about major ethical questions related to healthcare and bio-medical sciences  
• develop an ability to produce and consume moral arguments about those questions (and other real-world issues)  
• hone your writing skills, learning to write clear and persuasive philosophical arguments  
• hone your critical thinking skills, learning to engage charitably in discussion about moral issues and how to critically consume moral arguments

Required Text:

Course Requirements and Grading Basis:
• Active class participation (20%)—Attendance is necessary but not sufficient. Full credit will require being an active participant in class discussion. That means talking. But it also means listening, and making sure that your questions and remarks are re-
sponsive to the materials and to your fellow students. All this requires doing the reading carefully in advance and coming to class with developed questions and ideas.

- **Reading responses** (20%)—A short piece (1-3 paragraphs), emailed to me (rjleland[at]gmail.com) by midnight the day before each class. The subject line should be '[your last name] bioethics response [date of course]'. You should discuss something you found interesting, confusing, or otherwise worthy of consideration in writing. The goal is not to summarize but to share your ideas/interests/confusions with me and to engage critically before entering the classroom. Explaining why you didn't understand something is fine. So is expressing disagreement with the reading. But you want to give reasons for your confusions or disagreements (e.g., "the author's claim that X doesn't seem to fit together with his claim that Y because . . .")

- **Paper** (30%) — A 2000-3000 word paper on a topic of your choice, to be determined in consultation with me. The process will begin with a short (1-2 page) interest piece on the topic you'd like to work on, together with any ideas about what you'd like to say, and a mandatory meeting with me about the proposal. Then you'll develop and submit a paper outline, which you'll also discuss with me individually. All this culminates in a paper due before our final class meeting on 8/15.

- **Final Exam** (30%)—Held on 8/17 from 12:15-3:15. The test will be a mix of short and longer answer questions, which will evaluate whether you've done and retained the reading, and ask you to do some critical thinking about the issues we've discussed.

**Course Topics and Readings**

**6/25 Ethics and bioethics: an introduction**
No Reading

**6/27 Informed consent and patient autonomy**
John Stuart Mill, excerpt from On Liberty in K&S, pp. 621-623
Justice Benjamin Cardozo, excerpt from Schlerendorff v. New York Hospital in K&S p. 624

**7/2 Patient confidentiality**
Mark Siegler, "Confidentiality in Medicine: A Decrepit Concept" in K&S, pp. 597-600
Raanan Gillon and Daniel Sokol "Confidentiality" in A Companion to Bioethics 2nd ed. (available via email), pp. 513-519.
7/4 No meeting (Independence Day)

7/9 — Conscientious refusal of health care providers


7/11 Public health, paternalism, and liberty


Case Study: Sex and Vaccination http://sciencecases.lib.buffalo.edu/cs/files/hpv.pdf


7/16 A universal right to healthcare?

Norman Daniels, "Is There a Right to Health Care and, If So, What Does It Encompass?" from (available on course website)

Robert Nozick, selection from Anarchy, State, Utopia, pp. 233-235 (available on course website)

7/18 No meeting

7/23 Health care allocation I

Paul Menzel "Rescuing Lives: Can't We Count?" in K&S pp. 407-410

Nicholas Rescher "The Allocation of Exotic Medical Lifesaving Therapy" in K&S, pp. 410-421

Alvin Moss and Mark Siegler "Should Alcoholics Compete Equally for Liver Transplantation?" in K&S pp. 421-427

7/25 Health care allocation II

John Harris "The Value of Life" in K&S pp. 428-436

Robert Veach "How Age Should Matter: Justice as the Basis for Limiting Care to the Elderly" in K&S pp. 437-447
7/30 Health care allocation III
Norman Daniels "A Lifespan Approach to Healthcare" in K&S pp. 465-478

8/1 Killing and letting die

8/6 Euthanasia
Review Rachels's piece from 8/1
Case Study: "Death and Dignity" by Patrick Quill (http://web.missouri.edu/~bondesonw/Quill.HTM)
Daniel Callahan, "When Self-Determination Runs Amok" K&S pp. 381-385
Pieter Admiral, "Listening and Helping to Die: the Dutch Way" K&S pp. 391-397

8/8 No meeting

8/13 Abortion
Judith Thompson "A Defense of Abortion" K&S pp. 40-50
Don Marquis "Why Abortion is Immoral" K&S pp. 51-62

8/15 Conclusion
No Reading
Papers Due (submit via email to rjleland[at]gmail[dot]com)

8/17 Final Exam
12:15-3:15 (it won't take that long)