

## LDST 377: Ethical Decision Making in Healthcare

Prof. Jessica Flanigan

Jepson 119

Email: [flanigan@richmond.edu](mailto:flanigan@richmond.edu)

**Overview:** In this class, we will discuss ethical decision-making in healthcare from the perspective of patients, physicians, researchers, and policymakers. In Part 1, we will mainly address clinical ethics. For example, what can physicians permissibly do and what are patients entitled to request?

In Part 2, we turn to health policy. Do medical innovations like human enhancement and radical life extension threaten our moral equality? What about kidney taxes and organ markets? Is paternalism appropriate in public health or research contexts? Does everyone have a right to healthcare, and if so, how much? Are people entitled to elective treatments, enhancements, and life-extension technology?

Part 3 addresses procreative ethics. What do we owe future people? Are there any ethical principles that should inform the kinds of people we create? Is abortion permissible? Is commercial surrogacy permissible? Together, these readings and discussions will provide an introduction to the range of ethical questions that arise in modern medicine and medical research.

**Objectives:** This course is designed to give students a better understanding of medical ethics and the ethics of public health. The main learning outcomes center on discovery and creation:

- Students will **discover** philosophical perspectives that change the way they think about the ethics of healthcare.
  - o Students will develop skills that enable them to develop and evaluate moral arguments. For example, students will learn to assess the soundness and validity of an ethical argument.
  - o Students will critically evaluate real-world ethical dilemmas in healthcare in order to better understand concepts like consent, wellbeing, and justice.
- Students will also **create** original philosophical essays that address the ethics of healthcare.
  - o Students will think in a clear and systematic way about the normative dimensions of their career or personal choices going forward.

- Students will learn to develop and write an original philosophical argument.
- Students will learn to revise papers in response to counter-arguments.
- Students will write the best papers they've ever written in their lives.

## **General Education Learning Objectives**

### ***Writing***

1 Students will produce written work that reflects disciplinary conventions and attention to audience and situation. In LDST 377, students will produce a long-form argumentative essay about the ethics of healthcare.

2 Students will produce written work with a clear perspective and, where appropriate, forward claims supported by evidence, and cite sources responsibly. In LDST 377, students will support their claims with philosophical sources and original arguments.

3 Students will produce written work undergoing an iterative process, where content evolves (creation, drafting, and revision) and improves based on feedback from the faculty member. In LDST 377, students will choose a topic, submit a thesis and outline, research sources, write a draft, and revise the final essay at least once.

4 Students will compose written work with clarity, cohesion, concision, and minimal error. In LDST 377, students will be evaluated on the coherence and originality of their written philosophical arguments.

### ***PEIC***

1. Students will analyze the origins and dynamics of structural inequities and power imbalances in healthcare contexts.

2. Students will analyze how physicians', patients', and public officials' attitudes, experiences, and/or beliefs are shaped both by context and/or cultural identity.

3. Students will demonstrate knowledge of the social effects of inequities of access to healthcare and power imbalances between providers and patients. Students will also demonstrate knowledge of current efforts to reduce health disparities.

## **Readings:**

### **PART 1: CLINICAL ETHICS**

#### **Week 1: Consent**

M: Medical Ethics and Philosophy

*Savulescu- Why Bioethics Needs Philosophy*

W: Paternalism

*Buchanan, "Medical Paternalism"*

## *Hippocratic Oaths*

### Week 2: Pediatric Consent

**M: MLK!**

W: Children's Medical Rights and Consent through time

*Dare- Parental Rights and Medical Decisions*

*Davis, Precedent Autonomy and Subsequent Consent*

*AAP statement*

### Week 3: Addiction and Consent

**M: Class cancelled!**

W: Addiction and Choice

*Foddy and Savulescu- A Liberal Account of Addiction*

### Week 4: Euthanasia and Death

M: Death By Choice

*Velleman- A Right to Self Termination?*

*Fisher- Swiss Right to Die Clinics*

W:- Survival

*Parfit- Why Our Identity is Not What Matters*

*Aviv- What does it mean to die?*

## PART 2- HEALTH POLICY

### Week 5- Impairment and Disability

M: Impairment

*Howard and Aas- On Valuing Impairment*

*Savulescu- Disability: A Welfarist Approach*

W: Modification

*Bayne and Levy- Amputees by Choice*

*Minerva- Invisible Discrimination*

### Week 6- Public Health

M: Healthcare Systems

*Persad et al- Principles of Allocation of Scarce Interventions*

*Cochrane: After the ACA*

W: Social Dimensions of Health

*Voigt- Smoking and Social Justice*

*Earp et al- Racial Justice and the War on Drugs*

*Ray- Why Bioethics Should Care about Environmental Toxins*

### Week 7- Organs, Tissue, and Markets

M: Organ Markets

*McGrath "Organ Procurement, Altruism, and Autonomy"*

*Satz "The Moral Limits of Markets: The Case of Human Kidneys"*

W:- Organ Confiscation  
*Fabre- Organ Confiscation*

Week 8- Pandemic Policy

M: Infectious Disease

*Francis et al- How Infectious Disease Got Left Out*

*Flanigan- Compulsory Vaccination*

W: Challenge Trials

*Eyal- Human Challenge Studies to Accelerate Coronavirus Vaccine Licensure*

*Blumenthal Barby- Payment of COVID-19 challenge trials*

**Week 9: SPRING BREAK**

PART III- Procreative Ethics

Week 10: Conception

M: The non-identity problem

*Parfit- The Non-Identity Problem*

W: A Solution to the Problem

*Shiffrin- Wrongful Life, Procreative Responsibility, and the Significance of Harm*

Week 11: Creation Ethics

M: Designer Babies

*Savulescu- Procreative Beneficence*

*Sandel- The Case Against Perfection*

W: Transhumanism and Equality

*Bostrom, The Reversal Test*

*Bostrom, "The Fable of the Dragon Tyrant"*

Week 12: Pregnancy and Maternal Rights

M: Assisted Reproduction

*McLachlan and Swales- Babies, Child Bearers, and Commodification*

*Anderson- Commercial Surrogate Motherhood*

W: Maternal Rights

*Thomson- "A Defense of Abortion"*

Week 13: Pregnancy and Moral Status

M: A fetus has moral status

*Marquis- Why Abortion is Immoral*

*Liao- The Basis of Human Moral Status*

W: A fetus only has moral status in some cases

*Harman- Creation Ethics*

Week 14: Pregnancy and Moral Status

M: A fetus does not have moral status

*Tooley- Abortion and Infanticide*

W: We don't know whether a fetus has moral status

*Moller- Abortion and Moral Risk*

Week 15: Birth and Childhood

M: Birth

*Warren- The Moral Significance of Birth*

W:Childhood

*Gheaus- The Best Available Parent*

**Grading:**

Grade	Weight
Class Participation	5%
Perusall	10%
Top 10 Responses	30%
Essay <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>I will apply a 1/3 grade late penalty to your final essay grade if you do not meet with me and submit a thesis outline by week 5</li><li>I will apply a 1/3 grade late penalty to your final essay grade if you do not submit a draft by week 10</li><li>Final submissions are due by the end of week 15</li></ul>	35%
Final Exam	20%

All grades are entered as numbers.

The numerical values of essay grades are:

A+ 98.5	A+/A 97	A 95	A/A- 93	A- 91.5	A-/B+ 90
B+ 88.5	B+/B 87	B 85	B/B- 83	B- 81.5	B-/C+ 80
C+ 78.5	C+/C 77	C 75	C/C- 73	C- 71.5	C-/D+ 70

D+ 68.5	D+/D 67	D 65	D/D- 63	D- 61.5	D-/F 60
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The numerical values for final letter grades are:

<b>A+ 100-97</b>	<b>A 96.99-94</b>	<b>A- 93.99-90</b>
<b>B+ 89.99-87</b>	<b>B 86.99-84</b>	<b>B- 83.99-80</b>
<b>C+ 79.99-77</b>	<b>C 77.99-74</b>	<b>C- 73.99-70</b>
<b>D+ 69.99-67</b>	<b>D 66.99-63</b>	<b>D- 63.99-60</b>

### **Participation (5%)**

Everyone begins the class with full participation credit. Students lose participation points for behavior that undermines the quality of our class discussion. Guidelines for this grade are posted on the course website.

### **Perusall (10%)**

Your perusal grade is based on whether you completed the assigned reading and engaged in conversation on Perusall before class.

### **Reading Responses (30%)**

Every week will have a reading response due on Friday.  
Your grade will consist in the top ten highest scores for your response submissions.

### **Essay (30%)**

One of our goals in this course will be to develop your writing abilities further. Specifically, I want you to write the best paper you've ever written. For that reason, **you can revise your essay twice for a higher grade**, as long as you meet with me to discuss revisions.

### **Exam (20%)**

The Registrar sets the final exam time and date. Information about the final is posted online.

**Academic Integrity:**

Students may not use course materials from previous versions of this course, and students may not distribute the course materials (e.g. exams) without authorization.

Students must complete every assignment on their own unless otherwise specified.

Students may not use artificial intelligence to assist with writing assignments.

Students must comply with the UR honor code.

Students may not submit work from previous courses for this course.

**Grades:**

Make a copy of the GoogleDoc grade rubric and I will update your grades there. If this system doesn't work for you for some reason, contact me to opt out and we will find an alternative.

**Materials:**

All readings are on Perusall. You can print the readings and bring them to class.

Laptops and iPads are not permitted in class without authorization.

*This syllabus may be revised throughout the semester.*