

PHIL 2060-04: Biomedical Ethics
Fall 2025: in person, 3 credit hours

Instructor: Marina DiMarco
Pronouns: she/her/hers
Class location:
Email: m.dimarco@wustl.edu
Office:

Student hours: (no appointment needed, just stop by),
and by appointment, which you must make ≥ 24 hrs in advance
If you cannot come to student hours or find a time that works on
Calendly, please email with your availability.

Mentee:
Email:
Office:
Student hours:

Course Description:

A critical examination, in the light of contemporary moral disagreements and traditional ethical theories, of some of the moral issues arising out of medical practice and experimentation in our society. Issues that might be discussed include euthanasia, genetic engineering, organ transplants, medical malpractice, the allocation of medical resources, and the rights of the patient.

Healthcare asks us to navigate complex institutions, relationships, and decisions: for ourselves, with people we care deeply about, and on behalf of others in our care. Both practitioners and patients often face high-stakes, contested, challenging moral and social questions. This course is designed to help you identify and answer these questions, by offering philosophical concepts and frameworks with which to evaluate what might be most important to you and to those around you, and to assess how these relate to the specific context at hand. We will approach this by examining topics of concern in clinical medicine and public health, including abortion, genetic testing, disability, consent, refusal, surrogate decision-making, health surveillance, and the distribution of health resources. We will establish and follow community norms for discussing these topics, many of which may be sensitive or deeply personal.

This course has no prerequisites.

Learning Objectives:

Students who successfully complete this course will learn to identify and interpret philosophical arguments and apply them to cases of potential interest or concern in biomedicine. Students will be able to recognize theories, principles, and concepts from the traditions of western normative ethics, applied ethics, and disability studies, broadly construed; to compare them; and to reason about whether, how, and where we ought to use them. Students will be able to develop an

argument and defend their position from potential criticism, and extend charitable and critical evaluation to the arguments of others.

Students of all intellectual and personal backgrounds are enthusiastically welcomed to the course. It might be particularly interesting to students who are interested in careers in medicine, the health sciences, or health law & policy.

Assessment: There are three primary sources of feedback and credit for this course. A rubric for each type of assignment will be available in the “Rubrics” Module on Canvas. Assignments are divided into four types:

1. The Basics +20

You can earn up to 20 points for completing the following activities:

- a. Completing the Getting to Know PHIL 2060 Survey (+2)
- b. Signing up for, and serving as, collaborative note-taker for one class meeting (+3)
- c. Attending and productively contributing to class meetings (+15)

Absences due to illness and emergency will be excused. Do not come to class when you are sick. Please focus on getting better, and email me to let me know what is going on so we can make alternative arrangements. I will consider other candidate justifications for excused absence on a case by case basis. Example circumstances for which I have previously refused to excuse absences include the need to study for another class and personal travel plans. Attendance credit is calculated as the percentage of classes attended or excused x 15 points.

You should expect to work hard during class meetings. To earn credit for attendance you must show up on time, complete in-class tasks, and participate in activities in accordance with class norms. We will establish and practice class norms in Week 1. Repeated violation of these norms will reduce participation credit at my discretion. I expect you to refrain from using electronic devices during class meetings. If you wish to use a laptop or tablet during class meetings, please come to office hours or schedule a meeting to discuss individual permission.

2. Reading Responses +50

Beginning in week 3, there are 6 reading responses (one per week), worth up to 10 points each. Your best 5 scores will count. These are designed to help you learn to read carefully and to practice the skills we develop in class. Reading responses are typically due Tuesdays at midnight. I'll post the prompt at least a week before it's due. Reading responses will be graded anonymously using the Reading Response Rubric.

3. Case Studies +30

You can earn up to 30 points by completing two case analyses, worth up to 15 points each. These are opportunities to apply concepts and methods from class to a new and unfamiliar scenario and to practice explaining and defending your reasoning to another human being. Case studies will be assessed as in-person, closed-note, oral exams. Students will draw a case,

have 15 minutes to analyze it on their own, and complete a 10-15-minute conversation in which they offer a recommendation for a course of action and explain and defend their reasoning. Students may opt to complete the case study individually or in teams of two. I will provide some practice case studies, different from those to be used for assessment, for use in preparation.

Here's how the points you earn will correspond to your grade:

A+ 97+ points	A 93-96 points	A- 90-92 points
B+ 87-89 points	B 83-86 points	B- 80-82 points
C+ 77-79 points	C 73-76 points	C- 70-72 points
D+ 67-69 points	D 63-66 points	D- 60-62 points

Late work: We all need a little flexibility from time to time. Late work is worth 10 percent fewer points per business day. You may be able to avoid this penalty by writing an email at least 24 hours before the deadline to negotiate an extension. I am trying to get you to ask for an extension or to explain what's going on in your life. I reserve the right not to enforce the late work policy. If you are sick or have another emergency when you are scheduled to complete your Case Study, we will work with you to reschedule. Other requests to make up or reschedule Case Study appointments will be evaluated on the same grounds as excused absences and the 24 hr minimum notice for meeting scheduling policy. Please communicate about this by email as soon as possible.

Academic integrity: In all academic work, the ideas and contributions of others (including generative artificial intelligence) must be appropriately acknowledged and work that is presented as original must be, in fact, original. You should familiarize yourself with the appropriate academic integrity policies of your academic program(s).

Our learning and scholarship are deeply indebted to others. Academic integrity is the skill and habit of recognizing this. It goes beyond avoiding plagiarism to include expressing gratitude, showing that you are a generous participant in a conversation, allowing others to retrace your footsteps, and performing many other functions. To help you cultivate this skill, academic work in this class is subject to particular norms and expectations. First, we will adhere to the university's full academic integrity policy:

<https://wustl.edu/about/compliance-policies/academic-policies/undergraduate-student-academic-integrity-policy/>

If collaboration is explicitly permitted on an assignment, you should list your collaborator's name or student ID numbers as a comment on the Canvas submission if assignments are anonymized. If you are conducting original research, you should provide a full reference list and in-text citations (any style with page numbers for quotations and paraphrasing is fine). If you are using class materials for a non-research assignment, you should provide in-text citations (any

style with page numbers for quotations and paraphrasing is fine), but you do not need to provide a reference list. Feel free to ask questions about this.

Work that does not meet these expectations and/or university standards of academic integrity (including violations of my course policies on artificial intelligence and large language models) will earn 0 points. I will also report it to the Academic Integrity Coordinators in the Office of the Provost.

Artificial Intelligence and Large Language Models:

Artificial intelligence (AI) tools including large language models (LLMs) such as ChatGPT must be used judiciously and with care, as (1) their output must be critically evaluated and interpreted; (2) using them can undermine the goals of an activity or an assignment; (3) they have a substantial environmental impact, among other harms.¹ **If I do not explicitly approve the use of AI/LLMs for a class activity or assignment, I will consider it a violation of academic integrity and a breach of trust. You may not upload any course materials to a LLM.** If I approve the use of LLMs for a specific assignment, I expect you to cite them. I will not use TurnItIn functionality. Feel free to ask questions about this.

Unauthorized recording and distribution of classroom activities & materials:

The following applies to all students in my class: “Except as otherwise expressly authorized by the instructor or the university, students may not record, stream, reproduce, display, publish or further distribute any classroom activities or course materials. This includes lectures, class discussions, advising meetings, office hours, assessments, problems, answers, presentations, slides, screenshots or other materials presented as part of the course. If a student with a disability wishes to request the use of assistive technology as a reasonable accommodation, the student must first contact the Office of Disability Resources to seek approval. If recording is permitted, unauthorized use or distribution of recordings is also prohibited.”

Disability Resources (DR):

WashU supports the right of all enrolled students to an equitable educational opportunity and strives to create an inclusive learning environment. In the event a physical or online environment, learning activity, or learning interaction results in barriers to your inclusion due to a disability, please contact WashU’s Disability Resources (DR) to engage in a process for determining and communicating approved accommodations. As soon as possible after receiving an accommodation from DR, send me your WashU Accommodation Letter. Because accommodations are not applied retroactively, initiate your request to DR prior to, or at the beginning of, the academic term to avoid delays in accessing accommodations once classes begin. <https://disability.washu.edu/>

¹ Crawford, K. (2024). *Generative AI’s Environmental Costs Are Soaring—and Mostly Secret*. *Nature*, 20 February, 2024.

Sexual Harassment and assault:

If you are a victim of sexual discrimination, harassment or violence, we encourage you to speak with someone as soon as possible. Understand that if you choose to speak to me as an instructor, I must report your disclosure to my department chair, dean, or the Gender Equity and Title IX Compliance Officer, which may trigger an investigation into the incident. You may also reach out to the [Relationship & Sexual Violence Prevention \(RSVP\) Center](#) to discuss your rights and your options with individuals who are not mandatory reporters.

<https://titleix.wustl.edu/students/confidentiality-resources-support/>

Religious holidays:

To ensure that accommodations may be made for students who miss class, assignments, or exams to observe a religious holiday, you must inform me in writing before the end of the third week of class, or as soon as possible if the holiday occurs during the first three weeks of the semester. For more information, please see the university's [Religious Holiday Class Absence Policy](#).

Emergency Preparedness:

Before an emergency affects our class, students can take steps to be prepared by downloading the WashU SAFE App. In addition, each classroom contains a “Quick Guide for Emergencies” near the door.

Resources for Students:

WashU provides a wealth of support services that address academic, personal, and professional needs. To start exploring resources that can help you along the way, please visit: [Resources for Students](#).

No part of this course is more important than your health, broadly construed. If the course is distracting you from your health or vice-versa, please contact me so that we can make it work better. There are many other wonderful people at the university and in our broader St. Louis community who can also help with specific aspects of your mental and physical health. Some of them are:

1. Habif Health and Wellness Center:
<https://students.wustl.edu/habif-health-wellness-center/>
2. Center for Counseling and Psychological Services:
<https://students.wustl.edu/counseling-psychological-services/>
3. Center for Diversity and Inclusion Community Resource Guide:
<https://students.wustl.edu/community-resources/>

You may also find the following academic resources useful:

Kareem Khalifa's "How to Read Philosophically":

<http://community.middlebury.edu/~kkhalifa/Teaching/Guides/how-to-read.pdf>

The Chicago Manual of Style:

<https://www.chicagomanualofstyle.org/home.html>

Required Texts, Materials, and Supplies:

Instead of using a textbook, I will write a **primer** for some weeks where our readings require substantial introduction. You should read the primer before you start the other readings for each week. This and all required materials for the course will be available on Canvas. You do not need to buy any books. Some course materials are podcasts. If you need transcripts for the podcasts, please let me know early on in the course so I can arrange this.

Use of Gender-Inclusive and Non-Sexist Language:

In this course, we will use words in a way that affirm and respect how others describe, express, and experience their gender. One way to do this is to use non-sexist language in our writing. Using gender affirming and non-sexist language acknowledges people of any gender (e.g. humankind vs. mankind; first-year vs. freshman). We will also use non-sexist language in our interactions with and about one another. For instance, we will use students' (and instructors') preferred pronouns and names and we will update our use if these change over time.

Communication:

Please come to student hours and make appointments to meet outside of class! I genuinely like meeting with students and hope to continue conversations outside class time. You can stop by even if you have nothing in particular you'd like to talk about. If you need to schedule a meeting outside office hours due to a schedule conflict, please use Calendly, and be aware that **you can't book a meeting with me less than 24 hours in advance.**

Email and Canvas announcements will be our primary forms of professional communication. A respectable email has a subject line (ex: PHIL 3001 homework question), a salutation (ex: Dear Professor DiMarco), and a signoff (ex: Sincerely,/Best,/Cheers,). I expect your emails to include these components, and **I may not reply if they don't.** You should check to see if you could figure something out by yourself (by checking the syllabus or Canvas) or asking a question in a class meeting before sending an email. If you're emailing to request a meeting outside of my Calendly availability, include your availability with specific dates and times for the proposed meeting. If you're emailing with a time-sensitive request, specify the timeline. Please sign up to receive Canvas announcements via email. We will do our best to reply to student emails within 48 hours during the work week. **I do not answer student emails outside working hours or on the weekend.** You are responsible for knowing about the things that I send you by email, even if you use email forwarding.

Showing up: I am excited about this class because the material is important. I have high expectations for your individual work and for your contributions to our class community. We should expect each other to show up for class in several ways: preparing academically by

completing assignments and readings on time, trying challenging new things, treating sensitive topics with maturity, and asking questions.

Class schedule: This plan is likely to change as we go. When I make changes, I'll announce them in class and on Canvas.

Date	Focus
	Introduction & Community Norms
8/25	Le Guin (1973/1991) "The Ones Who Walk Away from Omelas (Variations on a theme by William James)" <i>Getting to Know PHIL 2060 due 8/26 at midnight</i>
8/27	Primer: Western Ethical Theories, Antitheories, and Principles
9/1	No class due to Labor Day
	Reproduction
9/3	Concepción (2004) "How to Read Philosophy" - read the Appendix Marquis, "Why Abortion Is Immoral" (excerpts)
9/8	Primer: Intuitions, Thought Experiments, and Analogies Thomson (1971) "A Defense of Abortion" <i>Reading Response 1 due 9/9 at midnight</i>
9/10	Roberts (2015), "Reproductive Justice, Not Just Rights" Optional: Kozhimannil, Hassan, and Hardeman (2022), "Abortion Access as a Racial Justice Issue"
9/15	Wilson (2018), "Eugenics Never Went Away" https://aeon.co/essays/eugenics-today-where-eugenic-sterilisation-continues-now Eugenics Archive eugenicsarchives.ca <i>Reading Response 2 due 9/16 at midnight</i>
9/17	Lovett (2022), "Eugenic housing: Redlining, reproductive regulation, and suburban development in the United States"

9/22	Roberts (2009) "Race, Gender, and Genetic Technologies: A New Reproductive Dystopia?" <i>Reading Response 3 due 9/23 at midnight</i>
9/24	Optional: BioUnethical podcast, Jeff McMahan: On the ethics of choosing our children's genes https://www.biounethical.com/episodes/episode/7e9ed558/15-jeff-mcmahan-on-the-ethics-of-choosing-our-childrens-genes McMahan (2006 "Is Prenatal Genetic Screening Unjustly Discriminatory?" https://journalofethics.ama-assn.org/article/prenatal-genetic-screening-unjustly-discriminatory/2006-01
9/29	Barnes (2014) "Valuing Disability, Causing Disability" <i>Reading Response 4 due 9/30 at midnight</i>
10/1	Murphy (2008) "Is it wrong to select a deaf embryo?" http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/health/7287508.stm DVP Interview: Christina Mills and Eli Gelardin (Part 2) https://disabilityvisibilityproject.com/2017/01/07/dvp-interview-christina-mills-and-eli-gelardin-2/ <i>Reading Response 5 due 10/7 at midnight</i>
	Decision-making and decision-makers
10/6	No class due to Fall Break
10/8	Beauchamp (2011) "Informed Consent: Its History, Meaning, and Present Challenges"
10/13	Liang and Lin, (2005) "Bouvia v. Superior Court: Quality of Life Matters" (excerpts) <i>Reading Response 6 due 10/14 at midnight</i>
10/15	Brudney (2018) "The Different Moral Bases of Patient and Surrogate Decision-Making" Lindemann (2018) "The Intimate Responsibility of Surrogate Decision-Making" (very short)
10/20	Aviv (2018) "What Does it Mean to Die?" read or listen to the short story here: https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2018/02/05/what-does-it-mean-to-die

10/22	Stahl and Emanuel (2017), “Physicians, Not Conscripts — Conscientious Objection in Health Care” Little and Lyerly (2013), “The Limits of Conscientious Refusal: A Duty to Ensure Access”
10/27	Fink (2025), “Noah is Still Here” (read or listen) https://www.nytimes.com/2025/07/31/magazine/trisomy-18-edwards-syndrome-baby-treatment-care.html https://open.spotify.com/episode/2QADeDDLvNphUCyFiNuJal?si=fc8b25c3b64a40fa
10/29	Berlinger and Reiheld (2025), “Ethics at the Hinge: health-care organizations and family caregivers during discharge planning” <i>Schedule your Case Study 1 by 10/31 for the week of 11/3</i>
11/3	Blum (2003), “‘You Gotta Be Crazy!’ Tales of My Practice in Rural Maine” BioUnethical podcast: Bryan Carmody: Are Doctor Shortages Real? https://www.biounethical.com/episodes/episode/7a963e43/21-bryan-carmody-are-doctor-shortages-real <i>Case studies by appointment taking place throughout this week outside class time</i>
	Health (in)justice
11/5	BioUnethical podcast: Govind Persad, How (not) to Allocate Resources During a Pandemic https://www.biounethical.com/episodes/episode/7b43e707/2-govind-persad-how-not-to-allocate-resources-during-a-pandemic Emanuel (2020) “Fair Allocation of Medical Resources in the Time of Covid-19”
11/10	Russ and Wirpsa (2024), “Should an Incarcerated Patient Get an Advanced Heart Therapy?” https://www.thehastingscenter.org/should-an-incarcerated-patient-get-an-advanced-heart-therapy/ Cabey, Strand, and Simonssen, (2024) “Breaking Boundaries: Reframing Clinical Ethics Discussions of Health Care for Incarcerated Patients” https://www.thehastingscenter.org/breaking-boundaries-reframing-clinical-ethics-discussions-of-health-care-for-incarcerated-patients/
11/12	Valles (2020), “The Predictable Inequities of COVID-19 in the US: Fundamental Causes and Broken Institutions”

	Optional: Chowkwanyun (2022), "What Is a "Racial Health Disparity"? Five Analytic Traditions"
11/17	Primer: Epistemic Injustice and Oppression Paul Crichton, Havi Carel, Ian James Kidd (2018), "Epistemic injustice in psychiatry"
11/19	Bioethics in the Margins podcast (2022), "Pain Talk: Beyond Epistemic Injustice with Jada Wiggleton-Little" https://open.spotify.com/episode/44hl7l28ngcRj8JtwSv142
11/24	Grasswick (2018), "Understanding Epistemic Trust Injustices and Their Harms" Yuko (2021), "Why are Black Communities Being Singled Out as Vaccine Hesitant?" https://www.rollingstone.com/culture/culture-features/covid-19-vaccine-hesitant-black-communities-singled-out-1137750/
11/26	No class due to Thanksgiving Break
12/1	Pallok and Ansell (2022), "Should Clinicians Be Activists?" Optional: Author Interview: "Should Clinicians Be Activists?" (~5 mins): https://journalofethics.ama-assn.org/podcast/author-interview-should-clinicians-be-activists
12/3	Summary and concluding reflections Cherry (2020), "Solidarity Care: How to Take Care of Each Other in times of Struggle" <i>Schedule your Case Study 2 by 12/4 for after the reading period has ended.</i> <i>Case Studies will be administered by appointment throughout the exam period.</i> <i>There is no in-person "final exam" scheduled for this course. Case studies will be in-person, by appointment.</i>

