

Philosophy 322: MEDICAL ETHICS
Spring 2018
Syllabus

Professor: Dr. Leigh M. Johnson

Email: leigh.johnson@cbu.edu

Office: Barry 226

Office Hours: MWF 11-12 and 2-4

Course Description:

French philosopher Albert Camus opened his famous text *The Myth of Sisyphus* with the following: “There is but one truly serious philosophical problem, and that is suicide. Judging whether life is or is not worth living amounts to answering the fundamental question of philosophy. All the rest... comes afterwards.” Today, as medical science and technology has advanced to levels practically unimaginable only a half-century ago, we find that the moral, political and economic ramifications of our decisions about medical care are as central as the strictly scientific ones. Most of will be forced at some point in our lifetimes, by choice or necessity, to subordinate the question “*is life worth living?*” to other equally-pressing questions: *At what cost (moral, political, or economic) is life worth living? What principles might be compromised or sacrificed in choosing life? When does “life” begin? When does it (or should it) end? Who decides?*

By analyzing the legal, ethical, political and philosophical debates that shape current public discourse on a series of controversial topics, this course will enable students to approach complex biomedical issues with analytical precision, moral concern, and reflective judgment. This will involve carefully attending to a range of theoretical positions in dialogue with concrete situations and particular contexts. The sorts of concerns raised in the study of medical ethics are at the heart of our social contract; they weigh heavily not only upon how we consider our own lives and bodies, but also the kind of consideration we extend to the lives and bodies of our family and fellow citizens. This course is an essential part of developing the philosophical skills to analyze and to evaluate conflicting positions on complex moral issues. In this class, we are not merely interested in what certain people believe, but also, and more to the point, whether the reasons they give for their beliefs are rational, philosophically coherent and politically defensible ones

Required Text:

L. Vaughn, Ed., *Biomedical Ethics: Principles, Issues and Cases* (2nd Edition)

Course Requirements:

- | | |
|----------------------------|--------------------------|
| 1. Participation | 100pts |
| 2. Quizzes: | 600pts (6 x 100pts each) |
| 3. Documentary Film Essays | 100pts (2 x 50pts each) |
| 4. Precis/ Presentations: | 200pts (2 x 100pts each) |

Grading Scale:

A = 900-1000pts B = 800-899pts C = 700-799pts
D = 600-699pts F = <600pts

Accessibility:

I will make reasonable and appropriate accommodations for any student with a documented disability. If you have a (visible or invisible) disability that you anticipate interfering with your performance in this course, please consult the CBU Office of Disability Services to obtain a letter of documentation and present that to me as early in the semester as possible.

Attendance Policy:

Students are expected to attend class every day, to complete all assigned readings *before* class, and to participate in class discussions regularly. The learning objectives for this course cannot be achieved with excessive absences, so students should read this attendance policy carefully and be sure they are capable of satisfying it. Attendance will be taken at the beginning of each class period and students must answer the roll-call in order to be counted present for the day.

- **Tardiness:** Students who arrive late to class will be counted as absent, and I will not adjust the roll at the end of class for tardy students.
- **Penalty for absences:** Students who miss more than 5 class periods will have their final grade deducted by 50pts for each absence after the fifth.
- **“FA” (Failure due to absences):** It is the policy of Christian Brothers University that no student can pass a course in which s/he has been absent for 20% of the class meetings. Consequently, students who miss more than 8 classes will automatically fail this course. On the ninth absence, a grade of FA will be entered into BannerWeb.
- **Excused/Unexcused Absences:** Students who have commitments that will require them to miss class (athletics, extracurricular activities, family obligations, etc.) should keep in mind that **there is no difference between “excused” and “unexcused” absences** in this course. If you are not in class, my default assumption will be that you have a legitimate and unavoidable reason for your absence. (It is not necessary to notify me in advance of your absences or to email me an excuse for them. Please resist the temptation to do so.) The penalties for 6+ absences apply to everyone the same way, so students who know that their extracurricular commitments will take up some of their absences are strongly encouraged to plan ahead.
- **Responsibility for “missed” classes:** Students are solely and completely responsible for everything they miss in class because of absences. If you must be absent, you should contact one of your classmates to acquire lecture notes or find out about announcements/assignments. You should **never**, under any circumstances, ask your Professor to “let you know what you missed.”

Students are responsible for keeping up with their own absences. Everything outlined in the Attendance Policy above is non-negotiable.

Explanation of Course Requirements:

Participation:

Attendance and participation in this course are requirements, not accomplishments. Students are expected to be in class and prepared every day. You will be required to express your philosophical ideas verbally in the class itself as a demonstration of your preparation, learning, and development. If you tend to be quiet or shy in the classroom, this will be your chance to work on developing the skills of self-expression in public. If you tend to be especially vocal in the classroom, this will be your chance to work on self-editing and learning to share the floor with others. Only students who contribute regularly and productively will receive full participation credit. In order to receive an “A” for participation, a student will need to have:

1. offered contributions that are insightful, provocative and thoughtful
2. demonstrated thorough preparedness with regard to the readings
3. treated other students with respect in conversation, fairly considering counter-arguments and thoughtfully/accurately representing others’ ideas
4. spoken directly to his or her peers in class discussions, and not only to the professor
5. demonstrated an awareness of the dynamic of the conversation as a whole

Students should note that irregular participation, even if accompanied by regular attendance, will not merit an above-average participation grade. The same is true of regular participation accompanied by irregular attendance.

Quizzes:

Students will be tested on the textbook material in six separate quizzes that will be completed via Moodle. Each quiz will cover two chapters worth of material. Quizzes will consist of part multiple choice questions, part T/F questions, and one essay question. The multiple choice and T/F questions will be worth 2pts each, and the essay question will be worth 20pts. Each quiz is worth a maximum of 100pts.

There will be a 90 minute time-limit for each quiz. Students are encouraged to be aware of the time while taking the quiz and make sure to leave themselves enough time to sufficiently answer the essay question at the end. **Essays must be at least two full paragraphs long.** (If you tend to be a slow test-taker, a good strategy is to *answer the essay question first*, since it is worth the most points.) Any questions that are left unanswered will receive zero points. Only one “attempt” is allowed for each quiz.

Documentary Film Essays:

We will be screening two documentary films in class this semester. Students will be responsible for writing a short (min. 800 word) essay on both films in response to a series of questions provided on Moodle. Each essay is worth up to 50 points. The first essay (*League of Denial*) is

due before midnight on **March 13**. The second essay (*Sicko*) will be due before midnight on **April 1**.

Précis /Presentation:

Each student will be responsible for working with a classmate to write a précis and present their material to the class during the semester. A *précis* is a clear, compact summary of material (text, lecture, discussion, etc.) intended to capture the essential or important ideas of the original. Ideally, the précis will set the tone and generally draw the guidelines for that day's discussion. Each précis will have three parts, and must include the following:

1. **A brief review of the previous class session:** What were the primary topics of discussion? What interesting questions were raised? What conclusions, if any, were reached?
2. **A synopsis of the reading material for that class session:** What are the main arguments of each essay? What are the significant terms/concepts? What, if any, objections can be raised to the authors' arguments or positions? How do these essays relate to material covered previously?
3. **A few questions designed to initiate and guide the subsequent discussion:** Think of these questions as "provocations." Don't ask factual questions. Be prepared to offer a possible answer to your own questions in order to spark discussion.

The primary function of the précis is to provide your classmates with a record of the material we are covering throughout the semester. You should think of your précis as a *thorough* summation of the "readings" at the end of each chapter, and there should be *no less than one paragraph* dedicated to each essay or case study. (NOTE: Most, if not all, of the essays will require more than one paragraph to properly summarize. Do not skimp!) You should think of your presentation as a "prep session" for that chapter's upcoming quiz, which means that you should be prepared to lead a thoughtful, critical, and interesting discussion of the material. (Do not simply read your précis to the class. Everyone already has a copy!) It is up to the students who are presenting to decide how to divide their work in any given week.

Précis must be submitted online through the Moodle "News Forum" ***at least 12 hours before class begins***. (That means no later than midnight on the night before your assigned presentation date!) Students who do not distribute their précis on time or who are absent on their presentation date will receive zero credit for the assignment.

Please consult the PRECIS SCHEDULE on Moodle to see your assigned week.

Dr. J's Rules

1. Read more. Write more. Think more. Be more. Adopt this rule as a mantra for your college life and, I promise, you will reap the benefits of doing so. I will remind you of this by saying it aloud at the end of each class, not only as a reminder, but also as an indication that class is finished for the day. Under no circumstances should you turn off your attention or begin packing up your stuff until you hear me say Rule #1.

2. Class Preparation: Never, ever, come to class without your book (or other relevant reading), note-taking materials, and enthusiasm for learning.

3. Technology in the Classroom: Technological devices like cellphones, laptops, smart pads, etc. are a part of the reality of our lives both inside and outside the classroom now, and we all need to learn how to integrate the use of them into our lives in productive and non-distracting ways. I will not “ban” tech devices (except earbuds, which are absolutely not allowed) in the classroom. However, any student distracted by such technologies will be (politely but firmly) asked to leave the classroom and will be marked absent for that day. Students wishing to use their laptop to take notes will be required to sit in the FRONT ROW of class.

4. Deadlines: LATE WORK WILL NOT BE ACCEPTED. Only in a case involving *unusual* and *documented* circumstances can the student be given a one-week extension on deadlines. I will employ the strictest possible definitions of “unusual” and “documented,” so be forewarned that it is *exceedingly difficult* (read: *almost impossible*) to warrant an extension. Being sick, although documentable, is not unusual and will not merit an extension. Being abducted by aliens, although unusual, is not documentable and also will not merit an extension. In other words, consider deadlines in this course as “hard” deadlines.

5. Honor Code: This class will operate on an Honor Code, which students are required to sign and turn in before the end of the first week of class. (The Honor Code is available for download on Moodle.) Students are reminded that inside this class, as well as outside of this class, they bear the responsibility of minding their pledge to act honorably and uphold the basic principles of academic integrity. All work turned in for this course will be considered “pledged” work. Please familiarize yourself with the standard protocols for citation, and be sure to double-check all of your work to make certain that you have not adopted or reproduced the ideas, words or statements of another person without appropriate acknowledgement

6. Trigger Warning: This course, like many philosophy courses, will include discussions of issues about which many people have strong personal views. Additionally, **this course will involve viewing films with content that some students may find disturbing, upsetting, or offensive.** Students are encouraged to speak openly and honestly, even if they feel that their views are unorthodox or unpopular. Passionate, even heated, philosophical discussions can be healthy educational experiences and are excellent opportunities to refine one’s own thinking and values. However, students are also required to treat their fellow classmates, especially those with whom they disagree, with respect. We will insist upon professional decorum and mutual consideration from everyone at all times. There are no exceptions to this rule.

7. **Extra Credit:** On occasion, there will be opportunities to attend our-of-class lectures, films, or other events for extra credit. Students should be aware that these opportunities cannot be used to “replace” a grade for required work that you failed to complete (or failed to complete on time). All opportunities for extra credit will be available to everyone and announced in class, so students should not ask for special extra credit opportunities.

8. **Email:** Students should make an appointment to speak with me whenever they have questions about the course. If for some reason you are unable to come to office hours, or if you have a time-sensitive issue to discuss, your next best option is to speak with me immediately before or after class. Keep in mind that, for most of the semester, you will see me within the next 48 hours, so EMAIL SHOULD BE USED ONLY AS A *LAST* OPTION. Email is absolutely not the medium for negotiating special requests or addressing grade concerns, both of which are issues that must be handled in person. Please regard email correspondence as formal communication and abide by conventional rules of professional etiquette when you are composing your email. I will make every effort to respond to emails promptly, but at no point should students expect emails to be answered in less than 24 hours. I will not reply to emails that do not include *all* of the following:

- **a formal salutation:** For example, “Dear Dr. J,”
- **a clear indication of who you are:** For example, “My name is Abraham Lincoln and I am in your 10am PHIL322 class.”
- **a detailed and specific question:** If I cannot answer your email in 3 sentences or less, then you are writing about something that requires an in-person meeting.
- **an indication of what you have already done to answer your question:** Under no circumstances should you email a question to your professor that can be answered by consulting your syllabus, or one of your classmates, or Moodle, or the CBU student handbook, or (in many cases) Google.
- **a valediction and your name:** For example, “Sincerely, Abraham Lincoln”

Before sending an email to your professor: wait one hour, reread it, consult a classmate, and then think *very hard* about whether or not emailing is necessary. It probably isn’t.

9. **Grades:** The work that you do and the learning that you accomplish in this course are more important than your grade. I am aware that grades are important to you, but if you come speak to me about your performance in the class, expect that our conversation will be about how to improve your work or your understanding of the material, and not about how to improve your grade.

10. **Adulting:** I will in every instance treat students like the rational, capable, and responsible adults they are. Correspondingly, students are expected to conduct themselves as rational, capable, and responsible adults. If you feel like you are in “trouble” in this course at any time—whether that regards matters related to assignments, exams, or your comprehension of the material—please come speak to me sooner rather than later. We are not antagonists in this venture. I want everyone to do well, I believe everyone can do well, and I will make every reasonable effort to ensure that you *do* do well.

Schedule of Classes

INTRODUCTION TO MEDICAL ETHICS

- JAN 8 Introduction and Syllabus
JAN 10 Opening Symposium: What constitutes the “good life”?
JAN 12 Opening Symposium: How we live / How we die

MORAL REASONING IN BIOETHICS

- JAN 15 MLK HOLIDAY – NO CLASS
JAN 17 Vaughn, Chapter 1
JAN 19 Vaughn, Chapter 1

BIOETHICS AND MORAL THEORIES

- JAN 22 Vaughn, Chapter 2
JAN 24 Vaughn, Chapter 2
JAN 26 Chapter 2 Precis/Presentation

PATERNALISM AND PATIENT AUTONOMY

- JAN 29 Vaughn, Chapter 3
JAN 31 Vaughn, Chapter 3
FEB 2 Chapter 3 Precis/Presentation

TRUTH-TELLING AND CONFIDENTIALITY

- FEB 5 Vaughn, Chapter 4
FEB 7 Vaughn, Chapter 4
FEB 9 Chapter 4 Precis/Presentation

INFORMED CONSENT

- FEB 12 Vaughn, Chapter 5
FEB 14 Vaughn, Chapter 5
FEB 16 Chapter 5 Precis/Presentation

HUMAN RESEARCH

- FEB 19 Vaughn, Chapter 6
FEB 21 Vaughn, Chapter 6
FEB 23 Chapter 6 Precis/Presentation

DOCUMENTARY FILM: *LEAGUE OF DENIAL*

- FEB 26 *League of Denial: The NFL's Concussion Crisis*
FEB 28 *League of Denial: The NFL's Concussion Crisis*

MAR 2 Discussion: *League of Denial: The NFL's Concussion Crisis*

MAR 5-9 SPRING BREAK

ABORTION

MAR 12 Vaughn, Chapter 7
MAR 14 Vaughn, Chapter 7
MAR 16 Chapter 7 Precis/Presentation

REPRODUCTIVE TECHNOLOGY

MAR 19 Vaughn, Chapter 8
MAR 21 Vaughn, Chapter 8
MAR 23 Chapter 8 Precis/Presentation

GENETIC CHOICES

MAR 26 Vaughn, Chapter 9
MAR 28 Chapter 9 Precis/Presentation
MAR 30 NO CLASS – EASTER BREAK

EUTHANASIA AND PHYSICIAN-ASSISTED SUICIDE

APR 2 NO CLASS – EASTER BREAK
APR 4 Vaughn, Chapter 10
APR 6 Chapter 10 Precis/Presentation

DIVIDING UP HEALTH-CARE RESOURCES

APR 9 Vaughn, Chapter 11
APR 11 Vaughn, Chapter 11
APR 13 Chapter 11 Precis/Presentation

DOCUMENTARY FILM: *SICKO*

APR 16 *Sicko*
APR 18 *Sicko*
APR 20 Discussion: *Sicko*

END OF LIFE ISSUES

APR 23 The Expense of Death
APR 25 Advanced Directives
APR 27 Discussion: End of Life Issues

APR 30 Final Symposium