

**Bioethics**  
**PHIL 165 – Summer II 2015**  
**Class M, T, W, Th, F, 8-9:30am in Caldwell 213**

Larisa Svirsky

Email: [svirsky@live.unc.edu](mailto:svirsky@live.unc.edu)

Office: Caldwell 210D

Office Hours: Tuesdays and Fridays 9:30-10:30am or by appointment

**Course description:**

In this class, we will explore ethical questions that arise in the context of science, medicine, and health care. Some central themes we will consider are autonomy and informed consent, what justice requires in terms of access to health care, and the norms that health care providers should follow with respect to their patients. We will consider these questions through theoretical lenses at times, but our focus will always be on the practical import of the ethical claims we are considering. No prior experience with ethical theory is expected or required.

**Course requirements:**

- |  |     |
|--|-----|
| 1) Ten blogs on the course readings on Sakai | 10% |
| 2) Three 4-6 page papers                     | 60% |
| 3) Final Exam                                | 20% |
| 4) Participation                             | 10% |

**Course Website:**

This course will have a Sakai site on which I will post the **syllabus, readings and course assignments**. All students enrolled in the course should have access to the Sakai site, but if you have any difficulty with this, please let me know.

The Sakai site will also have **blogs**. You must post a total of 10 blog posts throughout the course of the semester. These posts will be due by the Monday, Wednesday, and Friday class meetings of each week. For example, a post about the reading for Monday June 29th's class meeting would be due by the 29th at 8am. There are twelve M, W, F class meetings (aside from the first meeting, and taking into account the July 3rd holiday), which means that you are permitted to skip two (and ONLY two) blogs and still receive full credit for that part of the course. No late blogs will be accepted for credit.

Additionally, the Sakai site will also have a **forum**, where you should feel free to post any questions you have about the reading or any issues related to the course that you'd like to discuss with your fellow students. These forum posts will count as a form of participation in the course, and I will reply to them regularly, time permitting.

**Course Assignments:**

Blog posts: The requirements for the blog posts on Sakai are as described above. In terms of content and length, the blog posts should be no more than 200 words (and can be less), and should respond to that week's assigned reading, including a question, a criticism, and something you liked about the reading.

Three papers: I will drop the lowest grade of the three. This means that your two best papers will be worth 30% each. Papers will be 4-6 pages each, and I will give you details about the topics as well as guidelines for writing philosophy papers as the deadlines approach.

Participation: One earns a high participation grade in this course by attending class regularly, carefully preparing thoughts on the readings, and speaking in class and/or posting on the Sakai forums. Reading philosophy can be quite difficult, especially if you haven't done much of it before. I recommend taking notes and reading the required texts multiple times.

**Electronics policy:**

Please bring all assigned readings to class in a non-electronic form and turn off all electronics during class. Laptops, etc. will not be allowed for use in the classroom unless you have accommodations that require them, for which you must provide documentation.

**Grading:**

I will grade all assignments from this course (aside from the blog posts) blind. What this means is that **you should not include your name anywhere on your course assignments, but rather include your PID as identifying information.** Grading blind is one way of correcting against certain kinds of bias to help ensure that every student is graded fairly. In addition, I will set out clear expectations for the papers and exams in class. If you have any questions about these policies, please feel free to ask me about them.

**Late work policy:**

**If you need an extension on a paper, you must contact me with at least one day's notice and a medical or comparable excuse (barring very unusual circumstances).**

**Otherwise, late work will be graded down a third of a letter grade for each full day that it is late.** In other words, if a paper were due on Monday, you would need to email me by Sunday to receive an extension if one is appropriate. If you didn't contact me or an extension is not appropriate given your circumstances, handing in the paper on Tuesday would bring an A paper down to an A-, etc.

**Accommodations:**

**Any student with a disability or special learning requirement impacting his or her participation in the course should discuss this with me in the first week of class so that reasonable accommodations may be made.** An example of a special need would be larger font for handouts.

**Honor Code:**

**The honor code is in effect in this and all other classes at UNC.** You are responsible for complying with this code and therefore also for learning its content and for clarifying any questions you may have regarding this content or applicability.

The code is available online here: <https://studentconduct.unc.edu/sites/studentconduct.unc.edu/files/documents/Instrument.pdf>

## **Reading assignments and guidelines for class discussion:**

*Autonomy and Trust in Bioethics* by Onora O'Neill is the only text you will need of purchase for this course. All other course readings are available on Sakai.

When discussing readings in class, we will begin by clarifying and charitably interpreting what the author is saying before discussing outgrowths or possible criticisms of the views or arguments we are considering.

In classroom discussions, it is vital that you be respectful of your peers. This means listening to your classmates when they're speaking, not making derogatory or offensive comments, and providing supportive feedback to your classmates.

### **Course Assignments:**

#### **Week 1:**

M, June 22 - Course introduction

Arguments - Validity and soundness (handout on Sakai)

T, June 23 - Background

Brief in-class overview of moral philosophy O'Neill, O. *Autonomy and Trust in Bioethics* ch. 1

W, Th, F, June 24 - 26 - Informed consent

O'Neill, O. *Autonomy and Trust in Bioethics* ch. 7

Wikler, D. "Persuasion and Coercion for Health: Ethical Issues in

Government Efforts to Change Lifestyles," *Milbank Quarterly* 56(3), 1978 306-317

#### **Week 2:**

M. June 29 - Sports performance enhancement

Savulescu, J. et. al. "Why should we allow performance enhancing drugs in sport." *Sports Med* 2004.

Optional: Watch "We Should Accept Performance-Enhancing Drugs in Competitive Sports: A Debate" - <http://digital.films.com.libproxy.lib.unc.edu/PortalViewVideo.aspx?xtid=58289>

T, W, June 30 & July 1 - Reproductive ethics

Purdy, L. "Genetics and Reproductive Risk: Can Having Children Be Immoral?" Veatch, R.

"Genetics, Birth, and the Biological Revolution," in *Case Studies in Pharmacy Ethics*, pp. 181-198

Th, July 2 - Screening for disability

Spriggs, M. "Lesbian couple create a child who is deaf like them." *J Med Ethics* 2002: 28: 283

Levy, N. "Deafness, culture and choice" *Journal of Medical Ethics*, 2002:28: 284-285

#### **First paper due in class on Thursday**

#### **Week 3:**

M, T, W, July 6-8 - Abortion

Marquis, D. "Why Abortion is Immoral."

Tooley, M. "In Defense of Abortion and Infanticide" Thomson, J. J. "A Defense of Abortion"

Th, F, July 9-10 — Medical competence and autonomy

O'Neill, O. *Autonomy and Trust in Bioethics* ch. 2

Dresser, R and Robertson, J. "Quality of Life and Non-Treatment Decisions for Incompetent Patients: A Critique of the Orthodox Approach"

**Week 4:**

M, T, July 13-14 — Medical Paternalism

Buchanan, A. "Medical Paternalism," *Philosophy and Public Affairs* Goldman, A. "The Refutation of Medical Paternalism"

**Second paper due in class on Tuesday**

W, Th, F, July 15-17 — Euthanasia

Rachels, J. "Active and Passive Euthanasia"

Sullivan, T. "Active and Passive Euthanasia: An Impertinent Distinction?" Velleman, J. D. "A Right to Self-Termination?"

**Week 5:**

M, T, July 20-21 — Medical research ethics

Brandt, A. M., "Racism and Research: The Case of the Tuskegee Syphilis Experiment;" Lederer, S. "The Tuskegee Syphilis Study in the Context of American Medical Research"

W, Th, July 22-23 - Inequities in health care access

Gawande, A. , "The Cost Conundrum: What a Texas town can teach us about health care."

Buchanan, A. "Privatization and Just Health Care."

Dorfman, A. & Harel, A. "The Case Against Privatization."

**Third paper due in class on Thursday**

F, July 24 - Reading day/Final exam review

**Final exam T, July 28, 8-11am**