

**PHILOSOPHY 321  
MEDICAL ETHICS**

**BULLETIN INFORMATION**

PHIL 321: Medical Ethics (3 credit hours)

**Course Description:**

The concepts of person and justice as they relate to biomedical sciences and technologies.

**SAMPLE COURSE OVERVIEW**

The clinical and research contexts of medicine require a search for answers to questions such as ‘What values and norms should structure the doctor-patient relationship and decisions to treat, or refuse treatment?’ and ‘How does the concept of the person play a role in important issues of medical morality?’ and ‘What considerations of justice must be brought to bear on issues at the beginning and end of life and in the broader context of health care?’ In this course, we will examine those and related questions. Students will be expected to demonstrate an ability to address them in a reasoned and informed manner, and detailed in the list of assignments.

**ITEMIZED LEARNING OUTCOMES**

**Upon successful completion of Philosophy 321, students will be able to:**

1. Identify the sources and functions of values in the clinical and research context of medicine;
2. Demonstrate an understanding of the importance of values and ethics for doctors, patients, and researchers in contemporary society;
3. Demonstrate ability to reflect on how personal values shape personal and community ethics and decision making in the clinical and research contexts;
4. Demonstrate ability to reflect on how the concepts of the person and justice play a role in moral reflection at the beginning and end of life;
5. Demonstrate ability to reflect on the wider context of justice in contemporary society as it bears on issues of public health.

**SAMPLE REQUIRED TEXTS/SUGGESTED READINGS/MATERIALS**

1. Ramsey, P. *The Patient as Person*, Yale University Press.
2. DeGrazia, D. *Human Identity and Bioethics*, Cambridge University Press.
3. President’s Council on Bioethics, *Monitoring Stem Cell Research*.
4. Parens, E. *Enhancing Human Traits*, Georgetown University Press.
5. Caplan, A. ed. *The Case of Terri Schiavo*, Prometheus Books.
6. Anand, S. ed. *Public Health, Ethics, and Equity*, Oxford University Press.
7. Course Pack (CP)
  - a. Kass, L. ‘Regarding the end of medicine and the pursuit of health’

- b. Siegler, M. 'Searching for certainty in medicine: a proposal for a new model of the doctor-patient relationship'
- c. Beauchamp, T. 'Principlism and its alleged competitors'
- d. DeGrazia D. 'Moving forward in bioethical theory: theories, cases, and specified principlism'
- e. Thomson, J.J. 'A defense of abortion'
- f. Perrson, I., and Savulescu, J. 2008. "The Perils of Cognitive Enhancement and the Urgent Imperative to Enhance the Moral Character of Humanity," *Journal of Applied Philosophy* 25: 162-177.
- g. Michael Sandel, The Case Against Perfection, *The New Atlantis*
- h. Harris, J. 2007. *Enhancing Evolution*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press
- i. Snead, C. 'Science, Public bioethics, and the problem of integration'
- j. Daniels, N. 'Health-care needs and distributive justice'
- k. Didion, J. 'The Case of Terri Schiavo' *New York Review of Books*
- l. Snead, C. 'The (Surprising) Truth about Schiavo: A defeat for the cause of autonomy'
- m. Grisez, G. 'Health Care technology and justice'
- n. Peikoff, L. 'Heath Care is not a right'

### **SAMPLE ASSIGNMENTS AND/OR EXAMS**

1. **Papers.** Students are required to write 6 short papers (minimum 3, maximum 4 pages), each on a different topic (below).
  - a. Paper one: Identify the values at stake in the doctor-patient relationship. What is the source and function of those values? How does understanding the nature of these values affect one's understanding of what it means to be a doctor? Please draw on either Ramsey, Kass, or Siegler in answering this question.
  - b. Paper two: What values are at stake in medical decision making at the beginning and end of life? How are those different values brought to bear on the question of the morality of abortion or euthanasia? Please draw on Beauchamp or DeGrazia in answering this question.
  - c. Paper three: What values and frameworks for ethical analysis should play a role in public debates about stem cell research? How do personal values relate in this area to public values? Please draw on DeGrazia, Snead, or The President's Council on Bioethics in answering this question.
  - d. Paper four: What values for individuals and societies are at stake in questions about human enhancement? What ethical framework should be brought to bear on the question of whether and what kinds of genetic enhancement should or should not be permitted? Please draw on the essays in Parens, and on the chapters from Harris in answering this question.

- e. Paper five: What role should the idea of justice play in questions about public health, including the question the proper distribution of health care coverage. Please draw on the essays in Anand, and the Grisez essay in answering this question.
  - f. Paper six: What values and frameworks of ethical analysis should be brought to bear on questions surrounding nutrition and hydration and patients in an unresponsive (vegetative) state? How were competing values and frameworks at work in the case of Terri Schiavo? How should that case have been resolved, in your view? Please draw from the documents in Caplan, as well as Snead and Didion.
2. **Quizzes.** Once a week there will be a short quiz to assess student uptake of the value-concepts at work in that week's reading. Quizzes will be short answers and fill in the blank.
  3. **Final Exam.** Students will be required to take a final exam in which they show competence in identifying basic value concepts and their role in a variety of clinical and research issues in medicine; in identifying why these values play the role they do; and in evaluating the implications of holding different values norms and principles in these areas. The exam will consist of short-answer questions and a short essay.

### **SAMPLE COURSE OUTLINE WITH TIMELINE OF TOPICS, READINGS/ASSIGNMENTS, EXAMS/PROJECTS**

- Week 1:** Introduction to PHIL 321  
 What is medical ethics?  
 How should we deliberate about ethical questions in medicine?
- Week 2:** Doctors and Patients: Kass (CP); Ramsey Ch. 1.  
 Competing conceptions of the doctor-patient relationship: what values, norms and principles are at work here?
- Week 3:** Ethical values in medical decision making: Beauchamp (CP) and DeGrazia (CP)  
 What different theoretical approaches explain the source and function of values in the medical-moral context?
- Week 4:** The concept of the person DeGrazia Chs. 2 and 3  
 What concepts of the person underlie medical decision-making?  
 How do different concepts play different roles in moral deliberation?
- Week 5:** Personal identity, narrative, and the end of life: DeGrazia Chs. 4 and 5; Ramsey Ch. 3  
 How do personal and professional values shape choices at the end of life?
- Week 6:** Ethical dilemmas at the beginning of life: DeGrazia Chs 5 and 6; Thomson (CP)  
 How do personal and professional values shape choices at the beginning of life?

What role does the concept of a person play in these choices?

- Week 7:** The problem of stem cell research: Snead; President's Council, Monitoring Stem Cell Research, Chs. 1-3.  
What are the source and function of values underlying scientific research?  
What values are at stake in public deliberation about scientific research?  
What values are specifically at stake in embryonic stem-cell research?
- Week 8:** The ethics of enhancement: Parens, Juengst, and Silvers in Parens; Sandel (CP)  
How do different conceptions of individual well-being affect moral norms and judgments in deliberation about human enhancement?
- Week 9:** The ethics of enhancement (cont.) essays by McKenny, Little, Elliott in Parens; Chapters 1-3 of Harris (CP).  
How do different conceptions of individual well-being affect moral norms and judgments in deliberation about human enhancement? (cont.)
- Week 10:** Justice and health care: Anand part 1.  
How can we understand the value and function of "equity" in health and health care?  
What role does this value play in social deliberation about health care?
- Week 11:**  
Public health: Anand, essays 3, 4, and 5. Grisez (CP)  
What role does and should the concept of justice play in the distribution of health care resources?  
In what way is concern for justice in health care linked to national and global citizenship?  
What are some models that could be adopted for a more just distribution of health care?
- Week 12:**  
The Terri Schiavo case: basic facts and concepts: Caplan 19-54, Didion (CP)  
What competing values, norms, and ethical ideals are at work in understanding the well-being of patients in persistent vegetative states?  
What competing values, norms, and ethical ideals are at work among other players in health care decisions involving patients in pvs states?
- Week 13:**  
The moral controversy: Caplan parts 2 and 3  
How did moral values, norms and ideals play a role in shaping decisions at both the personal and political levels in the controversy over Theresa Schiavo?

**Week 14:**

Autonomy and the Schiavo case: Caplan pp. 180-220; Snead (CP)  
Summary reflections on the role of autonomy as a value in medical decision making, with special attention to its rhetorical and deliberative role in the Schiavo controversy