Topics in Medical Ethics

This course will explore key philosophical issues in the field of medical ethics. Particular topics to be treated include: prominent views of the optimal doctor-patient tie; the allocation of medical resources and considerations of social justice; end-of-life care and euthanasia; procreative freedom and prenatal testing. The goal is for us to reflect carefully on the issues both as individuals and as a group, bringing philosophical rigor to the exploration of assumptions, intuitions, and theories.

Required Readings


3) Additional readings—including, but not limited to, those listed below—will be distributed in class, available electronically, or on reserve in Neilson Library.

Schedule

Unit 1 (Jan. 29-31): Background


b) Introduction, *EIMM*, pp. 1-41

Unit 2 (Feb. 5-12): Approaches to the Doctor-Patient Tie and the Standing of Medicine

a) Ancient Roots of the Debate: selections from Plato’s *Republic* and *Laws* (to be distributed)

b) Overview: *EIMM*, pp. 43-58

c) Autonomy vs. Paternalism: *EIMM*, pp. 60-84

Unit 3 (Feb. 14-28): Resource Allocation and Considerations of Social Justice

a) Overview: *EIMM*, pp. 147-66

b) Is Access to Health Care a Moral Entitlement?
   i) *EIMM*, pp. 174-82


   iii) *EIMM*, pp. 182-92

c) Social Determinants of Health and the Health Care Debate:

   ii) *EIMM*, pp. 222-31

   iii) excerpts from Norman Daniels, *Just Health: Meeting Health Needs Fairly* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008)—book is available electronically through Neilson Library

d) Considerations of Fairness and the Allocation of Particular Treatments: *EIMM*, pp. 233-47, 254-75

e) Personal Responsibility and Health: *EIMM*, pp. 247-53

f) Organ Transplantation and Remuneration:
   i) *EIMM*, pp. 277-87


Unit 4 (Mar. 5-Apr. 4; Spring Break Mar. 16-24): Euthanasia and the Refusal and Withdrawal of Life-sustaining Treatment

a) Definitions of Death:

   ii) *EIMM*, pp. 517-25, 530-34
b) Overview, Euthanasia and Stances toward Life-Sustaining Treatment: *EIMM*, pp. 311-24

c) Incompetence: Anticipations and Realities:
   i) *EIMM*, pp. 355-73


   iv) *EIMM*, 373-90, 398-416

d) Physician-Assisted Suicide:
   i) *EIMM*, pp. 437-61


e) Duty to Die? *EIMM*, pp. 483-501

f) The novel *Still Alice*


a) Abortion: *EIMM*, pp. 510-14, 543-73

b) Overview, Procreative Assistance and Genetics: *EIMM*, pp. 585-91

c) Procreative Assistance: *EIMM*, pp. 631-41, 650-68

d) Prenatal Genetic Testing: *EIMM*, pp. 609-29

**Unit 6 (Ap. 30-May 2): The Experimental Use of Human Subjects**

a) Research involving Children: *EIMM*, pp. 762-5, 781-6

Course Requirements

1) Regular and spirited attendance! It is crucial that everyone come to each class meeting well-prepared to discuss and assess the readings. As the use of laptops and other electronic devices in class can pose a distraction, I would ask that they not be employed. Participation of various forms, including the leading of discussion, will make up 20% of the course grade.

2) In-class presentation (15%). (Date: Depends on when you sign up to give it.)

3) Two 5-page papers, due by noon in the Philosophy Department office (Dewey Hall 106) on Monday, March 4 and Friday, April 5—20% each. Alternatively, you may submit papers via email, but if you do so, be sure that you send them from your Smith account and that you receive email confirmation of receipt from me.

4) One 6-8 page paper, due by noon in the Philosophy Department office (Dewey Hall 106) on Friday, May 10—25%. Alternatively, you may submit papers via email, but if you do so, be sure that you send them from your Smith account and that you receive email confirmation of receipt from me.

Note: Grades on late work (i.e., that turned in at any point after it is due) will be lowered one step (e.g., from A- to B+) each day.