

BIOE 680-001 – Bioethical Theory, Fall 2019

Location: Room 101, 3647 Peel St

Time: Fridays 10:00am – 12:50pm

Instructor: Dr. Phoebe Friesen

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Office Location: Room 302, 3647 Peel St

Office Hours: Fridays, 1pm – 3pm

Course Description:

This course will explore theoretical and methodological questions underlying the discipline of bioethics. It will begin with an examination of moral theories developed within applied philosophy, including principlism, utilitarianism, and human rights approaches, as well as care, virtue, and narrative ethics. Critiques of moral theories from the social sciences and from within philosophy will be presented and considered. This will lead into a meta-ethical exploration of bioethics, where we will contemplate questions regarding the nature and source of morality.

Current methodological disputes within the field, stemming from the complicated link between epistemic and ethical questions, will be explored through a closer look at the ‘empirical turn’ in bioethics and the role of intuitions and thought experiments. This will lead into an investigation of the role of culture and identity in the bioethical enterprise, raising questions related to ethical knowledge in different times and places, the problem of speaking for others, and the link between activism and academia.

Readings:

All required and supplementary readings will be made available on MyCourses.com

Grading Breakdown:

Participation	10%
Reading Responses	25%
Presentations	15%
Abstract Draft and Review	10%
Final Paper	40%

Participation:

A portion of your grade will be based on your participation in class. This grade will reflect the quality, not quantity, of your contributions, as well as whether you abide by our community agreement and treat your fellow students with respect. A key (and rather obvious) point on this: the more you engage with the readings before class, the more interesting our discussions are likely to be.

Reading Responses:

Reading responses are an opportunity to critically engage with the readings before our weekly discussions. They are due at 6pm the day before each class and should be submitted by email.

Each response should consist of less than one page of writing (approximately 300 words). The first half should offer a summary of the position or argument you are interested in engaging with (this can be the thesis of a paper, an argument within a paper, or a point of contention between two papers). The second half should offer an original argument or response to the summary already offered. Finally, each should include one open question related to your response that could be used to guide class discussion.

Responses will be graded on the basis of your understanding and engagement with the readings, clarity of response, and originality of argument. While reading responses are assigned each of the 11 weeks that include readings, only your best 8 scores will count towards your final grade. This means you can skip 3 reading responses without penalty (usually students choose to skip the weeks they are also presenting), or complete them all and have your 3 lowest grades deducted.

Some tips:

- Don't try to include too much – there won't be space to discuss all of the readings, so try to narrow in on one interesting point or connection.
- Engage critically. Avoid merely summarizing the readings.

Presentations:

Each student will be responsible for giving two presentations during the term. Each presentation should be between 5-10 minutes long and should include a brief summary of the relevant reading(s) as well as some critical reflections and discussion questions for the class. A handout should be included (1-2 pages). If you'd like me to print copies for other students, please email the handout to me at least one hour before class.

Some tips:

- Use the handout to summarize key points made by the author(s).
- Some of the readings will be quite long and detailed and so you will be unable to cover everything that the author does – be thoughtful about what you include.
- Try to start with a broad overview (e.g., “this author is arguing that...(insert primary thesis)”), then offer some more detail (e.g., “they do so by providing evidence that...(insert skeleton of argument)”), and then comment on one or two things you think are worth discussing further (e.g., “I found it interesting / problematic that...(insert your thoughts/responses)”).
- Feel free to base your critical reflections and discussion questions on your reading response for the week.

Abstract Draft and Review:

One class will be devoted to peer review of abstract drafts. Each student will be required to submit a draft of an abstract (250 words) the day before this class (due at 6pm) and each student will be responsible for reviewing another's abstract during class. More detail will be given the week before this class.

This can be a great opportunity to:

- Think through the broad strokes of your final paper in advance of writing it (no need to write your paper on the same topic as your abstract though)
- Prepare an abstract to submit to a conference (!)

Final Paper:

The final paper should be roughly 16 - 18 pages (double-spaced) and should be submitted by email by Dec 6th at midnight. The paper can be on any topic you like, provided that is somewhat connected to the topics discussed in class. It should make an argument for a position related to bioethics and should be substantiated by reference to published work within the field. Please discuss your topic with me in advance of beginning writing. I am also happy to provide feedback on paper outlines or drafts before November 26th. If you haven't written this type of paper before, some good advice can be found [here](#). Any reference style, as long as it is consistent, is permitted (the standard style from your field is recommended).

Land Acknowledgement:

McGill University is on land which has long served as a site of meeting and exchange amongst Indigenous peoples, including the Haudenosaunee and Anishinabeg nations. We acknowledge and thank the diverse Indigenous people whose footsteps have marked this territory on which peoples of the world now gather.

Accommodations:

If, at any point in the term, you find yourself not able to fully access the space, content, and experience of this course, you are welcome (and not required) to get in touch with me to discuss the best ways to meet your needs. You are also encouraged to reach out to the [Office for Students with Disabilities](#) (Suite 410, 1010 Sherbrooke Ouest / 514-398-6009). OSD can help you document your needs and create an accommodation plan. This can help ensure that you receive appropriate accommodations without a need to disclose your condition or diagnosis to course instructors.

Language of Assessment:

In accord with the McGill University's Charter of Students' Rights, students in this course have the right to submit in English or French any written work that is to be graded.

Academic Integrity:

All students must understand the meaning and consequences of cheating, plagiarism and other academic offences under the Code of Student Conduct and Disciplinary Procedures. According to the Code, any work that is suspected of being dishonest must be turned over to the disciplinary officer within your faculty. If you are unsure how to properly cite sources, please see me before submitting your work. See McGill's guide to [academic honesty](#) for more information.

Course Evaluations:

Informal feedback and suggestions are welcome at any point during or after the course. You will receive an email notice and invitation to a formal course evaluations at the end of term. I appreciate your honest evaluation and will use the results to improve the course. My department

will use the results to assess my teaching performance. A minimum number of responses must be received for results to be available to students.

Assessment Policy:

The [University Student Assessment Policy](#) exists to ensure fair and equitable academic assessment for all students and to protect students from excessive workloads. All students and instructors are encouraged to review this Policy, which addresses multiple aspects and methods of student assessment, e.g. the timing of evaluation due dates and weighting of final examinations.

Library Liaison:

Genevieve Gore is the bioethics subject area librarian. She can assist with searching/locating bioethics resources for your research. To make an appointment contact Genevieve.Gore@mcgill.ca or 514-398-3472.

Schedule of Readings:

Date	Readings	Due
Sep 6	Introduction	
Sep 13	Moral Theory in Bioethics: Principles, Consequences, and Human Rights <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Tom Beauchamp – Methods and Principles in Bioethics (6 pages) ▪ Ruth Macklin – Can one do good medical ethics without principles? (4 pages) ▪ R. M. Hare – Medical Ethics: Can the Moral Philosopher Help? (Introductory Chapter of <i>Essays in Bioethics</i>) (14 pages) ▪ Julian Savulescu and David Birks – Bioethics: Utilitarianism (7 pages) ▪ Roberto Adorno – Human Dignity and Human Rights as a Common Ground for a Global Bioethics (18 pages) 	Reading Response
Sep 20	Moral Theory in Bioethics: Care, Virtue, and Narrative Ethics <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Virginia Held – Ethics of Care as a Moral Theory (Introductory Chapter of <i>The Ethics of Care: Personal, Political, Global</i>) (20 pages) ▪ Justin Oakley – A Virtue Ethics Approach (14 pages) ▪ Martha Montello – Narrative Ethics (6 pages) ▪ Hilde Lindemann – When Stories Go Wrong (5 pages) 	Reading Response
TBD	Moral Theory in Bioethics: Feminist and Intersectional Approaches <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Margaret Little – Why a Feminist Approach to Bioethics? (11 pages) ▪ Yolonda Wilson et al – Intersectionality in Clinical Medicine: The Need for an Intersectional Approach (12 pages) 	Reading Response

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Catriona Mackenzie – Relational Autonomy, Normative Authority, and Perfectionism (22 pages) 	
Oct 4	<p>Limits of Moral Theory in Bioethics</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Barry Hoffmaster – Can Ethnography Save the Life of Medical Ethics? (11 pages) ▪ Charles Bosk – Professional Ethicist Available: Logical, Secular, Friendly (22 pages) ▪ Susan Sherwin – Foundations, Frameworks, Lenses: The Role of Theories in Bioethics (8 pages) ▪ Richard Ashcroft – The Troubled Relationship Between Bioethics and Human Rights (21 pages) 	Reading Response
Oct 11	<p>The Source of Morality</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Carol Elliot – Where Ethics Comes from and What to Do about It (8 pages) ▪ J. L. Mackie – The Subjectivity of Values (6 pages) ▪ Gilbert Harman – Ethics and Observation (4 pages) ▪ Joshua Greene – From neural ‘is’ to moral ‘ought’: what are the implications of neuroscientific moral psychology? (4 pages) ▪ David Enoch – Why I am an Objectivist about Ethics (And Why You Are, Too) (14 pages) 	Reading Response
Oct 18	<p>Intuitions and Thought Experiments</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ James Rachels – Active and Passive Euthanasia (3 pages) ▪ Judith Jarvis Thomson – A Defense of Abortion (20 pages) ▪ Adrian Walsh – The Use of Thought Experiments in Health Care Ethics (7 pages) ▪ Alberto Giubilini – Don’t Mind the Gap: Intuitions, Emotions, and Reasons in the Enhancement Debate (9 pages) 	Reading Response
TBD	<p>The Empirical Turn in Bioethics</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Jonathan Wolff – Method in Philosophy and Public Policy: Applied philosophy versus engaged philosophy (12 pages) ▪ Adam Hedgecoe – Critical Bioethics: Beyond the Social Science Critique of Applied Ethics (24 pages) ▪ Scott Halpern – Towards Evidence Based Bioethics (3 pages) ▪ Maya Goldenberg – Evidence-based ethics? On evidence-based practice and the “empirical turn” from normative bioethics (9 pages) 	Reading Response
Nov 1	<p>Considerations of Culture</p>	Reading Response

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Renée Fox and Judith Swazey – Medical Morality Is Not Bioethics – Medical Ethics in China and the United States (25 pages) ▪ This American Life – Act 1: What You Don’t Know (from Episode 585: Defense of Ignorance) (27 minutes) ▪ Gilbert Harman – Moral Relativism Explained (14 pages) ▪ James Rachels – The Challenge of Cultural Relativism (12 pages) 	
Nov 8	<p>Situated Knowledges</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Kim Tallbear – An Indigenous, Feminist Approach to DNA Politics (Introductory Chapter of <i>Native American DNA</i>) (29 pages) ▪ Catherine Myser – Differences from Somewhere: The Normativity of Whiteness in Bioethics in the United States (11 pages) ▪ Patricia Kingori and René Gerrets – The Masking and Making of Fieldworkers and Data in Postcolonial Global Health Research Contexts (14 pages) ▪ Chattopadhyay et al. – A Question of Social Justice: How Policies of Profit Negate Engagement of Developing World Bioethicists and Undermine Global Bioethics (12 pages) 	Reading Response
Nov 15	Abstract Workshop – No Readings	Abstract Draft
Nov 22	<p>Speaking for Others</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Linda Alcoff – The Problem of Speaking for Others (28 pages) ▪ Lime Jello – Why You Shouldn’t Study Sex Workers (8 pages) ▪ Catriona Mackenzie and Jackie Leach Scully – Moral Imagination, Disability, and Embodiment (17 pages) ▪ Madison Powers – Bioethics as Politics: The Limits of Moral Expertise (18 pages) 	Reading Response
Nov 29	<p>Activism and the Academy</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Wendy Rogers – Bioethics and Activism: A Natural Fit? (9 pages) ▪ Research 101: A Manifesto for Ethical Research in the Downtown Eastside (15 pages) ▪ Scott Neufield et al. – Research 101: A process for developing local guidelines for ethical research in heavily researched communities (11 pages) 	Reading Response
Dec 6		Final Paper