

# PHI 229: Bioethics

Connecticut College, Spring 2017  
TuTh 10:25-11:40 a.m., 118 Hale Laboratory

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Office Hours: TuTh 12-1 p.m. at  
the Blue Camel Café, *or* by  
appointment.

## I. Course Description

This course offers an introduction to contemporary issues in bioethics, which, in this course, will largely concern whether, when, and how to bring about, extend, and end human lives. We will focus primarily on questions that arise at, and in between, the margins of life.

We begin the course, in our first unit, with ethical issues that surround the *beginning* of life. Some of the questions we will ask in this unit include: Is abortion morally permissible? Does the issue of whether or not abortion is morally permissible hinge on whether or not fetuses are people, or on something else? Can I pay women to have my baby? Can I harm a future person by bringing it into existence? Can it ever be immoral to have children (e.g., when one chooses to conceive a child with serious disabilities)?

In our second unit, we will turn to ethical issues that concern how to *treat and value* the human lives that are here. Some of these questions concern extending human lives: How should we allocate scarce medical resources to needy patients? Should we be able to buy and sell human organs? Other questions in this second unit concern the doctor-patient relationship: Do healthcare providers have an obligation to tell their patients the truth, or to perform services they believe to be immoral? Are there limits to what patients can choose to have done to themselves?

Finally, in our third unit, we turn to questions that concern the *end* of life. Is there an important difference between killing and letting die? Is it ever morally permissible for individuals to end their own lives? Can we make decisions about end-of-life care for our future selves, even when those future selves may be quite different from our present selves?

## II. Course Goals

1. *Mastering Content.* You will learn about some of the difficult ethical problems and dilemmas that concern whether, when, and how to bring about, extend, and end human lives.
2. *Reading Philosophy.* You will learn how to identify a thesis in a philosophical piece of writing, as well as the arguments offered in support of it, or offered as objections to it.
3. *Writing Philosophy.* You will learn how to reconstruct, explain, and evaluate philosophical arguments.
4. *Talking Philosophy.* You will develop your ability to rigorously interrogate difficult ethical questions with your peers, while remaining charitable to other viewpoints.

## III. Required Text

• Helga Kuhse, Udo Schüklenk, and Peter Singer, eds., *Bioethics: An Anthology*, 3rd edn. (Blackwell, 2016). ISBN: [978-1118941508](https://www.blackwell.com/9781118941508)

This text is available for purchase at the college bookstore. If you plan on ordering this book online (where it is significantly cheaper), please make sure to search by the ISBN I've listed; it is important that you do not purchase an earlier edition of this book.

All other readings will be made available on Moodle.

## IV. Course Requirements

### Breakdown of final grade (see below for details on each)

1. Attendance and participation, 10%.
2. Weekly in-class reading exercises, 10%.
3. Paper 1 (400-600 words, ~1-2 single-spaced pages), 10%
4. Paper 2 (400-600 words, ~1-2 single-spaced pages), 10%
5. Paper 3 (600-800 words, ~2-2.5 single-spaced pages), 15%
6. Paper 4 (800-1,000 words, ~2-3 single-spaced pages), 20%
7. Final paper (1,500-3,000 words, ~4-7 pages), OR final exam, 25%.

**1. Attendance and participation, 10%.** I will be keeping track of attendance. If you miss more than four class sessions (which is equivalent to 2 weeks of class!) without giving me prior notification, you may fail the course even if you complete all the assignments.

You will also be expected to participate and be actively engaged in discussion. This includes regularly asking questions, responding to other students' questions, and contributing in other ways toward making our classroom a safe, respectful space in which every student can feel comfortable expressing his/her thoughts and asking questions.

**2. Weekly reading exercises, 10%.** Every Tuesday at the beginning of class, there will be a short graded exercise. There will be 12 exercises (one per each week of instruction, minus the first and last weeks of the semester). All exercises will be graded on a pass/no pass (P/NP) basis.

The exercises may vary. Exercises may involve short quizzes on the reading assigned for that day, or ask you to reconstruct an argument from given piece of provided text, or ask you to reflect on some aspect of the reading assigned for that day. The purpose of these weekly exercises is to make sure you've done the reading, as well as to prime you to be actively engaged in the main topic of discussion for that day. Carefully doing the reading for that day should be sufficient preparation for these exercises; there won't be any "curveball" questions.

Your final grade for this portion of the course will be determined by the percentage of exercises that you pass. You can miss/not pass up to 2 exercises *without any penalty*. This means that the percentage of exercises you pass in the course is equal to the number of exercises you pass divided by 10.

This allows you the opportunity to get extra credit! Maximum extra credit possible is 11/10 exercises.

**3. Papers, 55% total.** You will have four papers, relatively short in expected length, over the course of the semester. These papers gradually increase in terms of complexity and length. This component of the course is central to the course goal of getting you to develop your

skills at identifying, reconstructing, explaining, and evaluating philosophical arguments. The structure of each paper is described below:

1. Paper 1. (400-600 words) Pick an argument from any of the readings we've considered so far, and carefully explain it, by identifying its central premises and how they support the author's conclusion. Then, identify one premise or underlying assumption in that argument that you think is the weakest (= most vulnerable to an objection), and briefly explain why you think it is the weakest. (10%)
2. Paper 2. (400-600 words) Pick and explain an argument from any of the readings we've considered so far in this course. Then, explain how that argument relates to a *different* view or argument we've considered in this course (and make sure, also, to explain this second view/argument). For example: How does one argument constitute an *objection* to another, and if so, how? Or, how does one argument *build on* the first? There are other possibilities as well; the only requirement is that the two come from the readings and have some interesting relationship to one another. When you write your paper, be clear about exactly what that relationship is. (10%)
3. Paper 3. (600-800 words) Pick and explain one argument from any of the readings we've considered so far, and *evaluate* that argument. Evaluating an argument means that you will have to provide reasons for why we ought to reject (or accept) the argument you've explained. This might involve arguing that one of the premises in the argument is false. Or it might involve arguing that the premises do not support the conclusion. (15%)
4. Paper 4. (800-1,000 words) Pick and explain two different arguments, and explain how these two arguments are related to one another. (This part has the same structure as Paper 2.) In addition, *evaluate* the argumentative exchange you've just explained. (20%)
  - For example, suppose that the second argument you explain is an *objection* to the first. Then, you should say whether or not you think that objection *succeeds*, and so, whether or not we should we accept the objection. Explain *why* you think the objection succeeds, or doesn't.
  - Alternatively, suppose that the second argument you explain *builds on* the first argument. Then, you should say whether or not we should accept one or both of these arguments, or not. *Why* should we -- or why should we not -- accept one or both of these arguments?

Note that these papers allow you the freedom to pick any arguments you find interesting in the course up to the due date of the paper (no skipping ahead!). The one constraint is that you cannot *repeat* a view/argument in more than one paper.

**4. Final (25%).** You have the choice of either a final exam or a final paper.

- The final exam will consist of short essay questions (think: a few paragraphs per question), plus one somewhat longer essay. I will provide a study guide.

- The final paper will be based on a topic of your choosing (which you will have to get approved by me). You will be expected to carefully reconstruct and analyze *at least* one of the philosophical views we've examined in this course, as well as provide an evaluative stage, where you will argue that we ought to accept or reject (or modify, or expand on) the view(s)

you've discussed in your paper. This evaluative stage should include some argumentative back-and-forth; you might, for example, explain what a *potential objection* to the evaluative claim you've made might be; why that potential objection might be persuasive; and why it doesn't succeed. The final paper should be 1,500-3,000 words.

## V. Class Policies

- **Laptops.** I don't allow the use of laptops in class. Studies have shown that using laptops to take notes is less effective than writing notes by hand, impeding long-term memory and comprehension. (See, e.g., Mueller and Oppenheimer (2014).) Laptop use can also be distracting – to you, to your classmates, and to me.

For the readings posted on Moodle: You may either print these out and bring them to class, or use a tablet to access an electronic version of the reading. If use of tablets becomes distracting, I will require that only hard copies of the readings be brought to class.

Accommodations can be made for those who, for medical reasons, need to use laptops for note-taking. Please get in touch if this applies to you.

- **Late papers.** All papers should be emailed to me by 11:59 p.m. on the due date. Every day that your paper is late, your paper grade will go down a "step." (For example, if your paper is one day late, then if your paper is an A paper, you will get an A-.) I will accept late papers up to 5 days after the due date; after 5 days, you will receive a zero on the assignment.

If you require an extension, please get in touch with me no later than 48 hours in advance of the deadline. I will not assign extensions after that period, unless you can provide a written note from your dean, or documentation for a medical or family emergency.

- **Re-writes.** You are allowed, but not required, to re-write Paper 1 and/or Paper 3. I've listed due dates for re-writes on the class schedule, below. If you choose to re-write a paper, your initial grade, and your re-write grade, will be averaged. No extensions will be granted for re-writes.

- **Grades.** How are final grades calculated? First, the letter grades for each element of the final grade are converted into a number on the 4.0 scale. (A = 4.0, A- = 3.7, B+ = 3.3, B = 3.0, and so on). Second, these numbers are weighted to reflect the percentage of each element of the final grade. (For example, if you have an A for attendance/participation (10%), that is  $4.0 \times .10 = .4$ .) Finally, those weighted numbers are summed. That number is then converted back to a letter grade, and that is roughly your final grade. I'm happy to keep you updated on your current grade in the class. Just ask.

You may receive a "slash grade" on an assignment (e.g., B/B+). Slash grades also correspond to a precise number on the 4.0 scale (e.g., a B/B+ = 3.15).

## VI. Miscellaneous Notables

- **The classroom environment.** In this course, we will encounter many difficult issues, including those that concern abortion, suicide, and disability, among other topics. I ask that you think of this course as a shared group effort to rigorously and carefully work through some very tough questions about complex and sensitive topics. In the spirit of this shared effort, it is important that we treat each other charitably and respectfully, even when we disagree. This involves keeping in mind that we each come to the discussion from different

backgrounds and with different life experiences. The difficult questions we will confront in this course will naturally affect each of us differently.

Treating each other charitably and respectfully doesn't mean that we cannot challenge or question each other's viewpoints. But it does mean that, when we do, we should do so in an attempt to work together to get clearer about some issue or make progress on a question, not to silence or intimidate each other. Your fellow classmates are your most valuable interlocutors, and they should be treated as such.

- **Office Hours.** At a small college like ours, office hours are an important extension of the classroom. In office hours, we can talk one-on-one about philosophical problems you want to understand better, or about how to improve your philosophical writing, or anything else related to philosophy (which is pretty much anything!).

- **Writing Clinics.** I plan on occasionally holding writing clinics outside of the classroom. You are not required to go to these, but you are highly encouraged to do so! Learning how to identify, reconstruct, and evaluate arguments is one of the most valuable and translatable skills that professional philosophers have to offer. In our writing clinics, you will get a crash course on, e.g., how to identify (and avoid making!) common logical fallacies; how to extract an argument from messy and disorganized bits of text; how to identify necessary and sufficient conditions; how to put an argument into logical form; and so on.

These clinics will be advertised to all students in philosophy, so they will also be good opportunities to get to know other majors/minors/philosophy enthusiasts! Dates/locations to be announced soon.

## V. Campus Policies

*Statements have been provided by the college.*

- **The Connecticut College Honor Code**

Academic integrity is of the utmost importance in maintaining the high standards of scholarship in our community. Academic dishonesty is considered to be a serious offense against the community and represents a significant breach of trust between the professor, the classmates, and the student. There are many forms of academic dishonesty, including plagiarism, submitting the same work in two courses without prior approval, unauthorized discussion or distribution of exams or assignments, and offering or receiving unauthorized aid on exams or graded assignments. Students violating the Honor Code may be referred to the college's Honor Council for resolution.

- **Office of Student Accessibility Services**

If you have a physical, mental, or learning disability, either hidden or visible, which may require classroom, test-taking, or other reasonable modifications, please see me as soon as possible. If you have not already done so, please be sure to register with the Office of Student Accessibility Services. You can do so by going to the Office of Student Accessibility Services, which is located in the Academic Resource Center (ARC) on the second floor of Shain Library in Room 236, or by contacting the Office at 860-439-5240 or 860-439-5428, or by email to [sas@conncoll.edu](mailto:sas@conncoll.edu).

- **The Academic Resource Center**

The Academic Resource Center (ARC) offers services to support your academic work, such as study skills workshops, time management, coaching, and tutoring. Our offices are located on the second floor of Shain. Please visit us or call 860-439-5294 for more information or to schedule an appointment.

- **The Roth Writing Center**

The Roth Writing Center provides one-to-one peer tutoring (free of charge) to help student writers of all abilities during all stages of the writing process. To make an appointment, call x2173 or stop by the Writing Center at 214 Blaustein. If you're a confident, experienced writer, we can help you to push your ideas and polish your style; if you're a relatively inexperienced and not-so-confident writer, we can also help you, by working on grammar or organization or whatever you need. Writing Center tutors are trained to help you to discover what you think through writing. Working with a tutor gives you the opportunity to share your work-in-progress with an actual reader, so that you can get useful feedback on that work *before* you have to turn it in for a final grade. For further information, visit the Writing Center web page at <http://write.conncoll.edu/>.

- **Title IX Statement**

As a faculty member, I am deeply invested in the well-being of each student I teach. I am here to assist you with your work in this course. If you come to me with other non-course-related concerns, I will do my best to help.

It is important for you to know that all faculty members are trained and required to report any incidents of gender-based discrimination, including discrimination based on gender identity, gender expression, and sexual orientation. This means that I cannot keep information confidential about sexual misconduct, intimate partner violence, stalking, or other forms of gender-based discrimination. Darcie Folsom, the Director of Sexual Violence Prevention and Advocacy, can advise you confidentially as can Counseling Services and any of the College chaplains. Darcie can also help you access other resources on campus and in the local community. You can reach Darcie at 860-439-2219 or [darcie.folsom@conncoll.edu](mailto:darcie.folsom@conncoll.edu), and her office is in Cro 222.

The student sexual misconduct, intimate partner violence, stalking, and non-discrimination policies are in the Student Handbook, which can be found on Camelweb, in the "Documents/Policies" section, under the Student Life section. There you will find the policies, definitions, procedures and resources. If you have any questions about the policy, you can contact Melissa Pierce, the Title IX Coordinator. You can reach Melissa at 860-439-2597 or [melissa.pierce@conncoll.edu](mailto:melissa.pierce@conncoll.edu); her office is in Fanning 104.

## VI. Course Schedule (subject to revision!)

Date	Topic	Readings
Tu 1/24, Week 1	Introduction to bioethics and ethical theory	
<b>Unit 1: Beginning Lives</b>		
Th 1/26	The Ethics of Abortion	Don Marquis, "Why Abortion is Immoral," pp. 49-60
Tu 1/31, Week 2		Michael Tooley, "Abortion and Infanticide," pp. 23-37 <b>(In-Class Exercise 1)</b>
Th 2/2		Judith Jarvis Thomson, "A Defense of Abortion," pp. 38-48
Tu 2/7, Week 3	Surrogacy: Is it permissible to pay women to bear your children?	(Moodle) "Baby M" (1 p.)  (Moodle) Elizabeth Anderson, "Is Women's Labor A Commodity?" (22 pp.)  <b>(In-Class Exercise 2)</b>
Th 2/9		(Moodle) Debra Satz, "Markets in Women's Reproductive Labor," (25 pp.)  <b>**Paper 1 Due Friday, 2/10**</b>
Tu 2/14, Week 4	Prenatal Sex Selection: May one select embryos on the basis of their sex?	The Ethics Committee of the American Society of Reproductive Medicine, "Sex Selection and Preimplantation Genetic Diagnosis," pp. 136-40  Julian Savulescu & Edgar Dahl, "Sex Selection and Preimplantation Diagnosis," pp. 141-3  (Moodle) Wendy Rogers, et al., "Is Sex Selective Abortion Morally Justified and Should It Be Prohibited?" (5 pp.)  <b>(In-Class Exercise 3)</b>
Th 2/16	Conceiving to Donate: Is it permissible to create a child to serve as a tissue donor?	John Robertson, et al., "Conception to Obtain Hematopoietic Stem Cells," pp. 144-51  David King, "Why We Should Not Permit Embryos to Be Selected as Tissue Donors," pp. 152-5

Tu 2/21, Week 5	The Non-Identity Problem: Can we harm in creating?	Derek Parfit, "Rights, Interests, and Possible People," pp. 86-90  (Moodle) Dan Brock, "The Non-Identity Problem and Genetic Harms—The Case of Wrongful Handicaps" (5 pp.)  <b>(In-Class Exercise 4)</b>
Th 2/23	Prenatal Screening and Disability	Laura Purdy, "Genetics and Reproductive Risk: Can Having Children Be Immoral?," pp. 105-11  <b>**Optional: Paper 1 re-write due the following Monday, 2/27**</b>
Tu 2/28, Week 6	<b>**Guest Presentation**</b> Bill Campbell, MS, Certified Genetic Counselor	(Moodle) Marsha Saxton, "Why Members of the Disability Community Oppose Prenatal Diagnosis and Selective Abortion" (18 pp.)  <b>(In-Class Exercise 5)</b>
Th 3/2	Topic to be determined by the class	<b>**Paper 2 Due Friday, 3/3**</b>
<b>Unit 2: Extending and Valuing Lives</b>		
Tu 3/7, Week 7	Healthcare Allocation: How should we determine who gets access to scarce resources (e.g., organs)?	(Moodle) Nicholas Rescher, "The Allocation of Exotic Medical Lifesaving Therapy" (13 pp.)  Alvin Moss & Mark Siegler, "Should Alcoholics Compete Equally for Liver Transplantation?," pp. 390-6  <b>(In-Class Exercise 6)</b>
Th 3/9		John Harris, "The Value of Life," pp. 397-405  (Moodle) Robert Veatch, "How Age Should Matter: Justice as the Basis for Limiting Care to the Elderly" (10 pp.)
Tu 3/14, Week 8		<b>SPRING BREAK!</b>
Th 3/16		
Tu 3/21, Week 9		
Th 3/23		



<p>Tu 3/28, Week 10</p>	<p>Markets in Donor Organs: Should it be permissible to buy and sell human organs?</p>	<p>Janet Radcliffe-Richards, et al., "The Case for Allowing Kidney Sales," pp. 421-4</p> <p>Debra Satz, "Ethical Issues in the Supply and Demand of Human Kidneys," pp. 425-36</p> <p>John Harris, "The Survival Lottery," pp. 437-41</p> <p><b>(In-Class Exercise 7)</b></p>
<p>Th 3/30</p>	<p>Altruistic Organ Donation: Should living strangers donate their organs to those in need?</p>	<p>(Moodle) Peter Singer, "Giving a Part of Yourself" (6 pp.)</p> <p>(Moodle) Larissa MacFarquhar, "The Kindest Cut" (12 pp.)</p> <p><b>**Paper 3 Due Friday, 3/31**</b></p>
<p>Tu 4/4, Week 11</p>	<p>Telling the Truth: Must doctors always tell their patients the truth?</p>	<p>Immanuel Kant, "On a Supposed Right to Lie from Altruistic Motives," pp. 613-4</p> <p>Joseph Collins, "Should Doctors Tell the Truth?," pp. 615-20</p> <p>Roger Higgs, "On Telling Patients the Truth," pp. 621-8</p> <p><b>(In-Class Exercise 8)</b></p>
<p>Th 4/6</p>	<p>Informed Consent: What is informed consent? Is our preoccupation with informed consent culturally specific?</p>	<p>John Stuart Mill, "On Liberty," pp. 631-3</p> <p>Tom Beauchamp, "Informed Consent: Its History, Meaning, and Present Challenges," pp. 635-41</p> <p>Ruth Macklin, "The Doctor-Patient Relationship in Different Cultures," pp. 642-53</p>
<p>Tu 4/11, Week 12</p>	<p>Patient Autonomy: Should there be limits to what people can choose to have done to their bodies?</p>	<p>Carl Elliott, "Amputees by Choice," pp. 654-64</p> <p>Julian Savulescu, "Rational Desires and the Limitation of Life-Sustaining Treatment," pp. 665-82</p> <p><b>(In-Class Exercise 9)</b></p>
<p>Th 4/13</p>	<p>Physician Autonomy: Do doctors have a right to conscientious refusal?</p>	<p>(Moodle) Dan Brock, "Conscientious Refusal By Physicians and Pharmacists: Who Is Obligated To Do What, And Why?" (14 pp.)</p> <p style="text-align: right;"><i>(continued on next page)</i></p>

		(Moodle) R. Alta Charo, "The Celestial Fire of Conscience: Refusing to Deliver Medical Care" (3 pp.)
Tu 4/18, Week 13	Duties toward Non-human Animals: Are there any? If there are, what explains them?	Immanuel Kant, "Duties towards Animals," pp. 527-8  Jeremy Bentham, "A Utilitarian View," pp. 529  Peter Singer, "All Animals Are Equal," pp. 530-9  <b>(In-Class Exercise 10)</b>
Th 4/20	Topic to be determined by class	<b>**Optional: Paper 3 re-write due the following Monday, 4/24**</b>
<b>Unit 3: Ending Lives</b>		
Tu 4/25, Week 14	Killing and Letting Die: Is there a distinction? Does it matter?	James Rachels, "Active and Passive Euthanasia," pp. 248-51  Winston Nesbitt, "Is Killing No Worse Than Letting Die?," pp. 252-6  Helga Kuhse, "Why Killing is Not Always Worse – And Sometimes Better – Than Letting Die," pp. 257-60  <b>(In-Class Exercise 11)</b>
Th 4/27	Brain death: Is "brain death" really death?	Ari Joffe, "Are Recent Defenses of the Brain Death Concept Adequate?," pp. 312-20  Peter Singer, "Is the Sanctity of Life Ethic Terminally Ill?," pp. 321-30  <i>Optional:</i> Report of the Ad Hoc Committee of the Harvard Medical School to Examine the Definition of Brain Death, "A Definition of Irreversible Coma," pp. 307-11  <b>**Paper 4 Due Friday, 4/28**</b>
Tu 5/2, Week 15	Advance Directives: Do competent patients have the right to make end-of-life decisions for their future no-longer-competent selves?	Ronald Dworkin, "Life Past Reason," pp. 333-40  Rebecca Dresser, "Dworkin on Dementia: Elegant Theory, Questionable Policy," pp. 341-50  <b>(In-Class Exercise 12)</b>

Th 5/4	Suicide: Do we have a right to terminate our own lives?	(Moodle) J. David Velleman, "A Right of Self-Determination?" (24 pp.)
Tu 5/9, Week 16	Semester Review	