

Caring for Vulnerable Populations

PHL281H1F: Bioethics, M 6-8, W 6-9, W Tutorials

Instructor	Email	Office Location & Hours
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Course Description

The Physician's Pledge (a modern successor to the Hippocratic Oath) details the ethical duties of a physician. It focuses on protecting the "autonomy and dignity" of the patient, and it lists groups who are particularly vulnerable to mistreatment and who therefore require special attention: "I will not permit considerations of age, disease or disability, creed, ethnic origin, gender, nationality, political affiliation, race, sexual orientation, social standing, or any other factor to intervene between my duty and my patient" (World Medical Association Declaration of Geneva).

This course explores the implications of the Physician's Pledge. How do we care for the elderly without treating them like children? Is disability a medical or a social problem? Can treatments work across differences of religion and culture? How can medical professions resist stereotypes about race and ethnicity? What role should gender (and especially transgender identity) play in medical treatment and research?

You will consider these topics as a class, debate your answers in smaller tutorial sections, and give individual responses in the written assignments. These are hard questions that the medical profession is still struggling to solve. You will be given the tools to participate in future conversations—whether as a medical professional, a patient, an ethics board member, or a citizen voting on potential policies. This is why you should care.

Evaluation

Assessment	Percentage of grade	Due date
Tutorial Participation	10%	throughout term
Summary	10%	May 11
Take Home Midterm	20%	May 20
Paper Proposal	10%	May 30
Final Paper	30%	June 11
Final Exam	20%	TBA

All assignments will be turned in on Blackboard by 11:59 P.M. on the marked due date.

This course will involve a combination of skills. The midterm and final exams will test your ability to recall the major features of the different topics we are covering throughout the term.

The short summary assignment will give you early feedback on your writing and how well you are understanding the readings. The final paper will allow you to delve in-depth into one topic.

Tutorials will be focused on developing your writing and critical thinking skills further.

Required Texts

All readings will be available on Blackboard. You are expected to have completed all readings ***BEFORE*** the class for which they are assigned.

Course Schedule

Topic	Date	Readings
Introduction	May 2	Eva Feder Kittay, "The Ethics of Care, Dependence, and Disability"
Old Age	May 7	Ronald Dworkin, <i>Life's Dominion</i> (selections)
Disability	May 9	Elizabeth Barnes, <i>The Minority Body</i> (selections)
May 11: Summary due on Blackboard		
Mental Illness	May 14	Autism Speaks vs. Identity-First Autistic
Euthanasia	May 16	Wayne Sumner, <i>Assisted Death</i> (selections) Christopher Newell, "Disability, Bioethics, and Rejected Knowledge"
Religion	May 23	Jehovah's Witness legal cases
May 25: Take Home Midterm due on Blackboard		
Medical Research	May 28	Leslie Young, "Experiments on Canada's Indigenous Populations" Rebecca Skloot, <i>The Immortal Life of Henrietta Lacks</i> (selections)
Indigenous Medicine	May 30	Anne Fadiman, <i>The Spirit Catches You and You Fall Down: A Hmong Child, Her American Doctors, and the Collision of Two Cultures</i> (selections)
Stereotypes	June 4	Chloë Fitzgerald, "A Neglected Aspect of Conscience: Awareness of Implicit Attitudes" Jacqueline Howard, "Childbirth is Killing Black Women in the US "
June 5: Paper Proposal due on Blackboard		
Mothering	June 6	Rebecca Kukla, "Measuring Mothering" Martina Shabram, "Zika babies reveal our society's deep, dangerous prejudice against disabilities"
Abortion	June 11	Rosalind Hursthouse, "Virtue Theory and Abortion" (selections)
Transmasc Pregnancy	June 13	Cyn Lubow, <i>A Womb of Their Own</i>
June 13: Final Paper due on Blackboard		
TBA: Final Exam		

Course Policies:

Class Attendance:

Tutorial attendance is mandatory, so if you have to miss tutorials (or know you are going to be late), inform me and your TA over email. You will be given the opportunity to make up the points.

If you know you will routinely have to miss tutorials—due to work, family obligations, accessibility reasons, religious obligations, prolonged sickness, etc.—please contact me as soon as possible so we can work out an alternative assessment scheme.

Late Assignments:

There will be a 2% penalty for each day the paper is late. Extensions may be granted (at my discretion, for reasons similar to the ones listed in “Class Attendance,” above). Except in exceptional circumstances, you must request an extension at least 48 hours prior to the posted deadline in order to receive an extension.

Contact Policy:

You are required to check your university email accounts regularly. All announcements and grades will be posted on Blackboard, and papers will be returned over Blackboard.

I can be reached at weekly office hours, before class, or over email: emma.mcclure@mail.utoronto.ca

Accessibility:

I am happy to provide any accommodations needed to ensure that all materials and activities are accessible to all students. All readings can be found in PDF form, and many of the stories have audio recordings. Handouts will include QR codes, and I will use a microphone during my lectures. Please let me know if you require any other accommodations, at any point throughout the term.

Academic Integrity:

The purpose of the assignments is to improve your skills in reading, writing, and critical thinking. The purpose of grades is to reflect your competency in these skills. Plagiarism undercuts these aims. You have plagiarized if you a) include writing that is not your own AND b) do not cite your sources. I will investigate suspected cases of plagiarism and academic dishonesty, in accordance with the procedures outlined in the University of Toronto’s Code of Behavior on Academic Matters (available online at: <http://www.governingcouncil.utoronto.ca/policies/behaveac.htm>).

If you have questions or concerns about what constitutes appropriate academic behavior or appropriate research and citation methods, you are expected to seek out additional information from other institutional resources. (http://writing.wisc.edu/Handbook/QPA_plagiarism.html is a good place to start.)

Mental Health:

Academic work is difficult and psychologically demanding. It’s important to work hard and push yourself but it is even more important to be kind to yourself. The University has a number of resources available if difficulties arise:

<http://discover.utoronto.ca/health-wellness>

<http://life.utoronto.ca/get-help/counselling/>

<http://mentalhealth.utoronto.ca/>