**CASE STUDIES IN BIOETHICS & SOCIETY**

Indicative syllabus

Credits: 30  
Module Convenor: Dr Silvia Camporesi  
Office: D6, 3rd floor, East Wing, King's Building  
Consultation time: TBD  
Semester: Second  
Lecture time and venue: TBD

**MODULE DESCRIPTION**

This module offers students a critical introduction to key concepts and topics in bioethics, using a bottom-up approach based on case studies and grounded in current debates and controversies surrounding the developments of biomedicine and neuroscience. Through the case-study approach, the module aims to enable students to understand how such controversies and proposed solutions emerge in unique social, political and regulatory contexts. Some of the concepts and topics covered include well-being, reproductive freedom, and enhancement.

The course will run over 10 weeks for 3 hours weekly: 1.5 hours of lecture, and 1.5 hours of presentation and discussion of an illustrative case study when appropriate.

The module is compulsory for students of the MA in Bioethics & Society, but is also open and of interest for students taking other postgraduate programmes at SSHM. It is designed to be complementary to the module ‘Foundations in Bioethics & Society’ that is a core module for the MA in Bioethics & Society in the first term.

**Assessment methods and deadlines**

Written formative essay: one x 2,000-word essay (only formative)  
Written summative essay: one x 4,000-word essay (100 % total grade)
OUTLINE OF CONTENTS AND READINGS

Week 1: Respect for Autonomy and Informed Consent
Where we critically discuss, with the aid of a relevant case study from clinical ethics, the fundamental concepts of autonomy and informed consent, the relations between the two and the grounds that have been proposed as legitimate to override autonomy.

Readings:
Required:


Recommended:


Weeks 2: Choosing Children: the Non-Identity Problem, and the Right to an Open Future
Where we critically discuss, through the aid of a case study of genetic technologies applied to use children’s traits in pre-implantation genetic diagnosis, the ‘non-identity problem’ and the right to an open future in bioethics.

Readings:
Required:


Recommended:


Weeks 3: Human Nature and Personhood at the cross-roads of Ability, Disability and Super-Ability: Towards a Post-Human future?
Where we critically discuss, with the aid of a relevant case study from disability studies, the fundamental concepts of human nature and personhood, and the implications that new biomedical technologies have on them within the bioethics debate of a post-human future.

Readings:

Required:


Recommended:


Week 4: Human Rights to Health/Healthcare, Justice and Equality
Where we critically discuss, with the aid of a relevant case study from the allocation of scarce healthcare resources, possible justifications for a human right to health or healthcare, and how this plays out with the concepts of justice and equality in healthcare.

Readings:

Required:


Recommended:

**Week 5: Enhancement, Complicity and Authenticity**
Where we discuss, through the aid of the case study of the use of Ritalin and Adderall in children and adults, the concept of enhancement, and the ethical and social issues that it raises.

**Readings:**


**Week 6: Well-being, Paternalism and Personal responsibility**
Where we discuss, through the aid of a case study of a health-incentive or nudge to organ donation, the concept of well-being and how it relates to paternalism and personal responsibility in bioethics.

**Readings:**


**Week 7: Governance in science and biomedicine**
Where we discuss, through a historical lens at genetic engineering from Asilomar 1975 up-to-now and discussion of synthetic biology, the issue of the governance of science and biomedicine in a democratic society.

**Readings:**


**Week 8: Advancement in brain imaging technologies: ethical and social implications**
Where we critically discuss, through the aid of the case study of functional magnetic resonance to measure chronic pain, the ethical and social implications of the most recent advancement in brain imaging technologies.

**Readings:**

**Required:**


**Recommended:**


**Week 9: Reproductive freedom, self-determination and medical tourism**
Where we critically discuss, through the aid of the case study of reproductive tourism across borders, the important and interrelated concepts of reproductive freedom and self-determination as they relate to the individual’s choices in reproduction.

**Readings:**

**Required:**


**Recommended:**
Week 10: What future for Bioethics?  
Where we reflect on the current state and future directions for the discipline of Bioethics, through a critical discussion of the views of prominent scholars.

Readings:

Required:


Recommended:


Callahan, C. (1973) Bioethics as a Discipline. The Hastings Center Studies 1(1):66-73