

FOUNDATIONS OF BIOETHICS & SOCIETY

Indicative Syllabus

Credits: 30

Module Convenor: [Dr Silvia Camporesi](#)

Office: D6, 3rd floor, East Wing, King's Building

Consultation time: TBD

Semester: First

Lecture time and venue: TBD

MODULE DESCRIPTION

This module offers students a critical introduction to the theoretical frameworks used in contemporary bioethics. In the first part of the module (weeks 1-3) we will critically discuss how the discipline of bioethics developed historically, introduce students to key questions in metaethics, and examine work in bioethics that applies general moral theories to analyze bioethical problems ('applied ethics').

The core of the module (weeks 4-9) will engage students in a critical analysis of methods and approaches that have been specifically developed in the context of bioethics, such as principlism, casuistry, narrative approaches, and feminist approaches to addressing bioethical issues. The final session of the module (week 10) will examine issues around agenda-setting and the framing of problems in bioethics.

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

This module is the core module for students of the MA in Bioethics & Society.

Assessment methods and deadlines

Written formative essay: one x 2,000 word (only formative)

Written summative essay: one x 4,000-word essay (100 % total grade)

OUTLINE OF CONTENTS AND READINGS

Week 1. The origins of Bioethics.

Where we critically discuss the foundations of the discipline of Bioethics, through a historical, comparative analysis of paradigmatic case studies.

Readings:

Required:

Duncan Wilson (2013) What can history do for bioethics? *Bioethics* 27(4):215-223

Robert Martensen (2001) The History of Bioethics: An Essay Review. *Journal of the History of Medicine and Allied Sciences* 56(2) pp. 168-175

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Warren Thomas Reich (1994) The Word 'Bioethics': Its Birth and the Legacies of those Who Shaped It *Kennedy Institute of Ethics Journal* 4(4) pp. 319-335

Recommended:

John H. Evans (2012) *The History and Future of Bioethics: A Sociological View*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press (Chapters 1)

Kuhse, H., & Singer, P. (1998). What is bioethics? A historical introduction. *A companion to bioethics*. Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 3-11.

Charles E. Rosenberg (1999) Meanings, Policies, and Medicine: On the Bioethical Enterprise and History. *Daedalus* 128(4): 27-46.

Weeks 2. The status of moral knowledge

Where we critically analyse moral relativism and other fundamental questions regarding moral truth and justification.

Readings:

Required:

Mackie J (1990) *Ethics: Inventing Right and Wrong*. Penguin UK. (Chapter 1: 1-48; Chapter 5: 105-124)

Jacobs, J. (2008). *Dimensions of moral theory: an introduction to metaethics and moral psychology*. Wiley. Com (Chapter 1: 1-40)

Recommended:

Ross, W. D. (2002). *The right and the good*. Oxford University Press. (Chapters 1-3: pp 1-74)

Dickenson, D. (2003). *Risk and luck in medical ethics*. Polity Press (Chapters 1-3:pp 1-59).

Velleman D (2013) *Foundations for moral relativism*. Open Book Publishers.

Weeks 3. Deontological and consequentialist approaches in ethics

Where we critically discuss approaches in bioethics that apply general ethical theories, and introduce students to fundamental concepts in bioethics derived from the application of consequentialist and non-consequentialist ethical theories.

Readings:

Required:

Mackie J (1990) *Ethics: Inventing Right and Wrong*. Penguin UK (Chapters 6-7: pp 125-168)

Smart, J. J. C. (1973) "An Outline of a System of Utilitarian Ethics" in *Utilitarianism: For and Against*, by J.J.C. Smart and B. Williams. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp. 3–74

Williams, B., 1973. "A Critique of Utilitarianism" in *Utilitarianism: For and Against*, by J.J.C. Smart and B. Williams. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp. 77–150.

Jacobs, J. (2008). *Dimensions of moral theory: an introduction to metaethics and moral psychology*. Wiley. Com (Chapters 3-4: pp 74-150)

Recommended:

Green, R. M. (1990). Method in bioethics: a troubled assessment. *Journal of Medicine and Philosophy*, 15(2), 179-197.

Green, R. M. (2001). What does it mean to use someone as "a means only": rereading Kant. *Kennedy Institute of Ethics Journal*, 11(3), 247-261.

Hayry M (2010) *Rationality and the Genetic Challenge: Making People Better?* Cambridge University Press (Chapter 2: pp 24-40)

Weeks 4. Principlism and Reflective Equilibrium in Bioethics

Where we critically analyse principlism, the dominant bioethical framework in the Western world, and how its four principles of respect for autonomy, beneficence, non-maleficence, and justice can be used to reach decisions about a bioethical problem.

Readings:

Beauchamp, T. L. & Childress, F. T. (2013) *Principles of Biomedical Ethics*, Oxford University Press.

Holm, S. (1995). Not just autonomy--the principles of American biomedical ethics. *Journal of Medical Ethics*, 21(6), 332-338.

Hinkley, A. E. (2012). Two rival understandings of autonomy, paternalism, and bioethical principlism. In *Bioethics Critically Reconsidered* (pp. 85-95). Springer Netherlands.

Weeks 5: A critical reflection on the dominance of principlism in Western Bioethics.

Where we critically discuss the limits and critique of principlism, and we prepare the ground for the discussion of alternative methodological approaches in bioethics.

Readings:

Required:

Evans, J. H. (2000). A sociological account of the growth of principlism. *Hastings Center Report*, 30(5), 31-39.

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Quante, M., & Vieth, A. (2002). Defending principlism well understood. *The Journal of medicine and philosophy*, 27(6), 621-649.

Schöne-Seifert, B. (2006). Dangers and merits in principlism. Meta-theoretical Reflections on the Beauchamp/Childress-Approach to Biomedical Ethics. In *Bioethics in Cultural Contexts* (pp. 109-119). Springer Netherlands.

Kelly, T., & McGrath, S. (2010). Is reflective equilibrium enough?. *Philosophical Perspectives*, 24(1), 325-359.

Recommended:

Engelhardt, H. T. (Ed.). (2012). *Bioethics critically reconsidered: Having second thoughts* (Vol. 100). Springer.

Week 6: Casuistry and common morality approaches to bioethics

Where we critically discuss casuistry and common morality as possible alternatives or complementary approaches to principlism in bioethics.

Required:

Jonsen AR. (1995) Casuistry: an alternative or complement to principles? *Kennedy Inst Ethics J*. 1995 Sep;5(3):237-51.

Kuczewski, M. (1998). Casuistry and principlism: the convergence of method in biomedical ethics. *Theoretical Medicine and Bioethics*, 19(6), 509-524.

Clouser, K. D. (1995). Common morality as an alternative to principlism. *Kennedy Institute of Ethics Journal*, 5(3), 219-236.

Brand-Ballard, J. (2003). Consistency, common morality, and reflective equilibrium. *Kennedy Institute of Ethics Journal*, 13(3), 231-258.

DeGrazia, D. (2003). Common morality, coherence, and the principles of biomedical ethics. *Kennedy Institute of Ethics Journal*, 13(3), 219-230.

Recommended:

Veatch, R. M. (2003). Is there a common morality?. *Kennedy Institute of Ethics Journal*, 13(3), 189-192.

Evans, J. H. (2006). Between technocracy and democratic legitimation: A proposed compromise position for common morality public bioethics. *Journal of Medicine and Philosophy*, 31(3), 213-234.

Lindsay, R. A. (2009). Bioethics policies and the compass of common morality. *Theoretical medicine and bioethics*, 30(1), 31-43.

Hodges, K. E., & Sulmasy, D. P. (2013). Moral Status, Justice, and the Common Morality: Challenges for the Principlist Account of Moral Change. *Kennedy Institute of Ethics Journal*, 23(3), 275-296.

Weeks 7: Narrative Approaches to Bioethics

Where we analyse, through the aid of a relevant case study, narrative approaches to bioethics, and critically discuss how meaningful storytelling is reshaping fundamental concepts in bioethics, such as respect for autonomy.

Readings:

Required:

Nicholas B. and Gillett G. (1997) Doctors' stories, patients' stories: a narrative approach to teaching medical ethics. *J Med Ethics* 23: 295-299

David B. Morris (2001) Narrative, Ethics, and Pain: Thinking with Stories. *Narrative* 9(1): 55-77

McCarthy, J. (2003). Principlism or narrative ethics: must we choose between them?. *Medical Humanities*, 29(2), 65-71.

Miller, T., & Boulton, M. (2007). Changing constructions of informed consent: Qualitative research and complex social worlds. *Social science & medicine*, 65(11), 2199-2211.

Recommended:

R. Charon, (2008) Narrative medicine: honoring the stories of illness. New York: Oxford University Press, 2008.

H. Haker (2006). Narrative Bioethics. In *Bioethics in Cultural Contexts*(pp. 353-376). Springer Netherlands

Weeks 8: Feminist approaches to Bioethics

Where we critically analyse the contribution of feminist approaches to bioethics, in the discussion surrounding human stem cell research, oocyte donation or sale, surrogate pregnancy, and commodification of the female body.

Readings:

Required:

Little, M. O. (1996). Why a feminist approach to bioethics?. *Kennedy Institute of Ethics Journal*, 6(1), 1-18.

Dickenson, D. (2007). *Property in the body: Feminist perspectives* (No. 3). Cambridge University Press.

Sherwin, S. (2008). Whither Bioethics?: How Feminism Can Help Reorient Bioethics. *International Journal of Feminist Approaches to Bioethics*, 1(1), 7-27.

Dickenson, D. L. (2006). The lady vanishes: what's missing from the stem cell debate. *Journal of Bioethical Inquiry*, 3(1-2), 43-54.

Recommended:

Waldby, C. (2008). Oocyte markets: women's reproductive work in embryonic stem cell research. *New genetics and society*, 27(1), 19-31.

Widdows, H. (2009). Border disputes across bodies: Exploitation in trafficking for prostitution and egg sale for stem cell research. *International Journal of Feminist Approaches to Bioethics*, 2(1), 5-24.

Weeks 9: A Virtue Ethics-based approach to bioethics

Where we critically discuss, through the aid of a significant case study, the virtue ethics based approach to bioethics, in particular with reference to the analysis of the professional roles in medical and nursing ethics.

Required:

McIntyre, (1984) *After virtue: A study in moral theory* (Chapters 14-16: pp 181-243)

Oakley, J. (1998). A virtue ethics approach. *A Companion to Bioethics, Second Edition*, 91-104.

Holland, S. (2011). The virtue ethics approach to bioethics. *Bioethics*, 25(4), 192-201.

Oakley, J., & Cocking, D. (2001). *Virtue ethics and professional roles*. Cambridge University Press (Chapter 4: 74-93)

Recommended:

Holland, S. (2012). Furthering the sceptical case against virtue ethics in nursing ethics. *Nursing Philosophy*, 13(4), 266-275.

Putman, D. A. (2012). A reply to 'Scepticism about the virtue ethics approach to nursing ethics' by Stephen Holland: the relevance of virtue in nursing ethics. *Nursing Philosophy*, 13(2), 142-145.

Week 10: Bioethics, Deliberation and Policy Making

Where we critically analyse the relations between bioethics and policy making, and discuss questions of agenda-setting and the framing of problems in bioethics.

Readings:

Required:

Gutmann A, Thompson D(1997) *Deliberating about bioethics. Hasting Center Report* 27(3):38-41.

Shapiro HT (1999) *Reflections on the Interface of Bioethics, Public Policy, and Science Kennedy Institute of Ethics Journal* 9(3),pp. 209-224

Wolff, J. (2011). *Ethics and public policy*. Routledge (Chapter 9: pp 191-208)

Recommended:

Kelly SE (2003) *Public Bioethics and Publics: Consensus, Boundaries, and Participation in Biomedical Science Policy. Science Technology Human Values* vol. 28 no. 3 339-364

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Hoffmaster B (2013) 'Impact Ethics' [<http://impactethics.ca/2013/04/02/impact-ethics/>] (accessed November 9, 2013)

Hills K (2013), 'Corruption in a Bioethics Free for All' [<http://impactethics.ca/2013/09/16/corruption-in-a-bioethics-free-for-all>] (accessed November 9, 2013)

Evans N (2013) 'Being and becoming compromised: conflicts of interest in bioethics' [<http://impactethics.ca/2013/09/19/being-and-becoming-compromised-conflicts-of-interest-in-bioethics/>] (accessed November 9, 2013)

Baylis F (2013) 'Impact Ethics: making a difference' [<http://impactethics.ca/2013/04/04/impact-ethics-making-a-difference/>] (accessed November 9, 2013)