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 SAS – SCHOOL OF ARTS AND SCIENCES
 

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**SCHOOL OF LIBERAL ARTS**  
**DEPARTMENT OF PHILOSOPHY / HEALTH HUMANITIES**  
**COURSE TITLE: Biomedical Ethics**  
**COURSE CODE: LAPLBE320 / LSHHBE320**  
**3 semester credits**

### 1. DESCRIPTION

This course examines the ethics of medical practices and issues in contemporary society. Coursework will pose questions regarding areas that affect human life and death. Topics include practices such as euthanasia, birth control and abortion, cloning, genetic engineering, and biomedical research. Students will analyze the ethical nature of covered practices, how they affect people on individual and social scales, and the relationship between patients and physicians and medical structures in terms of information, consent, and responsibility. Case studies from local European as well as non-European countries will be closely considered for discussion and study.

### 2. OBJECTIVES

Students in this course will:

- gain an understanding of the origins and foundations of Bioethics.
- examine historical cases and their implications today.
- explore future developments that will arise in the field.
- learn how to deal with moral and ethical issues that we, as human beings, have to face.
- become familiar with fundamental philosophical principles and ethical concepts in the field.

### 3. REQUIREMENTS

There are no prerequisites for this course.

### 4. METHOD

This course consists of lectures, class discussions, projects, and site visits within the local community. Mediums for instruction used will include, but are not limited to, interactive and hands-on activities which challenge thought processes, academic texts and studies, videos, slides, guided problem solving, and experiential and/or field learning activities where applicable.

### 5. TEXTBOOK – FURTHER READINGS – RESOURCES

TEXTBOOK (Copy available at the university library):

Lewis Vaughn, *Bioethics: Principles, Issues and Cases*, 2nd Edition. Oxford University Press; 2nd edition (September 12, 2012)

The Textbooks are pre-ordered and available at: Paperback Exchange in Via delle Oche 4r or laFeltrinelli Via dei Cerretani 40R. Textbooks may also be available for purchase online or in e-book format.

The textbook is mandatory for successful completion of the course.

Where applicable, additional materials, handouts and/or notes will be provided by the instructor.

## **FURTHER READINGS**

(Books listed below are available in the FUA-AUF library)

David DeGrazia, Thomas Mappes, Jeffrey Ballard. *Biomedical Ethics* 7th Edition. McGraw-Hill Education; 7 edition (June 28, 2010)

Robert M. Veatch, Amy M. Haddad, Dan C. English. *Case Studies in Biomedical Ethics: Decision-Making, Principles, and Cases* 2nd Edition. Oxford University Press; 2 edition (October 13, 2014)

## **LIBRARIES IN FLORENCE**

Please consult the posted schedules for official opening times of the university library. Also note that the library is for consultation only and it is not possible to borrow materials. The library is equipped with a scanner and internet access so that you may save or email a digital copy of the pages needed.

Students may also utilize additional libraries and research centers within the local community:

### **BIBLIOTECA PALAGIO DI PARTE GUELFA**

Located in Piazzetta di Parte Guelfa between Piazza della Repubblica and Ponte Vecchio. Please consult the library website for hours of operation:

[http://www.biblioteche.comune.fi.it/biblioteca\\_palagio\\_di\\_parte\\_guelfa/](http://www.biblioteche.comune.fi.it/biblioteca_palagio_di_parte_guelfa/)

### **BIBLIOTECA DELLE OBLATE**

Located in via dell'Oriuolo 26. Please consult the library website for hours of operation:

[www.bibliotecadelleoblate.it](http://www.bibliotecadelleoblate.it)

### **THE HAROLD ACTON LIBRARY AT THE BRITISH INSTITUTE OF FLORENCE**

Located in Lungarno Guicciardini 9. Please consult the library website for hours of operation. This library requires a fee-based student membership. For information: [www.britishinstitute.it/en](http://www.britishinstitute.it/en)

## **6. FIELD LEARNING**

Please consult your Official Registration for any mandatory field learning dates. Field Learning Activities cited in Official Registrations are an integral part of the course and also include an assignment that counts towards your final grade, details will be provided on the first day of class.

## **7. COURSE MATERIALS**

No additional course materials are necessary.

## **8. COURSE FEES**

Course fees cover course-related field learning activities, visits, and support the instructor's teaching methodologies. Book costs are not included in the course fee. The exact amount will be communicated by the instructor on the first day of class.

## **9. EVALUATION – GRADING SYSTEM**

10% Attendance

10% Class Participation

15% Paper

25% Midterm Exam or Field Learning project in intensive sessions

15% Presentation

25% Final Exam

A = 93-100 %, A- = 90-92%, B+ = 87-89%, B = 83-86%, B- = 80-82%, C+ = 77-79%, C = 73-76%, C- = 70-72%, D = 60-69%, F = 0-59%, W = Official Withdrawal, W/F = Failure to withdraw by the designated date.

## 10. ATTENDANCE – PARTICIPATION

Academic integrity and mutual respect between instructor and student are central to the academic policy and reflected in the attendance regulations. Student presence is mandatory and counts toward the final grade.

**Absences** are based on academic hours: 1 absence equals 3 lecture hours.

Two absences: 6 lecture hours, attendance and participation grade will be impacted.

Three absences: 9 lecture hours, the final grade may be lowered by one letter grade.

Four absences: 12 lecture hours, constitutes automatic failure of the course regardless of when absences are incurred.

Please note:

- The above hours refer to lecture hours. Please note that the contact / credit hour policy in the academic catalog includes additional distribution ratios according to delivery category. Ex: 1 absence equals 6 FL/SL/Lab hours or 9 EL hours.
- Hours may be distributed in different formats according to the academic course schedules.

### LATE ARRIVAL AND EARLY DEPARTURE

Arriving late or departing early from class is not acceptable. Two late arrivals or early departures or a combination will result in an unexcused absence. Travel is not an exceptional circumstance.

### TRAVEL (OR DELAYS DUE TO TRAVEL) IS NEVER AN EXCUSE FOR ABSENCE FROM CLASS.

It is the student's responsibility to know how many absences are incurred. If in doubt, speak with your instructor!

**Participation:** Satisfactory participation will be the result of contributing to class discussions by putting forth insightful and constructive questions, comments and observations. Overall effort, cooperation during group work, proper care of work space and tools, responsible behavior, and completion of assignments will be assessed. All of the above criteria also apply to Field Learning and site visits.

## 11. EXAMS – PAPERS – PROJECTS

The **Midterm** and **Final** exams account for 25% each of the final course grade. For exam time and date consult the course calendar. **The time and date of the exam cannot be changed for any reason.**

Format:

- 20 multiple choice questions (3 points each)
- 1 short answer (15 points)
- The discussion of a case study

In an intensive session the midterm exam is replaced by the Field Learning project. Details are available in myFUA.

The **Paper** accounts for 15% of the course grade.

- Format: topic, length, guidelines, and due date will be provided in the course addendum.
- Material for research will be available in the FUA Library in Corso Tintori 21.

The **Presentation** accounts for 15% of the course grade.

- Format: topic, length, guidelines, and due date will be provided in the course addendum.
- Material for research will be available in the FUA Library in Corso Tintori 21.

## 12. LESSONS

Lesson 1	
<b>Meet</b>	In class
<b>Lecture</b>	Introduction, Morals and Ethics
<b>Objectives</b>	Summary of topics to be covered in the course. Define “ethics”. Development of ethics and medicine through time and different societies. Define and delineate morals from ethics, discuss the role of technology and pragmatism in the practice. Outline and explain the main branches of ethics. What is “morality”? Morality and the Law.
<b>Readings/ Assignments</b>	Case Studies: Introduction: <i>Four Questions of Ethics</i> p. 1-16 Chapter 1 - Moral Reasoning in Bioethics p. 3-32 Chapter 2 - Bioethics and Moral Theories p. 33-51 <i>Utilitarianism</i> , John Stuart Mill p. 52 <i>The Moral Law</i> , Immanuel Kant p. 53 Case Studies: Chapter 2: <i>Values in Health and Illness</i> p. 29-44

Lesson 2	
<b>Meet</b>	In class
<b>Lecture</b>	Religion and Society
<b>Objectives</b>	Explore the role of religion and the social environment in medical decisions and practices. Explore how a country’s religious and historical past influences the medical practices and legislation in place today. Understand and investigate how religion and society can influence an individual’s/doctor’s decision to undergo/perform medical procedures. Case study: human body dissection through centuries and societies.
<b>Readings/ Assignments</b>	Textbook: Chapter 3 p. 71 – 80, p. 80 Case Study 1: <i>Prayer, Medicine, and a Child’s Death</i> Case Studies: Chapter 3 <i>Grounding Ethics in Religious or Philosophical Perspectives</i> p. 57-61 Case study 10-7: <i>Biased Counseling: Teaching About Birth Control</i> p. 220 - 222 Case study 12-4: <i>The Jesus Christian Transplant: Brainwashed into donating a Kidney?</i> p. 261 – 263 Case study 18-7: <i>Demands for Futile Care</i> p. 422 - 424

Lesson 3	
<b>Meet</b>	In class
<b>Lecture</b>	Explore Santa Maria Nuova Hospital (inside)
<b>Objectives</b>	Visit the world oldest hospital working continuously since the foundation in 1288
<b>Visit</b>	Santa Maria Nuova - Please see MyFUA.it for site visit details
<b>Readings/ Assignments</b>	Readings available in myFUA – Lesson #3

Lesson 4	
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<b>Meet</b>	In class
<b>Lecture</b>	Physicians and Patients
<b>Objectives</b>	Investigate how the relationship between doctor and patient has evolved over time, including privacy and consent. Define and discuss key issues related to the doctor-patient dynamic, including paternalism, confidentiality, and therapeutic privilege.
<b>Readings/ Assignments</b>	Textbook: Chapter 4 - Truth-Telling and Confidentiality p. 131 - 140 Chapter 5 - Informed Consent p. 180 – 190 <i>The Concept of Informed Consent</i> , Faden and Beauchamp p. 190

<b>Lesson 5</b>	
<b>Meet</b>	In class
<b>Lecture</b>	Experimentation and Testing
<b>Objectives</b>	How can we be sure that a drug is useful and not dangerous? Ethical issues of experimenting and testing on animals and humans. Case studies: vaccination (polio, small pox, etc.), thalidomide, first heart transplant. Testing new drugs: Protocols and practices. Clinical studies: Prospective, retrospective, case-control, cross-sectional, double-blinded trials, etc. and their implications for experimentation and testing. Basic biostatistical knowledge: sensitivity, specificity, positive/negative predictive value, area-under-curve, for objectively assessing clinical study results and ensuing ethical questions.
<b>Readings/ Assignments</b>	Textbook: Chapter 6 – Human Research p. 221 – 241 <i>Racism and Research: The Case of the Tuskegee Syphilis Study</i> , Brandt p. 266-275 Biomedical Ethics: Chapter 4 – Human and Animal Research  <b>Class Paper due</b>

<b>Lesson 6</b>	
<b>Meet</b>	In class
<b>Lecture</b>	Euthanasia and Physician Assisted Suicide
<b>Objectives</b>	Explore end of life issues in a social and ethical context. Define active vs passive euthanasia. Case study: Englaro and Welby in Italy. Comparison of varying laws on euthanasia (Switzerland, EU, USA, rest of the world).
<b>Readings/ Assignments</b>	Textbook: Chapter 10 – Euthanasia and Physician-assisted Suicide p. 594 – 609 <i>When Self Determination Runs Amok</i> , Callahan p. 625 <i>When Abstract Moralizing Runs Amok</i> , Lachs p. 630

<b>Lesson 7</b>	
<b>Meet</b>	In class
<b>Lecture</b>	<b>Midterm Exam</b>

<b>Lesson 8</b>	
	<b>Academic Break</b>

<b>Lesson 9</b>	
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<b>Meet</b>	In class
<b>Lecture</b>	Genetic engineering, Cloning
<b>Objectives</b>	<p>Planning and enhancing a living organism: from plants to animals to human beings. Economic role of modified vegetables in developed and developing world (corn, ...). DNA modification to cure genetic diseases.</p> <p>Distopic future as represented in literature: “Brave New World”, “Our neural Chernobyl”, “Blade Runner”.</p> <p>Technical aspects of cloning. Duplicating a human being: what for? Organs' reservoir? Mass production? Cloning and genetic engineering in fiction: “The Island” vs “Attack of the Clones”</p>
<b>Readings/ Assignments</b>	<p>Textbook: Chapter 8 – Reproductive Technology p. 400 (<i>Cloning</i>) <i>Cloning Human Beings: An Assessment of the Ethical Issues Pro and Con</i>, Brock p. 499 - 509 Chapter 9 - Genetic Choices p. 518 – 537 <i>Germ-Line Gene Therapy</i>, Walters and Palmer p. 589 - 591</p>

<b>Lesson 10</b>	
<b>Meet</b>	In class
<b>Lecture</b>	Human Reproduction and Eugenics
<b>Objectives</b>	<p>Abortion and contraception; case studies: Roe vs Wade in USA, Italian laws and 1978 referendum, gender control in developing countries</p> <p>Biological determinism, improvement of genetic pool, eugenics; examples: sterilization in Nazi Germany, eugenics law in USA, Cesare Lombroso in Italy</p>
<b>Readings/ Assignments</b>	<p>Textbook: Chapter 7 – Abortion p.291 – 306 Chapter 8 – Reproductive Technology p.392 – 399 <i>Is Gene Therapy a Form of Eugenics?</i>, Harris p. 571 - 576</p>

<b>Lesson 11</b>	
<b>Meet</b>	In class
<b>Lecture</b>	Mental illness
<b>Objectives</b>	<p>Explore mental illness in different cultures and throughout history.</p> <p>Debate and argue on madness as violation of social or religious norms.</p>
<b>Readings/ Assignments</b>	Foucault, <i>Madness and Civilization</i> (pdf, excerpts)

<b>Lesson 12</b>	
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<b>Meet</b>	In class
<b>Lecture</b>	Health Care Resources
<b>Objectives</b>	<p>Who is or is not eligible for care? Who comes first?</p> <p>Moral and ethical issues in emergency situations when large groups of people are involved: natural disasters (i.e. earthquakes), industrial accidents (i.e. Chernobyl), war zones.</p> <p>Allocation of healthcare resources on a daily basis: treatment eligibility, the controversy of over-testing, who pays for therapies (i.e. immunotherapy). Examining standard guidelines of clinical management.</p>
<b>Readings/ Assignments</b>	<p>Textbook:</p> <p>Chapter 11 – Dividing Up Health Care Resources p. 681 – 695</p> <p><i>Is There a Right to Health Care, and, if So, What Does It Encompass?</i>, p. 696</p> <p><i>The Allocation of Exotic Medical Lifesaving Therapy</i>, Rescher p. 729</p>

<b>Lesson 13</b>	
<b>Meet</b>	In class
<b>Lecture</b>	Biology meets technology
<b>Objectives</b>	<p>Explore and discuss the boundary between humans and machine.</p> <p>Examples:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Prostheses implantation: Oscar Pistorius: too enhanced to compete?</li> <li>- Organ transplantation: Donation or sale? Ethics of face-transplantation</li> <li>- Stem-cell therapy: doing research with fetal stem cells, the position of the Catholic Church in Italy</li> </ul>
<b>Readings/ Assignments</b>	<p>Textbook:</p> <p><i>What Does 'Respect for Embryos' Mean in the Context of Stem Cell Research?</i>, Steinbock p. 589</p> <p><i>Declaration on the Production and the Scientific and Therapeutic Use of Human Embryonic Stem Cells</i>, Pontifical Academy for Life p. 592</p> <p>Case Studies in Biomedical Ethics: Chapter 14 – Organ Transplants p. 293 – 325</p> <p>Case study 14-1: <i>Donation, Salvaging, Incentives for Transplantable Organs</i> p. 295</p> <p>Case study 14-8: <i>The Full-Face Transplant</i>, p. 315</p>

<b>Lesson 14</b>	
<b>Meet</b>	In class
<b>Lecture</b>	Final Recap
<b>Objectives</b>	A full survey of the topics presented and discussed in the course
<b>Readings/ Assignments</b>	Prepare questions for the final review

<b>Lesson 15</b>	
<b>Meet</b>	In class
<b>Lecture</b>	<b>Final Exam</b>