

NOVA COLLEGE-WIDE COURSE CONTENT SUMMARY

PHI 227 - BIO-MEDICAL ETHICS (3 CR.)

Course Description

Examines the ethical implications of specific biomedical issues in the context of major ethical systems. Lecture 3 hours per week.

General Course Purpose

To introduce the student to important controversies in biology and medicine which have ethical dimensions. To examine these issues in the context of ethical theory. To show the importance of critical analysis and ethical theory for the resolution of these dilemmas. In addition, students will engage each other in sustained discussion of these issues. This course will provide the student with the opportunity to critically read and write about primary texts, commentaries and textbook materials in bioethics.

Course Prerequisites/Corequisites

None

Course Objectives

At the completion of this course, the student will be able to identify and critically evaluate important controversies in healthcare and biology, such as informed consent, abortion, euthanasia in terms of major ethical theories. Specifically, the student will be able to:

- Identify, explain and evaluate the principal ethical theories, including Classical, Natural law, Kantian, Utilitarian, and social contract theories. (Relates to General Education objectives 1.1, 1.2, 1.3, 1.4, 3.4 and 5.2)
- List, define and explain key concepts, such as "death", "whole brain death", "suicide", "informed consent", "extraordinary means", "euthanasia", "genetic engineering" in ART and cloning, etc (objs 1.1-1.5, 2.2-2.6, 3.2-3.4)
- Apply these theories in the analysis of bioethical controversies, case studies and legal cases. (objs 2.1, 2.2, 2.3, 2.5, 3.2, 3.5)
- Present effectively in writing an extended argument on a topic of bioethical importance. (objs 1.1-1.5, 2.1-2.6, 3.2-3.4, 4.1 - 4.4)
- State a thesis about a problem or text in bioethics, and provide evidence and philosophical argument in formal writing and discussion, (including replies to counter-arguments) in its defense. (objs 1.1-1.5, 2.1-2.6, 3.2-3.4, 4.1 - 4.4)
- Analyze fundamental issues and problems in bioethics, and distinguish better and worse reasoning in texts concerned with bioethics. (objs 1.1-1.5, 2.2-2.6, 3.1-3.5)
- Participate and reflect on a service learning experience with a specific community in their local area, e.g. hospice, free clinic, hospital (Service Learning) (objs 1.1-1.5, 5.1,5.2, 3.1-3.5)

Major Topics to be Included

- Problems surrounding the changing definition of death, life and personhood
- Truth-telling and confidentiality
- Informed Consent and autonomy
- Rights of patients
- Suicide, Euthanasia and Physician-Assisted Suicide
- In vitro fertilization and other forms of Assisted Reproduction Technology (ART)
- Surrogate motherhood
- Ethics of organ and other transplantation
- Problems of allocating scarce medical resources
- Genetic choices in ART and other treatments