

SPRING 2022

Philosophy 6698: Bioethics & Biotechnology

3:00 – 6:00 pm Mondays
Room 200 Griffin-Floyd Hall

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Office Hours: Wednesdays, 12:30 – 2:30 p.m. (in person) and
Thursdays, 3 – 4 p.m. (on Zoom) and by appointment
Office Hours Sign-Up Sheet: <http://bit.ly/2vYpCmI>
Zoom office hours link: <https://ufl.zoom.us/j/5413165558>

Course Description: This is a graduate seminar on issues in bioethics and biotechnology. We will consider a number of issues loosely organized around the themes of creating, extending, and ending lives. Such issues include abortion, assisted reproduction, reproductive cloning, human enhancement, life extension, euthanasia, and creating and killing nonhuman animals. We will contextualize these issues within a variety of philosophical frameworks including utilitarianism, deontology, and pluralistic accounts of right and wrong. We will also consider and evaluate certain patterns of reasoning that show up in many of these debates. Such patterns include slippery-slope arguments, appeals to a distinction between what is natural and what is artificial, and appeals to various formulations of what is often referred to as “the precautionary principle.”

Course Goals: This course is designed to increase your “knowledge how,” which is acquired through practice; and your “knowledge that,” which is acquired through exposure to information.

Knowledge how:

- To read for, charitably understand, and reconstruct arguments
- To critically evaluate your own and other people’s views
- To develop and situate your own contributions to the literature
- To teach the methodology of and main ideas in bioethics to undergraduates

Knowledge that:

- Knowledge of the major contributions that have so far been made to the discussion about bioethics and biotechnology

Materials: All of the required readings will be available as PDFs on our Canvas website. Studies suggest that reading printed words promotes comprehension better than reading words on a computer screen, so I recommend that you print out the readings and compile them in a three-ring binder. This will have the added advantage of making it easier for you to refer to specific passages from the readings during our seminar discussions.

Requirements:

(1) *Attendance and Participation.* You will be expected to attend and actively participate in our seminar discussions. However, if you fall ill, you should not come to seminar. Missing class will not adversely affect your grade unless you accrue an usually large number of absences; quality participation (when you are healthy) is more important than perfect attendance. *There is no need to email me about any individual absence unless you have a large number of them.* Requirements for class attendance and make-up exams, assignments, and other work in this course are consistent with university policies stated here: <https://catalog.ufl.edu/UGRD/academic-regulations/attendance-policies/>. (10% of grade)

(2) *Weekly Question or Comment.* By 11:59 p.m. on every Saturday before class (not including the Saturdays before holidays or spring break), you must upload a question or a comment on at least one of the readings to Canvas. Your question or comment can take a variety of forms. You can raise an objection, offer a response to an objection on behalf of the author, attempt to lay bare the structure of an argument that is difficult to interpret, consider how a particular view might handle certain cases that the author doesn't discuss, draw an interesting connection between one reading and another, or simply raise a question about something you found puzzling. Aim to write approximately 200 words each week. Our in-class discussion will be centered, in large part, on some of your comments or questions, so this is one of the main ways in which you can help set the agenda for our seminar. (20% of grade)

(3) *Midterm Exam.* There will be a "take-home" exam for you to complete on Canvas. It will consist of short essay questions asking you about the material from the first two thirds of the semester. (20% of grade)

(4) *End of Semester Conference and Term Paper.* At the end of the semester, you will present your term paper idea to the class. You should then write/revise your paper in light of the feedback you receive during the Q&A. The final draft of your term paper will then be due at 11:59 p.m. on April 28. It should be between 3,000 and 4,500 words. (50% of grade)

Current UF Grading Policies: <https://catalog.ufl.edu/UGRD/academic-regulations/grades-grading-policies/>

Resources for Students With Disabilities: Students with disabilities who experience learning barriers and would like to request academic accommodations should connect with the Disability Resource Center: <https://disability.ufl.edu/get-started/>. It is important to share your accommodation letter with me and discuss your access needs as early as possible in the semester.

Evaluations: Students are expected to provide professional and respectful feedback on the quality of instruction in this course by completing course evaluations online via GatorEvals. Guidance on how to give feedback in a professional and respectful manner is available at <https://gatorevals.aa.ufl.edu/students/>. Students will be notified when the evaluation period opens, and can complete evaluations through the email they receive from GatorEvals, in their Canvas course menu under GatorEvals, or via <https://ufl.bluera.com/ufl/>. Summaries of course evaluation results are available to students at <https://gatorevals.aa.ufl.edu/public-results/>.

Schedule

January 10: Bioethics, AI, and Philosophy

- Ian Brassington (2013). What's the Point of Philosophical Bioethics? *Health Care Analysis* 21: 20 – 30.
- Julian Savulescu (2015). Bioethics: Why Philosophy is Essential for Progress. *Journal of Medical Ethics* 41: 28 – 33.
- Walter Sinnott Armstrong and Joshua August Skorburg (forthcoming). How AI can AID Bioethics. *Journal of Practical Ethics*.

January 17: Martin Luther King, Jr. Day – No Class

January 24: Creating People

- Derek Parfit (1986). *Reasons and Persons*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, Chapter 16.
- David Boonin (forthcoming). Parfit and the Non-Identity Problem. In Stephen M. Gardiner, ed. *The Oxford Handbook of Intergenerational Ethics*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

January 31: Creating People

- Molly Gardner (2015). A Harm-Based Solution to the Non-Identity Problem. *Ergo* 2: 427 – 444.
- Molly Gardner (2019). When Good Things Happen to Harmed People. *Ethical Theory and Moral Practice* 22(4): 893 – 908.

February 7: Selecting for Disability

- Mark Greene and Steven Augello (2011). Everworse: What's Wrong with Selecting for Disability? *Public Affairs Quarterly* 25(2): 131 – 139.
- Elizabeth Barnes (2014). Valuing Disability, Causing Disability. *Ethics* 125(1): 88 – 113.

February 14: Prenatal Genetic Testing

- Erik Parens and Adrienne Asch (1999). The Disability Rights Critique of Prenatal Genetic Testing: Reflections and Recommendations. *Hastings Center Report* 29(5): s1 – s22.
- Julian Savulescu (2001). Procreative Beneficence: Why We Should Select the Best Children. *Bioethics* 15(5&6): 413 – 26.

February 21: Enhancement

- Michael J. Sandel (2004). The Case Against Perfection. *The Atlantic Monthly* 293(3): 51 – 62.
- Nick Bostrom (2003). Human Genetic Enhancements: A Transhumanist Perspective. *The Journal of Value Inquiry* 37(4): 493 – 506.
- Walter Veit (2018). Procreative Beneficence and Genetic Enhancement. *Kriterion – Journal of Philosophy* 32(1): 75 – 92.

February 28: Anti-Natalism

- David Benatar (2006) *Better Never to Have Been: The Harm of Coming into Existence*. New York: Oxford University Press, Chapters 1 and 2.
- Elizabeth Harman (2006). David Benatar, *Better Never to Have Been: The Harm of Coming into Existence*. *Nous* 43(4): 776 – 785.

SPRING BREAK (March 5 – 12)

March 14: Abortion

- Judith Jarvis Thomson (1971). A Defense of Abortion. *Philosophy and Public Affairs* 1(1): 47 – 6.
- Don Marquis (1989). Why Abortion is Immoral. *Journal of Philosophy* 86(4): 183 – 202.
- Alastair Norcross (1990). Killing, Abortion, and Contraception: A Reply to Marquis. *Journal of Philosophy* 87(5): 268 – 277.

Midterm Essay Exam Due Friday, March 18 at 11:59 p.m.

March 21: Killing Nonhuman Animals

- Peter Singer (2003). Animal Liberation at 30. *New York Review of Books* 50(8), May 15th, 23 – 6.
- Carl Cohen (1986). The Case for the Use of Animals in Biomedical Research. *New England Journal of Medicine* 315(14): 865 – 70.
- Gary Varner (1994). The Prospects for Consensus and Convergence in the Animal Rights Debate. *Hastings Center Report* 24(1): 24 – 28.

March 28: Euthanasia and Physician-Assisted Suicide

- James Rachels (1975). Active and Passive Euthanasia. *New England Journal of Medicine* 292(2): 78 – 80.
- Philippa Foot (1967). The Problem of Abortion and the Doctrine of the Double Effect. In Philippa Foot (1977/2002) *Virtues and Vices and Other Essays in Moral Philosophy*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- J.M. Dieterle (2007). Physician Assisted Suicide: A New Look at the Arguments. *Bioethics* 21(3): 127 – 139.

April 4: To Be Determined by Class Vote

April 11: Conference (no readings)

April 18: Conference (no readings)

The final draft of your term paper will is due at 11:59 p.m. on April 28.