



School of History, Philosophy, Political Science and International Relations
Philosophy Program

First Trimester 2009

PHIL361 (CRN 1061)
THICS AND POLITICS:
A SELECTED TOPIC: BIOETHICS

Lecturer

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Office hours

By arrangement

Class Times and Room Number

One three hour lecture per week in **HU324** on Monday 2:10-5pm. Students will be expected to attend class regularly, contribute to class discussion and keep up with the reading.

Blackboard

This course will be listed on the University Blackboard System. The course information and power point presentations for the lectures will be posted there.

Additional Information

Any additional information will be posted on Blackboard.

Course Aims

This course explores a range of controversies in bioethics. The course begins by examining issues that arise at the beginning of life. What is the moral status of abortion? Does a pregnant woman have a moral obligation to safeguard the welfare of her future child? Should a woman be entitled to accept payment for bearing another woman's child? We then turn to questions concerning the end of life. We examine debates about euthanasia, severely disabled newborns, and the moral status of advance directives. The third topic concerns the allocation of scarce medical resources. How do we decide which patients should have the strongest claim on a finite health budget? The fourth topic is organ donation. What moral reason can we give for donating organs? Are there morally acceptable ways to increase the supply of donated organs? This is followed by a section on the ethics of medical research in which we examine the issue of the rules governing medical experimentation. We conclude with a section on the behaviour of doctors in respect of their patients. Are doctors bound by a duty to always tell the truth? What limits are set by the doctrine of informed consent?

Course Objectives

Students who pass the course will have acquired a good understanding of some of the central issues in bioethics.

Course Content

Detailed in a separate document.

Key text

You should purchase Helga Kuhse and Peter Singer (eds), *Bioethics: An Anthology: Second Edition* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2006) from the university bookshop.

Assessment

There will be two essays (25% each), three short answer tests (the best two marks to jointly contribute 10%) and an exam (40%).

i. Essays: The essays should be approximately 2500-3000 words long. The due date for the first essay will be April 27. The second essay is due June 2. **You must submit your essay electronically via Blackboard** (please consult *Blackboard* for instructions). **This electronic version will be sent to turnitin.com, an anti-plagiarism website, and is the version that will be graded.** (Additional information regarding the use of Turnitin will be given on the essay topic handout.) However, as a back-up **you must also submit a hard copy of your essay to the Philosophy Programme office (MY 518).**

Essays submitted after the due date will be accepted but they will not receive written comments. There will be no grade penalty for late essays. The final date for the submission of work for this course is June 12. No essay can be accepted after this date.

ii. In-class tests: The dates of the short answer tests are as follows – March 23, May 4, and May 25. The tests will take up the final hour of the lecture. Their purpose is evaluate students' general awareness of the literature in the text.

iii. Exam: The final piece of assessment is a three hour, closed book exam. You should answer any three questions – the exam will **not** be divided into sections. You should avoid overlap between exam answers.

The University has a policy of reasonable accommodation of the needs of students with disabilities in assessment procedures.

Relationship between Assessment and Objectives

The essay gives students an opportunity for a relatively philosophically in-depth treatment of one of the issues covered in the course. The in-class tests should ensure that students are keeping up with the issues and literature as the course proceeds.

Workload

The University's guideline for a 300-level 1 trimester 24 point course is 18 hours per week, including class time.

Graduate attributes

As with all PHIL courses, learning objectives of this course contribute to the attainment of specific attributes in the areas of logical and critical thinking, conceptual analysis and rational and ethical decision-making. Please consult the Programme Prospectus 2009, p. 7, for more details or on our website

<http://www.victoria.ac.nz/phil/degrees/index.aspx>

Mandatory course requirements

None

Academic integrity and plagiarism

Academic integrity means that university staff and students, in their teaching and learning are expected to treat others honestly, fairly and with respect at all times. It is not acceptable to mistreat academic, intellectual or creative work that has been done by other people by representing it as your own original work.

Academic integrity is important because it is the core value on which the University's learning, teaching and research activities are based. Victoria University's reputation for academic integrity adds value to your qualification.

The University defines plagiarism as presenting someone else's work as if it were your own, whether you mean to or not. 'Someone else's work' means anything that is not your own idea. Even if it is presented in your own style, you must acknowledge your sources fully and appropriately. This includes:

- Material from books, journals or any other printed source
- The work of other students or staff
- Information from the internet
- Software programs and other electronic material
- Designs and ideas
- The organisation or structuring of any such material

Find out more about plagiarism, how to avoid it and penalties, on the University's website: <http://www.victoria.ac.nz/home/study/plagiarism.aspx>

GENERAL UNIVERSITY POLICIES AND STATUTES

Students should familiarise themselves with the University's policies and statutes, particularly the Assessment Statute, the Personal Courses of Study Statute, the Statute on Student Conduct and any statutes relating to the particular qualifications being studied; see the *Victoria University Calendar* or go to the Academic Policy and Student Policy sections on:

<http://www.victoria.ac.nz/home/about/policy>

This website also provides information for students in a number of areas including Academic Grievances, Student and Staff conduct, Meeting the needs of students with impairments, and student support/VUWSA student advocates.