
Topics in Biomedical Ethics

BIOL496 Independent Study (1 credit) Spring 2023

Summary

Medical practice and scientific research in the biomedical sciences are at their core human activities governed by reason. The desire to uncover mechanisms and develop approaches to improve human health must be accompanied by universal moral principles governed by human reason. One of the most obvious contributions of Philosophy to the natural sciences today is found in the application of ethical thinking. Found in guidelines for responsible conduct in research, the design of clinical trials or everyday medical practice, ethical principles are meant to protect vulnerable individuals and to promote harmony between scientific goals and the human person.

Scope and Outcomes

After completing this course students will be able to describe bioethical challenges of acute relevance in the world today. They will be able to apply ethical principles to conduct analyses of specific problems and propose possible solutions. The course will consist of 4 short lectures (25 min, we will find a time that works for all participants) which will address selected topics in biomedical ethics, followed by a 30 minute discussion amongst participants. The topics will be chosen by the instructor using materials from the 2018 Clinical Bioethics Course at Harvard Medical School.

Logistics and Grading

Students are expected to attend the lecture/discussion sessions (February) and to complete the assigned reading. Afterwards, each student will select a topic of interest and write a short research essay (rubric will be provided) under the guidance of the instructor (March-April). The conclusions of the paper will be presented (5 minute presentation, 5 minute discussion) by the student to their peers at the end of the semester. The final grade will be computed as follows: Attendance: 25% Presentation: 25% Paper: 50%

Examples of topics to be covered:

The Belmont Report and Basic HHS Policy for the Protection of Human Research Subjects.	Death and organ transplantation
Disorders of consciousness	Medical assisted suicide
Human genetic engineering	Assisted reproduction

Dr. Ontiveros has completed certificate coursework in Bioethics from Georgetown and Harvard universities and is a member of the Bioethics Committee at Strong Memorial Hospital (Rochester, NY) To register for this course talk to Dr. Ontiveros and then fill out an Independent Study Authorization form found in the Registrar's site: <https://www.sjf.edu/services/registrar/documents-and-forms/>