

PHIL 165: Bioethics

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course has two related objectives. First, it aims to acquaint you with some of the questions and the philosophical responses to these questions that dominate contemporary thinking in bioethics. Second, and perhaps more importantly, this course aims to equip you with skills that you can apply to a variety of domains outside of philosophy.

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COURSE INFORMATION

You will use this Sakai course site to access lesson content, submit assignments, and participate in the discussion forums.

We recommend using [Mozilla Firefox](#) with Sakai for optimal performance.

- New to Sakai? Review our [Student Orientation](#).
- [Contact your instructor](#) with questions regarding the content of the course and your progress.
- If you experience any problems with this Sakai site, please contact [Heather Hans](#), the instructional designer at the Friday Center.
- Contact the [UNC Help desk](#) for any problem you have with Sakai, your Internet connection, your browser, downloads, and so on. Help is available twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week.
- Contact the [Student Services](#) staff at the Friday Center for Continuing Education (phone 919-962-1134 or 800-862-5669) with questions about enrollment, Onyen, credits, withdrawal, and so on.

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This syllabus includes the following sections:

- Course Overview
- Required Text
- Course Requirements
- Grading
- Points of Advice
- Useful Websites

- Academic Policies

COURSE OVERVIEW

This course has two related objectives. First, it aims to acquaint you with some of the questions and the philosophical responses to these questions that dominate contemporary thinking in bioethics. You will be asked to think carefully and critically about the merits of competing responses to these questions. You will also learn to apply the theoretical tools that philosophers have developed to address these questions in analyzing particular cases. By the end of the term, you will be well positioned to develop and argue for your own answers to these questions.

Second, and perhaps more importantly, this course aims to equip you with skills that you can apply to a variety of domains outside of philosophy. Through both your writing and your discussion with your peers in the forum, you will employ abstract principles to analyze particular cases, effectively reconstruct arguments for a position or view from a piece of text, critically evaluate arguments, construct persuasive arguments in defense of a position or view, and anticipate potential objections to a position or view.

This course has no prerequisites and is designed for students without prior exposure to philosophy.

REQUIRED TEXT

You are required to purchase one textbook for this course:

Lewis Vaughn: *Bioethics: Principles, Issues, and Cases*. 2nd edition (Oxford University Press, 2013). ISBN: 978-0199796236

You can find information on how to purchase textbooks and required materials on the [Textbooks](#) page of the Friday Center website. Note: If you purchase your textbooks from UNC Student Stores, be sure to purchase the textbooks from the 990-992 section of the course to ensure you obtain the correct materials.

Although many of the reading assignments are rather short, they are difficult. Plan to read the assignments several times because you will probably not understand everything after just one reading. You should start your reading for one lesson before the previous lesson ends to allow adequate time to read carefully and to submit your assignments by the due dates.

Library Services (including Course Reserves)

Students enrolled in Carolina Courses Online have access to the UNC Library System. Visit [Distance Education Library Services](#) to access a wide array of online services and resources including course reserves, online databases, online journals, online books, and live help with research and library access. Most online resources require you to log in with your Onyen and password. If you have any trouble finding the resource that you need or logging in to a resource, you

can contact the library through the contact information at [Distance Education Library Services](#). You can chat live about your problem, or send an email to request assistance.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

This course requires you to complete reading quizzes and participate in the discussion forum. You must also complete two papers and a final exam. This workload is the same as that of a traditional class, but since we are in a short summer session, it takes place over a much shorter period of time. Therefore, you should be prepared to devote a significant amount of time to this class on a daily basis. Detailed information about each requirement and information about submitting assignments is below.

Reading Quizzes

During most lessons you will complete a short multiple-choice reading quiz (in the Quizzes and Exams section of Sakai). These quizzes assess your reading comprehension. You may take each quiz as many times as it takes for you earn a perfect score, which is meant to encourage you to clarify your understanding of any part of the reading that you do not grasp the first time. And you can post questions about the reading quizzes and respond to each other's questions on the Open Discussion Forum, which is explained in more detail below.

You *must* complete the quiz prior to the end of the lesson. For each time a student does not achieve a perfect score on a reading quiz prior to this deadline, he or she will receive a 5 percent deduction in his or her participation grade for the course.

Discussion Forum

The discussion forum is our online version of classroom discussion, and it serves several purposes:

- It provides an intellectual community for the class.
- It helps you pace your work so that you won't be tempted to leave all the reading until a few days before a major assignment is due.
- It allows me to determine when you are confused about major points so I can offer corrections.

You can access the discussion forums using the Forums link in the left navigation bar of Sakai. Don't worry if all you see is a blank white screen at first; sometimes it takes a while for the forums to load.

Two types of forums will run throughout the term.

- The optional **Open Discussion Forum**, where you can post any questions or comments related to the material. I will *not* guide the discussion here.
- The required **Lesson Forum**, containing prompts that I post for each lesson.

You are required to participate in the forum for most lessons, either by answering one of my suggested questions or by responding to others' posts. (The specific requirements are explained in greater detail below.) Discussion will be suspended during exam periods.

Roles

For Lessons 1 and 12, all of you are required to post about the same topic and your posts will be graded for completion.

For Lessons 2 through 11, I will divide the class into two groups. Each lesson, the students in each group will alternate between completing the Role A assignment and the Role B assignment on the Lesson Forum. For example, if you are in the group that completes the Role A assignment for Lesson 2, then you will complete the Role B assignment for Lesson 3, and so on.

Regardless of which role you have been assigned for a particular lesson, you are always encouraged to participate in our discussion more fully and comprehensively than what is required. For example, if you are assigned to Role A for a given lesson, you are certainly encouraged to respond to posts that others have submitted in response to your initial essay.

Role A: Students in the group assigned to Role A for a particular lesson are required to post a response (between 200 and 300 words) to one of the prompts **on the first day of the lesson**. These responses will be graded for quality as short essays, and I will provide feedback to you on both the content and on the quality of your writing. The prompts will require you to go beyond demonstrating comprehension in your responses by asking you to critically evaluate arguments presented in the reading and to apply the views presented in the reading in new ways. **Role A posts are due by 11:55 pm on the first day of the lesson.**

Role B: Students in the group assigned to Role B for the lesson will have **twenty-four hours** to post at least one response to the essays that students in Role A have already posted on the Lesson Forum. These responses ought to engage respectfully, but critically, with the essays to which they respond and should be *at least* a few (grammatically correct) sentences long. Each of the posts submitted by students in Role B will be graded for satisfactory completion. This means that posts that demonstrate a gross misunderstanding, are not grammatically correct, and/or are difficult to parse will not receive full credit. **Role B posts are due by 11:55 pm on the second day of the lesson.**

Grading

Each of your five Role A discussion posts count as 20 percent of your discussion forum grade. (And your discussion forum grade counts as 20 percent of your final course grade.) Your Role B responses and any additional posts you make will be factored into your course participation grade.

To ensure that the discussion forum is successful in encouraging students to engage with one another, late discussion posts will not be accepted and students will not be permitted to make up any

discussion form posts that they miss (unless the student provides documentation of extenuating circumstances).

At the end of each lesson, I will distribute a summary of the main themes covered in our discussion on the Lesson Forum.

Tips for Success

To promote a respectful atmosphere, remember to formulate suggestions to colleagues carefully, so that they will be received as constructive criticism. Also, if a suggested question has already been answered by a number of your colleagues, you should try to critique or build upon a colleague's postings by considering the following:

- Has your colleague's response covered all the main points, or is there something that you could add?
- Is part of the post confusing, and do you have questions about what it might mean?
- Do you have a suggestion about how the point might have been expressed more clearly?

Reading and critiquing one another's work is a useful learning tool, so I encourage you to get into the habit of responding to one another.

Finally, you should be able to answer all of the questions suggested for the discussion forum, regardless of which ones you choose to answer. All of the questions are fair game for the final exam.

Papers

You will be expected to submit two critical papers (each between 1,000 and 1,250 words) for this course. Each paper requires you to focus on a case study and synthesize material from the readings to develop and defend your own ethical analysis of the case.

I prefer that you do not reference readings outside of those assigned in this class in your papers. You must cite the sources of all ideas, quotes, and paraphrases that are not your own. The Writing Center has a useful [\[handout on completing philosophy writing assignments\]](#) that you should review before beginning your paper.

Though you can use the Open Discussion Forum to discuss the theories you plan to use in your paper and/or the arguments that you plan to give in defense of your own position, the paper you submit must contain only your own work. *The Honor Code will be strictly enforced*, and you will be required to pledge that you have neither given nor received unauthorized aid.

I am always happy to set up a time to meet with you via Skype or over the phone to discuss an outline of your paper.

Requirements

- **Length:** Your papers must be between 1,000 and 1,250 words. This is the equivalent of three to four double-spaced pages in 12-point type. I will strictly enforce this maximum. It is

in place to help you focus your discussion, explain your points thoroughly but concisely, and avoid the temptation to discuss tangential issues.

- **Submission:** Submit your papers by uploading them in the Assignments section of Sakai. See the Submitting Assignments section below for more information.
- **Late Work:** Late papers will not be accepted for credit unless there is a serious problem that has been documented (such as by a doctor's note). If, for any reason, you anticipate needing an extension on one of the paper assignments, you must contact me via email at least twenty-four hours prior to the due date to ask for an extension.
- **Anonymity:** So that I can grade "blindly," do not include your name in the filename or in the body of your paper. However, you must include your PID in the filename and in the main text of your paper. Instructions regarding how to format your submission will be included with each paper assignment (Your PID is included in your Confirmation Letter. If you do not have your confirmation letter, you can find your PID [here](#).)
- **Citing Sources:** You should cite any sources you use in your papers in a way that clearly identifies the source. You can use any system of citation and/or bibliography you like (MLA, APA, Chicago, and so on), as long as use one style consistently throughout the paper.

Grading Rubric for Papers 1 and 2

Task	Weight
<p>Summarize a Case: Does your paper explain the details of the case that will be relevant to subsequent discussion clearly and concisely?</p>	10 percent
<p>Clearly state the bioethical question(s) that your paper will address in connection with this case and articulate the answer(s) to these question(s) that your paper will defend: Does your paper make clear to the reader which bioethical issues that arise in connection with the case you have chosen it will address? Does your paper articulate a coherent position with respect to these issues?</p>	20 percent
<p>Convincingly and thoroughly defend your position: Does your paper provide the reader with good reasons for thinking that your answer(s) to the bioethical question(s) that arise in the context of the case you have selected are correct? To receive credit for this portion of the assignment, it is not enough for your paper to merely explain your position and detail the way it differs from opposing views. Your paper must also explain why your position has some advantage over opposing views. A paper that does not address at least one potential objection to the position that it aims to defend will not earn top marks in this category.</p>	30 percent
<p>In the course of defending this evaluative stance, demonstrate a sophisticated understanding of relevant material from the course</p>	20 percent

<p>readings: Do you show that you fully understand the various (relevant) philosophical positions that we have studied in the course? Does your writing demonstrate that you have thought deeply and critically about the relevant material from the readings.</p>	
<p>Craft prose that clearly communicates ideas: Is your paper organized effectively. Do your sentences express your thoughts clearly and are they structured so that they are easy to understand? Does your writing style makes the reasoning or way of thinking transparent to the reader?</p>	20 percent

Final Exam

The cumulative final exam will require you to write one short essay (between 300 and 400 words) in response to a prompt that you will select from a bank of three prompts. The final exam essay prompts will be modeled on the discussion forum prompts.

The exam will be available in the Quizzes and Exams section of the Sakai site on the dates listed on the Schedule page. You may complete the final exam at any point during those dates, but once you begin the exam you will have three hours to submit your essay. If you fail to submit your exam response within three hours of opening the exam, you will not receive credit for the final exam.

You must take the final exam alone. The final exam will be **open book** and **open note**, but you are not permitted to seek any outside assistance apart from these sources while completing the exam. All your responses must be given in your own words. You may not quote from any source. You may not cut and paste from any sources, including your own papers or discussion forum posts. The Honor Code will be strictly enforced, and you will be required to pledge that you have neither given nor received unauthorized aid.

No late exams will be accepted. Anyone who does not submit exam responses will not be able to complete the course this term.

Submitting Assignments

Make sure to complete the steps below when you're ready to submit your papers or final exam.

1. Keep backup copies of each assignment.
2. Pledge the Honor Code for each graded assignment ("I have neither given nor received unauthorized aid, in accordance with the Honor Code, on this assignment"). The [Honor Code](#) will be strictly enforced for all exams and papers.
3. Cite every *idea* that is not your own, as well as any quoted or paraphrased passages.
4. Submit all assignments as instructed through Sakai.

5. If technical difficulties prevent your exam or paper from reaching me in a legible form, you must let me know immediately and attempt to resend your assignment electronically—either by uploading it to Sakai or sending it to me as an email attachment.

GRADING

Final grades in this course will be calculated as shown below.

Assignment	Weight
Role A Discussion Posts (5 total)	20 percent
Paper 1	30 percent
Paper 2	30 percent
Final Exam	10 percent
Participation (Lessons 1 & 12 posts, 10 Role B posts, and Reading Quizzes)	10 percent

Grading is a matter of comparing and ranking student work. When I grade your assignments, I am comparing your work to that of other students in this class but also in past classes. The comparative nature of grading means that it is important for students to have the same assignments and opportunities. Occasionally, a student will ask to do extra work in order to raise a grade, but in fairness to other students, I must refuse such requests. The same considerations motivate my policy about paper drafts: Since I won't be reading and commenting on drafts from every student, I will not read drafts at all.

Like most instructors I know, I do not approach an assignment with the idea that it starts with an A, and then loses points for errors. If anything, I approach the assignment initially as if it is average work, which then receives a higher or lower grade according to whether it indicates more or less

understanding and skill than average. When you remember that grading is comparative, it can help you to understand why, for example, an exam or paper response that makes no obvious errors may not earn top marks. Other students may have written responses that demonstrated greater depth of understanding, were better organized, or easier for a reader to follow.

The grade given for any particular assignment reflects only the quality of that assignment. It is not a personal judgment either of you or your abilities. This is why I will, whenever possible, grade “blindly.” I am aware that some of you may be facing difficulties or juggling many responsibilities, and I will not be offended if philosophy is not your first priority. Nevertheless, it would be unethical for me to base anyone’s grade upon effort or independent reasons for needing a high grade, for example. The grade a student earns on any given assignment will be determined exclusively by the quality of the work submitted.

Your work in this course is graded on a standard 10-point scale as outlined below. See the [Registrar’s explanation of the grading system](#) for more detailed information about the grading scale.

A	94–100	B+	87–89	C+	77–79	D+	67–69	F	below 60
A-	90–93	B	84–86	C	74–76	D	60–66		
		B-	80–83	C-	70–73				

I employ “blind grading” for all papers. I ask you to assist me in this by including only your PID (and not your name) on your paper. (Your PID is included in your confirmation letter. If you do not have your confirmation letter, you can find your PID [here](#).)

You can estimate your own grade at any point during the term based on the grades you have received so far, which will be posted in the grade book.

If you believe that a grade you received does not accurately reflect the quality of the work, you may contact me with this concern. In doing so, please be prepared to explain your reasons. Be aware that when you contest a grade, I will reassess the assignment from scratch, which means that the grade could be either raised or lowered.

POINTS OF ADVICE

Since this is a three-credit course, you should spend a minimum of nine hours on the lesson each week. You may need to spend more than that on the first few lessons, since you will be faced with ideas and expectations that may be unfamiliar. Once you start to accumulate a stock of concepts and tools, you will become more efficient in your reading and writing. Throughout the course, though, *you should expect to read each article several times*, and outline or summarize each reading.

On the Reading Guidelines page, I suggest a general strategy for approaching the readings. As you progress through the course, you probably will begin to follow my suggestions more naturally. In the beginning though, you should use these steps to guide your reading.

The better you become at seeing the big picture, the more you'll enjoy grappling with the questions and assignments. Don't focus on trying to understand every detail. Focus on learning to figure out what the bottom line of the author's view is, on seeing the basic differences among the various responses to a question, and on understanding the arguments that the authors we read offer in defense of their positions.

Be sure that your discussion forum posts and your papers *specifically answers the questions posed to you in the assignment* (rather than simply addressing related topics). This might seem obvious, but it's surprisingly easy to forget.

USEFUL WEBSITES

- [A Dictionary of Philosophical Terms and Names](#). Use this dictionary to look up any unfamiliar philosophical terms. You may wish to consult other resources as well (this site includes links to such resources), but look here first.
- [Writing in Philosophy](#), a handout from the UNC Writing Center. I greatly encourage you to use this handout! The site has links to handouts containing more general advice about writing.
- [Guidelines on Writing a Philosophy Paper](#). This is a great link to information on how to write a philosophy paper.
- [Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy](#). This online encyclopedia is an immense resource. Some of these entries are quite advanced, so don't worry if they don't all make sense to you (yet!).

General Bioethics Websites and Search Engines

- [Ability.org \(Bioethics\)](#)
- [Hastings Center](#)
- [WHO \(World Health Organization\)](#)
- [Bioethics Information Sources](#), National Library of Medicine

There are many websites related to issues in bioethics. While I encourage you to look around a bit, beware of spending too much time chasing facts and figures and too little time grappling with the philosophical questions.

ACADEMIC POLICIES

By enrolling as a student in this course, you agree to abide by the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill policies related to the acceptable use of online resources. Please consult the [Acceptable Use Policy](#) on topics such as copyright, net-etiquette, and privacy protection.

As part of this course, you may be asked to participate in online discussions or other online activities that may include personal information about you or other students in the course. Please be respectful of the rights and protection of other participants under the UNC-Chapel Hill [Information Security Policies](#) when participating in online classes.

When using online resources offered by organizations not affiliated with UNC-Chapel Hill, such as Google or YouTube, please note that the terms and conditions of these companies and not the University's Terms and Conditions apply. These third parties may offer different degrees of privacy protection and access rights to online content. You should be well aware of this when posting content to sites not managed by UNC-Chapel Hill.

When links to sites outside of the unc.edu domain are inserted in class discussions, please be mindful that clicking on sites not affiliated with UNC-Chapel Hill may pose a risk for your computer due to the possible presence of malware on such sites.

Honor Code

As a UNC student, you are expected to uphold the University's [Honor Code](#). All work that you produce must be your own! [Plagiarism](#) is a serious offense and will not be tolerated in this course. If you have any additional questions about what constitutes plagiarism, or how to properly cite a source, please contact me. Please view this brief [Plagiarism Tutorial](#) created by the librarians of UNC-Chapel Hill, Duke University, NC State University, and NC Central University.

Office of Accessibility/Special Accommodations

If you are a student with a documented disability, you can receive services through Accessibility Resources & Service. You must self-identify through Accessibility Resources to receive services or accommodation from either of these offices. Accessibility Resources works closely with programs, offices, and departments throughout the University to help create an accessible environment.

The office is located in Suite 2126 of the Student Academic Services Building (SASB), 450 Ridge Road, Chapel Hill, NC, and is open from 8 am to 5 pm Monday through Friday. You can contact them by phone at 919-962-8300 or 711 (NC-RELAY), or by email at accessibility@unc.edu.

• PHIL 165: Bioethics

COURSE SCHEDULE

This schedule is your source for lesson dates and assignment due dates.

- Budget your time carefully and begin your reading assignment for one lesson before the previous lesson has ended, so that you have adequate time to read carefully and to submit your assignments by the due dates.
- Role A discussion forum posts are due by 11:55 pm on the first day of the lesson.
- Role B discussion forum posts are due by 11:55 pm on the second day of the lesson.
- Unless otherwise noted, all assignments are due by 11:55 pm on the due date.
- All times refer to **Eastern time**. If you live in another time zone, please plan accordingly.

Lesson Dates	Lesson Topics	Assignments
May 17	Lesson 1: An Introduction to Bioethics	Lesson 1 forum assignment; no quiz
May 18–19	Lesson 2: Moral Reasoning in Bioethics	Lesson 2 reading quiz and forum assignment
May 22–23	Lesson 3: Paternalism and Autonomy	Lesson 3 reading quiz and forum assignment
May 24–26	Lesson 4: Truth-Telling and Confidentiality	Lesson 4 reading quiz and forum assignment May 26: Paper 1 due by 11:55 pm

May 30 <i>Holiday: May 29</i>	Lesson 5: Informed Consent	Lesson 5 reading quiz and forum assignment
May 31–Jun 2	Lesson 6: Human Research	Lesson 6 reading quiz and forum assignment
Jun 5–6	Lesson 7: Abortion	Lesson 7 reading quiz and forum assignment
Jun 7–9	Lesson 8: Reproductive Technology	Lesson 8 reading quiz and forum assignment
Jun 12–13	Lesson 9: Genetic Choices	Lesson 9 reading quiz and forum assignment
Jun 14–15	Lesson 10: Euthanasia and Physician-Assisted Suicide	Lesson 10 reading quiz and forum assignment Jun 16: Paper 2 due by 11:55 pm
Jun 16	Lesson 11: Dividing up Health Care Resources	Lesson 11 reading quiz and forum assignment
Jun 19	Lesson 12: Wrap-up and Review	Lesson 12 forum assignment; no quiz
Jun 22	Final Exam	Available at 12 am and due by 11:59 pm on Jun 22 , via the Quizzes and Exams section.