

# Phil 164: Medical Ethics

Summer 2010 • Session II (online)

*Instructor:* Jeffrey Dunn

## ***DESCRIPTION:***

Health care is a very polarizing topic right now. The primary purpose of this course is to introduce you to some fascinating yet difficult ethical issues that arise when we think carefully about health care and the biomedical field. Some of the topics we will investigate include abortion, genetic choice, euthanasia, and the fair distribution of health care resources. Although the course is primarily focused on particular issues in biomedical ethics, you will also gain some familiarity with several major ethical theories, including Utilitarianism, Kantianism, and Social Contract Theory. You will also cultivate the ability to think and write clearly and carefully. These critical thinking skills are ones that you will be able to carry with you outside of this class, and to apply to a wide range of arguments. Many students find these skills to be rewarding because they help us think clearly and pointedly about an issue.

\*Note: The workload for this course will certainly be no more than the amount of work in a regular (e.g., Fall or Spring) term course. However, since this is a compressed summer session lasting only a bit more than five weeks, the course may feel quite intensive.

## ***REQUIRED TEXT:***

Lewis Vaughn, *Bioethics: principles, issues, and cases*. ISBN 978-0-19-518282-8

Students are required to purchase a copy of this text. It is widely available online. For students in the Amherst area, a limited number of texts have been ordered at *Amherst Books*. Several of the assigned readings are not available in our text. These will be made available to you online.

## ***CONTACT INFORMATION:***

**Email:** All email correspondence for this course will be through the email service available on our course's web page. Every member of the course is able to send and receive messages through this service. This is NOT the same as your regular or university email account.

**IMPORTANT:** *I will not be regularly checking my UMass email account for this course. To get in touch with me you must use the email service on the course web page.*

**Contact hours:** It's important to me to make myself as available to you as I can. I will be around my computer from at least 12-5 on class days (please see the schedule for a list of class days). If you write to me during those times I will respond to you within an hour (and probably much faster than that.) If you write after hours, or on holidays I will try to get back to you as soon as I can. However, during those times you may not receive a reply until the next class day.

**Discussion Boards:** There are discussion boards that have been created for each topic that we cover in this course. Posting questions and comments is a great way to stay up on the

material that is presented. I have posted questions for discussion on these discussion boards and from time to time will add comments. (For more on discussion boards, see below)

**Actual Office Hours:** For those of you in the Amherst area this summer, I will be available to meet in person at my office on the UMass Amherst campus by appointment.

\*Note: Since this is an online course with no class meetings, it is imperative that you contact me in one of the ways above if you have any questions, or get confused with some of the material presented.

**Tech Support:** If you need technical assistance you may:

- Send email to Amherst Support: [amherstsupport@umassonline.net](mailto:amherstsupport@umassonline.net), or
- Call 1-888-300-6407, or
- Contact support via live text chat: <https://login.umassonline.net/amherst.cfm>, or
- Search the self-help site: <http://help.perceptis.com/umassamherst/>, or
- Review Vista Student Help Documentation.

### ***COURSE MECHANICS:***

The course is divided into six units. Next to each class day, you will see a topic and a reading assignment. I will post lecture notes which are meant to supplement the reading assignment. Ideally, you will read the lecture notes and the corresponding text for each day on that day. This is to your advantage, and will help you fulfill the discussion requirement for this course (see below).

You will notice that on the home page for our course there are six learning modules, corresponding to each unit of the course. When you click on a learning module, you will see a heading for each day that there is a reading assignment. Below each of these headings you will find a link to the lecture notes for that reading assignment. In the learning module, you will also find a link to the discussion board for that unit. Hopefully, these learning modules are fairly straightforward and self-explanatory. If you have any questions, be sure to let me know. The best way to stay up on the course material is to work your way through the learning module according to the dates listed on the course schedule.

### **Grading:**

There are four aspects to your grade in this course:

1. Midterm Exam
2. Final Exam
3. Essay Assignment
4. Discussion Requirement

### ***Midterm***

There will be a midterm exam roughly half-way through the term. It will be posted on Thursday, June 24, and must be completed before 11:59 pm on Sunday, June 27. It will consist of multiple choice, fill-in-the-blank, short answer questions (1-3 sentences), and long answer questions (2-3 paragraphs). There is a time limit for the midterm. Once you open the midterm, the time will begin and you must submit it within the time limit. (I will let you know what the time limit is as the midterm approaches).

### Final Exam

There will be a final exam at the end of the term. It will be posted on Friday, July 10. It must be submitted by the last day of class, Tuesday, July 13 before 8:00 pm. The final exam is cumulative and the format will be similar to the midterm.

### Essay Assignment

You are required to submit one essay for this course. It is due by noon on the last day of class, Tuesday, July 13 and should be 2-3 pages long (double-spaced, 12 point font). I have posted further information about the essay on our main course page.

### Discussion

In addition to the two exams and essay assignment, you are expected to participate in the online discussion board. To receive full discussion credit, you must make at least **one quality** post for each unit's learning module, by the end of the learning module. For the purposes of discussion, a unit ends on the last day of the unit at 9:00 pm. For example: to receive full discussion credit for Unit 2, you must have made at least **one quality** post on the Unit 2 discussion board before Wednesday, June 16 at 9:00 pm.<sup>1</sup>

A quality post is either

- a well-articulated, and thought-out response to a current discussion thread or question,

or

- a well-articulated, and thought-out post that raises a question or starts a discussion.

A quality post has the following characteristics:

1. It is thoughtful. (A post can be thoughtful in many ways: by looking carefully at a particular part of the assigned reading; by raising an original point or question; by seeing a connection between several issues; by responding insightfully to a previous question or post, etc.)
2. It is clearly stated.
3. It is relevant to the topic of discussion.
4. It does not merely state your opinion or how you feel about a certain topic. You may state these things, but it is important that you do more than this. In this course we will be interested in giving reasons or arguments for the things that we say.

If you have at least one quality post per unit, you receive full discussion credit. If you do not, you will lose discussion credit. Occasionally, I will post comments on the discussion board, but for the most part, this is a student-lead aspect of the course. Although the requirement is for **one** quality post, I encourage you to make more than one post, and start a discussion with fellow students in the course.

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<sup>1</sup> There is one exception to this. For Unit 3, you are not required to do a discussion post. Instead, there are two journal entries that you are required to do. This is explained in the Unit 3 Learning Module.

## **Grading Breakdown**

<i>Assignment</i>	<i>Points</i>
Midterm	70
Final	100
Essay	70
<u>Discussion</u>	<u>60 (10 points per unit)</u>
Total:	300 points

### **Students with Disabilities:**

If you have a disability relevant to this course that you think that I should be aware of, please contact me as soon as possible.

### **Academic Dishonesty:**

Academic dishonesty is a serious offense, and I take it very seriously. There is a clear Academic Honesty Policy that can be found here:

[http://www.umass.edu/dean\\_students/codeofconduct/acadhonesty/](http://www.umass.edu/dean_students/codeofconduct/acadhonesty/)

It is your responsibility to read the university policy. If you are unclear about what academic dishonesty is, it is your responsibility to contact me with any questions so that you are clear about it. Ignorance is not an excuse. If I discover any instance of academic dishonesty, I will pursue the harshest penalty consistent with university policy.

**If you have any questions about the course, or this syllabus, please be sure to contact me. I look forward to an enjoyable Medical Ethics course!**