Bioethics
Instructor: Joseph M. Vukov
Meeting Time: TBD
Location: TBD
Office Hours: TBD and by appointment
Email: jvukov@fordham.edu; joseph.vukov@gmailcom

[This syllabus is for a course that introduces students to some of the central topics in contemporary bioethics. The course is aimed at students in philosophy, and also at interested students in psychology and the health sciences.]

Course Description: Bioethics captures a set of ethical questions that are raised by our complex status as moral agents, social actors, embodied beings, and technological innovators. Bioethical questions are often brought into the public eye because of an emerging issue in science or health care, and because it is not clear how our current ethical principles and legal frameworks equip us to address it. So bioethicists are concerned with the following kinds of questions:

- What long should we extend life, given our newfound capability to extend it longer than we previously could?
- Who should get access to newly-developed medical resources?
- To what extent is it permissible to engage in genetic modification?
- How should we understand the roles of health care workers such as physicians and nurses in the ever-changing contemporary medical landscape?

But while bioethics is therefore on the forefront of emerging ethical questions, it ultimately addresses these issues against the backdrop of questions that ethicists have been concerned with from the beginning:

- What does a good life look like? What does a good death look like?
- What does it mean to make an informed decision? In what circumstances is it appropriate to make a decision for someone else?
- How should we accommodate the values of other cultures without compromising our own?

Students who complete the course will be expected to familiarize themselves with the conversations that have arisen around these and similar questions. Students who complete the course will also demonstrate the ability to contribute to contemporary bioethical discussion by completing a number of assignments including: an advanced directive project, a bioethics-in-the-news presentation, and a final paper.

Texts
Required
Lewis Vaughn, Bioethics, 2nd Edition
Anne Fadiman, The Spirit Catches You and You Fall Down
Kazuo Ishiguro, Never Let Me Go

Additional readings will be available on WEBSITE.
Means of Evaluation

Your final grade will be a weighted one. This means that various assignments will count towards a certain percentage of your final grade. The assignments and their respective weights are listed below; the descriptions are all subject to (slight) modification:

Advanced Directive Project: 20%
To help facilitate our discussion of paternalism, consent, and decision-making capacity, you will complete a (non-binding) advanced directive for your own end-of-life care. This will help you think about how the issues we will be studying apply to you, and will help you think through the benefits and limitations of advanced directives. In addition to completing your advanced directive, you will write a short paper explaining the choices you make throughout it.
We will be using the Mayo Clinic’s Advanced Directive template, which can be accessed at the link below:
More details about this project will be distributed at a later date.

Bioethics-in-the-News Presentations 10%
We will begin every class with a brief presentation of a current bioethics issue. You will sign up for a class period to present an issue of your choice to the class. Time slots and issues will be assigned on a first-come, first-served basis. Your presentation should be no more than five minutes in length, and you should plan to lead discussion for another five minutes. To facilitate conversation beyond our class, I will be posting a discussion thread to WEBSITE for every presentation, so that conversation can continue there. I will also be distributing a grading rubric for you to consult as you plan your presentation. It should be relatively easy for everyone to find an issue to present (there is no shortage of bioethics issues in the news!), but if you are having difficulty finding a topic, let me know, and we will find something for you to present.

Attendance/Participation: 10%
Attendance will be recorded at every class session, and is mandatory. For every unexcused absence, I will deduct 2 percentage points from your attendance grade (i.e. if you miss one session, you will receive 8% for attendance; two sessions, 6%; and so on). For the university’s policy on excused absences, see: WEBSITE ON EXCUSED ABSENCES. I also expect you participate regularly in class discussions. Infrequent participation will lead to a reduced grade in this category.

Final Paper (5 pages): 25%
In your final paper, you may either write about a topic of your choice [to be pre-approved by me], or choose from a list of topics I will distribute. In this paper, I will expect you to demonstrate all the skills
you have acquired throughout the semester; you should demonstrate a thorough understanding of any books or articles with which you interact as well an ability to articulate and defend a moral argument. In your final paper, however, I also expect you to formulate an original position.

You will be allowed to complete two drafts of your final paper. After completing your first draft, you will receive comments from each other in a peer-review session. I will also be willing to meet with you one-on-one to discuss first drafts. You will then revise your paper based on the comments you receive, and submit a final draft to me.

*Final Paper Peer Review: Class 27*
*Final Paper Due: Class 30*

**Final: 25%**

The final will be cumulative and will consist mostly of short answer questions. More information and a review sheet will be distributed near the end of the semester.

**Schedule of Topics, Readings, and Assignments**

*Readings which cannot be found in your required texts can be accessed online at [WEBSITE](#). All topics and readings are subject to (slight) alteration.*

**Course Introduction**

Class 1: Course Welcome and Introduction

Class 2: Philosophical Principles in Bioethics, *Chapters 1 and 2*

Class 3: Legal Principles in Bioethics, *Law and Bioethics [excerpts]*

**Fair Distribution of Scarce Resources**

Class 4: Tia Powell, et al., “Allocation of Ventilators in a Public Health Disaster”

Class 5: Alvin H. Moss & Mark Siegler, “Should Alcoholics Compete Equally for Liver Transplantation?”; Robert M. Veatch, “How Age Should Matter: Justice as the Basis for Limiting Care to the Elderly”


Class 7: Ishiguro, Kazuo, *Never Let Me Go*, pages 151-end

Class 8: Sheri Fink, “The Deadly Choices at Memorial”

**Paternalism, Decision-Making Capacity, and Informed Consent**

Class 10: Alan Goldman, “The Refutation of Medical Paternalism”; Terrence F. Ackerman, “Why Doctors Should Intervene”


Class 12: Jerry Menikoff, “The Right to Refuse Care”; Tennessee v. Mary Northern

Class 13: Robert J. Levine, “Informed Consent: Some Challenges to the Universal Validity of the Western Model”

Class 14: Jerry Menikoff, “Making Decisions for Incompetent Patients”

Class 15: Advanced Directive Project Due

Cross-Cultural Issues in Bioethics


Class 17: Anne Fanniman, The Spirit Catches you and You Fall Down [pp. 1-105]

Class 18: Anne Fanniman, The Spirit Catches you and You Fall Down [pp. 106-181]

Class 19: Anne Fanniman, The Spirit Catches you and You Fall Down [pp. 181-305]

Abortion & Euthanasia

Class 20: Introduction to Abortion, Chapter 7, Intro and Cases


Class 22: Introduction to Euthanasia, Chapter 10, Intro and Cases; Jerry Menikoff – The Constitution and the Right to Die

Class 23: Selzer, “A Question of Mercy”


Genetic Choices

Class 25: Introduction to Genetic Choices, Chapter 9, Intro and Cases

Class 26: John Harris, “Is Gene Therapy a Form of Eugenics?”; Walter Glannon, “Genetic Enhancement”

Class 27: GJ Annas & S Elias, “23andMe and the FDA”; Jerry Menikoff, from Law and Bioethics

Professional Issues in Bioethics

Class 28: William Osler, “Aequaminitas”; The Hippocratic Oath

Class 30: Helga Kuhse, “Advocacy or Subservience for the Sake of Patients?”

Final: Date and Time TBA