

## BIOMEDICAL ETHICS

### Philosophy 163

Spring 2008 (Revised—changes in reading schedule, assignment dates in purple)

Dana Kay Nelkin

Office: HSS 8004

Office Hours: Thursday 1:30-3:30, and by appointment

Phone: (858) 822-0472

E-mail: [dnelkin@ucsd.edu](mailto:dnelkin@ucsd.edu)

Web site: <http://philosophyfaculty.ucsd.edu/faculty/dnelkin>

#### *Teaching Assistants and Sections:*

Sarah Aiken

Sections: M 11, F 8

Office: HSS 7055

Office Hours: M 12:30-1:30, F 9:30-10:30

E-mail: [saikin@ucsd.edu](mailto:saikin@ucsd.edu)

Erick Ramirez

Sections: W 3, W 4

Office: HSS 8089

Office Hours: W 9-11

E-mail: [ejramirez@gmail.com](mailto:ejramirez@gmail.com)

Nina Brewer-Davis

Sections: M 1, M 2

Office: HSS 8056

Office Hours: M 11:30-12:30, T 9:30-10:30

E-mail: [ncdavis@ucsd.edu](mailto:ncdavis@ucsd.edu)

**Course Description:** In this course, we will explore several hotly debated issues in biomedical ethics. We will begin with a set of questions concerning moral agency and autonomy that arise with the creation of advance directives and research subject's consent. We will then turn to moral issues that concern the beginning of life, focusing on the ethics of abortion, stem cell research, and cloning, paying close attention to recent development in research methods. Our next topic will be genetic screening, performance enhancement, and perfection, and we will ask questions such as "to what extent, if at all, should we choose the traits of future children?" Finally, we will examine the challenging topic of justice in health care, both local and global.

Throughout the course, we will aim to focus on the practical issues before us, and also on the larger moral and political frameworks from which we can best approach our particular questions. Certain larger issues will emerge from the various more specific ones, including the role of autonomy in morality and the value and meaning of life. Our aims will be two-fold: (i) to gain an understanding of a variety of positions on each of the pressing ethical issues at hand, and to come to reasoned and well-informed views about them, and (ii) to hone our reasoning skills and knowledge of fundamental moral and political positions so that we will be in a good position to adjudicate all sorts of other debates within, and even beyond, bioethics.

**Requirements:**

- Section attendance and participation (10%)
- A series of quizzes in section (15%)
- Viewing of *Gattica* outside of class (class screening time TBA, DVD available for library use)
- 1 midterm exam (20%)                      Date: April 29
- 1 medium paper (6-8 pages) (20%)      Due: **May 29**
- 1 final exam (cumulative) (35%)        Date: June 10, 11:30-2:30

Note: A hard copy of your paper must be turned in, and an electronic copy uploaded to turnitin.com. (This is very easy to do, and I'll give you instructions and a password for doing so.)

Note: All work must be completed in order to receive credit for the course.

**Discussion Sections:** Discussion sections meet once a week. Sections are designed to give you an opportunity to meet in smaller groups, to ask questions and have them answered by your TA, and to discuss the course material in greater depth than is possible in lecture. Attendance and participation contribute to 10% of your course grade, and weekly quizzes taken in section contribute another 15% of your course grade.

**Specific course topics and readings**

Most readings may be found on library e-reserves (<http://reserves.ucsd.edu>), or via links from the course web page (CWP). We also have one text book, *Just Health: Meeting Health Needs Fairly*, which we will use for the final unit of the course.

**I. Autonomy and Value: Advance Directives**

4/1: Introduction

4/3: Campo-Flores, "The Legacy of Terry Schiavo" (CWP) and Dworkin, "Life Past Reason"

4/8: Dresser, "Dworkin on Dementia: Elegant Theory, Questionable Policy", Jaworska, "Respecting the Margins of Agency"

4/10: McMahan, Jeff, *The Ethics of Killing* (excerpt, especially pp. 493 ff.)

**II. Autonomy and Value: Research Subjects and Consent**

4/15: Wendler, "Informed Consent, Exploitation, and Whether It Is Possible to Conduct Human Subjects Research Without Either One," and Tannsjo, "The Morality of Clinical Research: A Case Study"

4/17: Lemmons and Elliot, "Guinea Pigs on the Payroll: The Ethics of Paying Research Subjects"

### **III. Beginning of Life: Abortion, Stem Cell Research and Cloning**

4/22: Fienberg, “Abortion”

4/24 Marquis, “Why Abortion is Immoral,” and Thomson, “A Defense of Abortion”

4/29: MIDTERM

5/1: President’s Council on Bioethics Report; Presidential Candidates’ Statements on Embryonic Cell Research (CWP)

5/6 Harris, “Goodbye, Dolly?: The Ethics of Human Cloning”, Fitzpatrick, “Surplus Embryos, Nonreproductive Cloning and the Intend/Foresee Distinction”

5/8 Dworkin, “What is Sacred?”

### **IV. Genetic Screening, Performance Enhancement, and Perfection**

5/13: Kaplan, “Prenatal Screening and its Impact on Persons with Disabilities”, Glover, “Future People, Disability, and Screening” [Guest Speaker: Dr. David Salmon](#)

5/15: Buchanan, Brock, Daniels and Wikler, *From Choice to Chance* (excerpt)

5/20: Buchanan, Brock, Daniels and Wikler (continued), Sandel, “The Case Against Perfection”

5/22: Sandel, “The Case Against Perfection”

### **V. Justice in Health Care**

5/27: *Gattica* (the film) [**topic for lecture, screening Wednesday, 5/21, 4-6 pm, Center Hall 105**]

5/29: Daniels, *Just Health*, chapters 1-3; Presidential Candidates’ Plans (CWP) [Guest Speaker: Dr. Michael Kalichman](#) **PAPER DUE**

6/3: Daniels, *Just Health*, chapters 4-5

6/5: Daniels, *Just Health*, chapters 11-12

#### Notes

- If accommodations are needed for a disability or for religious reasons, please notify me during the first class period or as soon as possible.
- The Academic Honor Code must be observed in this course.
- *Laptops and other electronic devices may not be used in class, except for lecture*

- *note-taking.*  
Please note that the policies and readings described above are subject to minor change.