Ethics and Biological Science

Course number: PHI 4633, Section 0001  
Meeting Times: MWF 6:00-8:50  
Location: CL1, Room 0318

Instructor: Dr. William Butchard  
Email: william.butchard@ucf.edu  
Office: PSY 236  
Office hours: Monday 1:30-3:30

Course Description

Most of us do not have an explicit theory about what makes an action right or wrong. Are the consequences what explain the moral status of an action? Or are the intentions behind the action more important? Or is it something else entirely? Making a decision about this issue can have an effect on which actions one judges to be right or wrong. Applied ethics is the study of what bearing various ethical theories have on concrete situations that call for ethical decision-making. Bioethics, in particular, is the study of what ethical theories say about various situations in which biological and biomedical facts are salient. The topics covered in this course will include animal experimentation, genetic engineering, euthanasia, organ donation, and reproductive freedom. We will approach these issues by reading classical and contemporary works, discussing them, and writing critical papers.

Required Text and Readings


Additional material I will supply electronically

Assignments and Grade Determination

Assignments

Paper

There will be one term paper, 10 pages in length. The paper will require a clear representation of an argument from one of the assigned readings and a sustained critical discussion of that argument. The papers will be graded on the basis of your demonstrated understanding of the course material and your ability to respond to an argument with an illuminating, critical discussion. I will provide a list of topics and some guidance as to how to structure your papers.

Exams

There will be four in-class exams. These will consist of multiple-choice, true-false and fill-in-the-blank, and essay questions about the course content.

Grade Determination

You can earn a total of 100 percentage points in the course. Each course requirement is worth a certain number of points. The distribution of points is as follows:

Paper: 20%  
Exams: 80% (20% each)

Attendance
Class attendance should be viewed as a responsibility. I will take attendance every class period, and I consider attendance mandatory, but it will not affect your grade directly. If you come to class, you will get a much better handle on the readings and the issues we discuss. Note that the exams and the papers require you to demonstrate an understanding of the readings and the material that I present in class. Also, missing a day when there is an exam is not something that can be taken lightly because of fairness and exam security. I can allow a make-up exam only if you can provide proper documentation in a reasonable amount of time. What constitutes proper documentation will be decided on a case-by-case basis.

**Grade scale**

The grade scale for the course will be as follows:

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<tr>
<th>Percentage Range</th>
<th>Grade</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>93% to 100%</td>
<td>A</td>
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<tr>
<td>90% to 92%</td>
<td>A-</td>
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<td>83% to 86%</td>
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<td>57% to 59%</td>
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**Academic Honesty**

Plagiarism includes copying and submitting as your own a passage from a text, the work of a fellow student; handing in a paper prepared by another as your own; using sources for writing your paper and not citing them in the paper. Plagiarism does cover materials found on web-sites. Note that it is possible to plagiarize even if you cite your sources, if, e.g., the wording is too close to the cited text.

If, in writing a paper, you have any questions about what counts as plagiarism or how to avoid plagiarism, please discuss the paper with me before turning it in.

CLEAR EVIDENCE OF PLAGIARISM WILL RESULT IN AN AUTOMATIC FAILING GRADE FOR THE ENTIRE COURSE, AND YOU WILL BE REPORTED TO THE DEAN’S OFFICE FOR ACADEMIC DISHONESTY.

For more information on plagiarism (and other forms of academic dishonesty), go to http://z.ucf.edu/

**Students with Disabilities**

If you have a disabling condition that may interfere with your ability to successfully complete this course, please register with Student Disability Services:

http://sds.sdes.ucf.edu/

They will provide you with the proper documentation for you to show your instructors if you request accommodations.

**Participation and Classroom Etiquette**

I strongly encourage you to be a full participant in class discussions. Don’t worry about getting something wrong. If something we are discussing is unclear to you, chances are a lot of other people are confused by the same thing, and your input may well help us focus in on the difficulty. Voicing your opinion, putting an idea on the table for examination, or just asking a question can be very helpful in a class discussion.

Please remember that there are several other students in the course and that it is important not to distract them. Please turn off your cell phones before entering the classroom. Please do not surf the web, check your e-mail, read the newspaper, sleep, eat, or be in any way uncivil. Please make an effort not to interrupt class by arriving late.
Topics and Readings

Our pace will depend to some extent on how quickly you grasp the material. As a result, it is not easy to predict when a given reading will be assigned. Therefore, the readings will be assigned as we go, and we may not get to every selection listed. Some of the selections are not in your textbook and will be available on the course website.

1. Experimentation

Animal Subjects

Peter R.G. Frey and Sir Williams Paton: Vivisection, Morals and Medicine: An Exchange
Peter Singer: All Animals are Equal
Immanuel Kant: Duties Towards Animals
McAninch, Goodrich, and Colin Allen: Animal Communication and Neo-Expressivism

Human Subjects

Henry K. Beecher: Ethics and Clinical Research
Tännö: The Morality of Clinical Research: A Case Study

2. Genetics

John Harris: Is Gene Therapy a Form of Eugenics?
Nicholas Agar: Liberal Eugenics

3. Life and Death

Killing vs. Letting Die
Winston Nesbitt: Is Killing No Worse Than Letting Die?
Helga Kuhse: Why Killing is Not Always Worse—and Sometimes Better—than Letting Die

Assisted Suicide
John Hardwig: Is there a Duty to Die?

4. Resource Allocation

The Right to Health care
Norman Daniels: Is There a Right to Health Care, and, if So, What Does it Encompass?

Rationing
Paul T. Menzel: Lives: Can’t We Count?
A. B. Shaw: In Defense of Ageism

Organ Donation
Richard M. Titmus: Why Give to Strangers?
Elke-Henner W. Kluge: Organ Retrieval: Whose Body is it Anyway?

5. Reproduction

Abortion
Michael Tooley: Abortion and Infanticide
R.M. Hare: Abortion and the Golden Rule
Don Marquis: Why Abortion is Immoral

Severely disabled newborns
R.M. Hare: The Abnormal Child: Moral Dilemmas of Doctors and Parents
Assisted Reproduction
Laura M. Purdy: Surrogate Mothering: Exploitation or Empowerment?
Susan Dodds and Karen Jones: A Response to Purdy