

Preliminary syllabus – work on progress

ANT 4930 (8715) Bioethics in Daily Life

Prof. Connie J. Mulligan

Class meets in B310 Turlington

Class time: Tuesday, periods 5-7 (11:45-2:45pm), with a 15 min break

Contact information:

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Course summary: Bioethics in Daily Life is intended to introduce students to bioethical issues that are encountered in everyday life through the popular media. This course is intended to provide students with an understanding of the scientific basis of these issues in order to develop informed opinions. 1) For instance, what are the issues with ‘designer babies’? Do we understand the human genome sufficiently to choose particular genes and traits for the next generation? Should this technology be available to whoever can afford it? 2) Another issue is animal experimentation. Do the many medical advances based on animal experimentation justify such use of animals? What do we understand about animal cognition and how does such information influence our opinion on animal experimentation? 3) A third issue is human participation in research projects. Is such participation a right, a responsibility, or a burden? How do we ensure that people make good decisions about whether or not to participate in research projects? Are some people unfairly excluded from research or are some people misled in order to persuade them to participate in research projects?

Course design: This course is intended for advanced undergraduate students who have an interest in bioethics. A science background is not required, but students must have an interest in understanding the details of the scientific basis of bioethical issues. The course is intended for students from all departments and colleges. In the past, I have had students from anthropology, chemistry, history, molecular genetics and microbiology, and zoology in my classes. A diverse audience makes for a more interesting class since everyone has different backgrounds, different perspectives and different interests to contribute to class discussions. Active participation is one of the strengths of the class in this regard.

Course objectives and student goals: All students are expected to gain knowledge of the scientific underpinning of bioethical issues that might be encountered in daily life. Some of these issues are controversial and, in fact, have been chosen for their timeliness in terms of being currently debated in our society. Students may have to reflect on their personal views and their rationale for holding particular opinions. Thus, the class may be personally intense and demanding in a unique way relative to most college courses. For instance, we will discuss abortion, animal rights, genetic selection, personhood, informed consent, etc. Course material will consist of one book (see below), newspaper articles, movies, and blogs and other online material that reflect the contemporary nature of the issues we’ll be discussing. All students will be expected to do all required readings and follow up with additional readings to expand your understanding. Furthermore, students will be expected to fully participate in class discussions.

Reading and course format: Reading material includes one textbook (Bioethics at the Movies, Shapshay) available at Orange and Blue Textbooks (309 NW 13th St, 375-2707). Additional, required, reading materials will be provided each week. If students know of additional articles or topics that they would like to discuss, please contact me. The course meets once per week for three hours and the course format is mainly discussion

with substantial student participation. Lectures will be supplementary only in order to provide necessary introductory and background material.

Grading: Final grades will be determined by the following three categories, each of which contributes 100 points to the final grade: 1) **participation** (100 pts), 2) four **oral presentations** (100 pts total), and 5) one **paper** (100 pts). Possible points total 300. Grades will be based on the following point percentages: 90-100%=A, 87-90%=B+, 80-87%=B, 77-80%=C+, 70-77%=C, 67-70%=D+, 60-67%=D, < 60%=E. The new university grading policy can be found at <http://www.registrar.ufl.edu/catalog/policies/regulationgrades.html> and includes minus grades as follows: A = 4.0 GPA, A- = 3.67, B+ = 3.33, B = 3.0, B- = 2.67, C+ = 2.33, C = 2.0, C- = 1.67, D+ = 1.33, D = 1.0, D- = 0.67, E = 0.0.

- **Participation** is required of all students and will be based on each student's contribution of original comments, questions, etc to the class. Students are not graded on the brilliance of their statements, but on their willingness to talk, a demonstration that the assigned material was read, and the originality of their comments. Simply showing up for class does not constitute participation. Remaining silent in class means that the highest grade a student can receive will be lower than a B.
- Each student will present four 5-10 min **oral presentations**. You will work in groups of 3 or 4 to develop oral presentations each week. Each week, one member of your team will present your presentation such that everyone presents four times during the semester. The presentations will take a stand on an aspect of the bioethical issue being discussed that week. You will work on the presentations outside of class during the week – you can work in person, or through email, but each presentation should be a group effort. If any group experiences problems, i.e. a member of the group is not contributing to the presentations, please notify me as soon as possible so we can rectify the problem. The presentation must use MS Power Point.
- For the **paper**, you will choose a bioethical issue to discuss. There must be a clear scientific aspect to the issue you choose and you must explain the science and how it relates to your chosen bioethical issue, in addition to developing the bioethical issue. The expected length of the paper is ~3000 words, or ~5-7 single-spaced pages.

Useful websites:

<http://www.clas.ufl.edu/users/cmulligan/Webpage/Bioethics.2011/Bioethics.home.html> – website for class

http://bioethics.georgetown.edu/pcbe/reports/beyondtherapy/beyond_therapy_final_webcorrected.pdf - Beyond Therapy: Biotechnology and the Pursuit of Happiness, report from the President's Council on Bioethics, 2003 (353 pages)

<http://www.uflib.ufl.edu/ej/> - UF database of available electronic journals (may only be available from a campus computer)

<http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/PubMed> - National Library of Medicine database of over 11 million journal articles dating back to the 1960s

<http://www.genome.gov/glossary.cfm> – NIH-maintained glossary of genetic terms

<http://www.genome.gov/LegislativeDatabase> - Database of federal and state laws focused on genetic issues, such as genetic testing and counseling, insurance and employee discrimination, etc.

Class attendance policy: Because the class meets only one time per week and because the class format is mainly discussion, it is very difficult to make up missed classes by borrowing notes, etc. Therefore, students are strongly encouraged to attend all classes and to arrive on time. Class discussions/lectures cannot be recorded in any manner without special permission. Computers are allowed in class for taking notes although I may ban computers if I feel their use is hindering class discussions. All cell phones must be turned off during class.

Strategies for success:

- It is important to complete all the readings on time and it is best to do the readings throughout the week. In this way, you have time to think about and process the information during the week and in between different readings. Ideally, you would read some every night of the week. The amount of reading material is very modest, particularly for an anthropology course.
- For the oral presentations, you will have to get started as early as possible each week in order to make quality presentations. I suggest using class time to choose a topic for the following week and dividing

responsibilities for research and ppt creation during the following week. By the end of the semester, you will (hopefully) have learned how to efficiently choose and research a topic and create an informative and engaging oral presentation. It is a good idea to practice your entire presentation without any stops the night before your scheduled presentation – this ensures your talk is the correct length of time and develops good practice for all public speaking.

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Accommodations for students with disabilities: If you require accommodation due to a disability, please make an appointment during my office hours so that we may discuss your needs. Students requesting classroom accommodation must first register with the Dean of Students Office. The Dean of Students Office will provide documentation to the student who must then provide this documentation to the Instructor when requesting accommodation.

Academic honesty: As a result of completing the registration form at the University of Florida, every student has signed the following statement: “I understand that the University of Florida expects its students to be honest in all their academic work. I agree to adhere to this commitment to academic honesty and understand that my failure to comply with this commitment may result in disciplinary action up to and including expulsion from the University.”

Here are three websites that explain plagiarism and I encourage you to look at all of them:

- <http://web.uflib.ufl.edu/msl/07b/studentplagiarism.html>

- <http://www.dso.ufl.edu/sccr/procedures/honorviolations.php>

- A 30 minute video, titled ‘Citing Sources and Avoiding Plagiarism’, at the bottom of the webpage - <https://teachingcenter.ufl.edu/video.html>

UF Counseling Services: On-campus services are available for students having personal problems or lacking clear career and academic goals. They include:

1. University Counseling Center, 301 Peabody Hall, 392-1575, personal and career counseling
2. Student Mental Health, Student Health Care Center, 392-1171, personal counseling
3. Sexual Assault Recovery Services (SARS), Student Health Care Center, 392-1161, sexual assault counseling
4. Career Resource Center, Reitz Union, 392-1601, career development assistance and counseling

Course schedule:

January 11 – Introduction

- Course format
- What do we mean by bioethics?
- How to read a scientific journal article
- Sample PubMed search
- Sample oral presentation
- Create study groups for oral presentations
- Assessment of class opinions and experiences concerning bioethical issues

January 18 – Race

- Is there a biological basis to race?
- How have we evolved?
- Global distribution of genetic and phenotypic variation

- How different are we?
- Genetic ancestry
- Racial disparities in health

Required reading (also listed on course webpage, Day 2)

- Sample Genetic ancestry report, intended for African American audience

Video – African American Lives

Practice oral presentations

January 25 – Genetic screening I

- Prenatal screening
- Testing for personality, mate choice, etc
- Genetic ancestry testing
- Reproductive technologies
 - Who is the mother when egg and sperm are donated?

Required reading (also listed on course webpage, Day 3)

- <http://www.newsweek.com/2010/06/09/inside-information.print.html> - Newsweek article, Americans want to know their genetic codes
- <http://www.technologyreview.com/blog/editors/25297/> - Genetic testing can change behavior
- <http://www.nature.com/ng/journal/v42/n10/pdf/ng1010-811.pdf> - newborn genetic screening
- <http://www.nature.com/nature/journal/v466/n7308/pdf/466816a.pdf> - Nature, Aug 12 2010, Genetic testing regulation
- <http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,1158968-2,00.html> – Iceland genetics project
- <http://www.medicalnewstoday.com/articles/157335.php> - Iceland/deCODE project - genes identified to date
- <http://ghr.nlm.nih.gov/handbook/therapy/ethics> - very short article on gene therapy
- Review <http://bioethics.georgetown.edu/pcbe/reports/beyondtherapy/> - Beyond Therapy: Biotechnology and the Pursuit of Happiness, report from the President’s Council on Bioethics, 2003 (353 pages)

Video – African American Lives

Four oral presentations

February 1 – Genetic screening II

- Eugenics
- Designer babies

Required reading

- Bioethics at the Movies (BAM)
 - Chpt 5 (“No Gene for Fate?”: Luck, Harm, and Justice in *Gattaca*)
 - Chpt 6 (Lifting the Genetic Veil of Ignorance: Is there anything really unjust about *Gattacan* society?)
- <http://www.scientificamerican.com/article.cfm?id=regulate-designer-babies> – Scientific American article on the need to regulate ‘designer babies’
- <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Eugenics> - Wikipedia definition of eugenics

Video – GATTACA

Four oral presentations

February 8 – Stem cells

- Eugenics
- Designer babies

Required reading

- Bioethics at the Movies (BAM)
 - o Chpt 5 (“No Gene for Fate?”: Luck, Harm, and Justice in *Gattaca*)

Feb 15

Feb 22

Mar 1

Mar 8 – Spring break

Mar 15

Mar 22

Mar 29

Apr 5

Apr 12

Apr 19