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Fall 9-1-2017

AHMS 270E.50: Medical Ethics

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AHMS 270 – 50: Medical Ethics
3 Credit Hours
University of Montana
Fall 2017

Instructor: Mark J. Hanson, Ph.D.

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LA 152
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Office Hours: Mondays and Fridays 2:00 to 3:00 on the Mountain Campus (LA 152) and Tuesdays 11:00 to 12:00. I'm also available by email. I will post exceptions as a class announcement. I will also check for email messages on a regular basis, but I am not constantly online. In addition, feel free to set up an appointment with me if you would rather talk about an issue in person.

Course Description: This three-credit, online course examines the moral dimensions of the health professions in select issues, including the professional-patient relationship, medical decisionmaking and caregiving, treatment obligations, caretaking at the end-of-life, assisted suicide, defining health and the goals of medicine, abortion and prenatal genetic testing, human subjects research, and medical resource allocation. Numerous cases will be used to highlight moral issues.

Course Objectives:

1. Students will develop a basic understanding of major traditions and theories of ethics.
2. The course will focus on one or more of the specific traditions of ethical thought on basic ethical topics such as justice or the good life as seen through the lens of one or more traditions of ethical thought, or on a professional practice within a particular tradition of ethical thought.
3. The course will provide a rigorous analysis of the basic concepts and forms of reasoning which define the traditions, the ethical topics, or the professional practices that are being studied.
4. Students will develop a basic understanding of moral dimensions of health care and medical decisionmaking generally.
5. Students will learn principles of medical ethics found within medical ethics literature and learn how to apply them in particular situations.
6. Students will learn about the relationships between medical ethics and ethical values in the larger society.
7. The course will advance students' skills in critical thinking and writing in ethics through the consideration of medical ethics issues and cases in class and in a writing assignment.

Prerequisites: None

Course Format:

The course will be delivered online with support from UMOline. Readings and assignments are designed to help students develop the knowledge and skills stated in the course objectives. For purposes of assignments and class activities, the week starts on Monday at 12:01 a.m. and ends on Sunday at midnight. The course will consist of the following components:

- 1. Lectures:** “Lectures” are in written form, to be read during the week assigned and prior to completing discussion forum questions, case studies, and other assignments (unless otherwise specified).
- 2. Reading assignments:** Each week will feature a reading or two, found on electronic reserve on the Mansfield library website (see instructions below) or posted directly on the course page. Read these before attempting other assignments for the week, and try to have them completed by Thursday.
- 3. Case studies (or discussion questions) for the Discussion Forum:** Case studies (or general discussion questions) will be posted as each week in written form on the main course menu. A written response is required (see next item below).
- 4. Discussion Forum:** Discussion questions will be posted each week in relation to case studies or to the lectures and readings. You are required to post responses to each question on the forum(s). As the discussion evolves, all students should extend the dialog by posting additional questions and responses relevant to the topics under discussion. You should try to do that at least once per week. All students are required to participate in discussions by the end of the day Thursday every week. To achieve full credit, you should **respond to another student once per week and include questions for other students to respond to in your posts**. To avoid a last-minute flurry of postings, please post earlier, rather than later, and check back at least twice, including the week following your post (to see if someone has responded to you). Class participation reflects a significant portion of the grade, based on the grading matrix posted under the main course heading. I will check the discussion forum regularly, sometimes posting responses and questions, but sometimes also allowing the students’ discussion to unfold with each other. Remember that discussion forums are appropriate only for questions and discussions that would normally occur in the classroom. Please try to stay on point—keep your discussion relevant to the issue/question under discussion and keep the language formal and appropriate. Remember that the rest of the class can read postings.
- 5. Questions for the instructor:** Feel free to send questions or express concerns to me privately through email or by phone regarding any aspect of the course.

Grading Policy

Again, for purposes of assignments and class activities, the week starts on Monday at 12:01 a.m. and ends on Sunday at midnight. Written assignments that are late will be penalized one-half letter grade per day. Students who will request permission to submit an assignment late must contact me well before the assignment deadline. Extensions will be granted and late assignments forgiven only when there are serious and verifiable extenuating circumstances.

Grading guidelines for class discussion: See “Forum Grading Matrix” under the main course heading.

Requirements

1. Mid-term examination (25 percent of grade)
 2. Online participation (20 percent of grade)
 3. Case study analysis exercises and other assignments/quizzes (30 percent of grade)
 4. Final examination (25 percent of grade)
- Examinations will likely be a combination of a choice among short answer questions and a longer essay and/or case analysis. The final examination will not be comprehensive. **Exams must be taken at scheduled times unless prior permission of the instructor is obtained; otherwise the exam receives a failing grade.**
 - The required case analysis exercise(s) will help build skill regarding analysis of the moral dimensions of a particular case study. Unless an extension is granted, late submissions are immediately penalized one grade, and thereafter at a graduated rate, amounting to a half-grade level per day.
 - Full credit for class participation on the discussion forum involves regular and thoughtful participation in online discussions. See “Forum Grading Matrix” under the main course heading.
 - Case study responses on the Discussion Forum involve responding to questions or instructions posted, or otherwise conducting a case analysis by describing the ethical issues involved as well as the ethically relevant facts; weighing alternative courses of action, and selecting and defending the most ethically justifiable course of action. More detail on ethical case analysis is provided during week one and as the course progresses.

Course Procedures and Expectations

- **Announcements:** I will post announcements regularly under “Announcements” on the main course menu. Be sure to check them each time you log on.
- **Communication:** Communication using the Discussion Forum and other Moodle features should be thought of as public communication. Please use email to me for issues regarding your grade and other issues of a more personal nature.
- **Weekly Course Materials:** Look for each week’s section on the main course page to see all instructions and course materials for the week.
- **Logging in:** You are expected to log at least every other day to read current announcements. You may do this at any time of day.

Required Reading

All required readings will be posted on the course website.

Additional Notes

- This syllabus is subject to change by the instructor. Any changes will be announced in the “Announcements.”

- Disability Student Services: In accordance with the University of Montana’s mission to provide equal educational opportunities for all students, necessary accommodations for students with disabilities will be made whenever possible. If you require accommodations, please provide written information regarding your disability from the Disability Services as soon as possible so that accommodations can be made.
- Academic Misconduct: All students must practice academic honesty. Academic misconduct is subject to academic penalty by the course instructor and/or disciplinary sanction by the University of Montana. All students should be familiar with the Student Code of Conduct. The Code is available for review online at <http://www.umt.edu/SA/VPSA/index.cfm/page/1321>
 - Plagiarism is the represent of another’s work as one’s own. It is a particularly intolerable offense in the academic community and is strictly forbidden. Students who plagiarize may fail the course and may be remanded to Academic Court for possible suspension or expulsion. (See UM Student Conduct Code.)
 - Students must always be very careful to acknowledge any kind of borrowing that is included in their work. This means not only borrowed wording but also ideas. Acknowledgment of whatever is not one’s own original work is the proper and honest use of sources.
 - Exams are taken on the honor system. They will be “closed book” exams—allowing no notes, texts, or access to other online materials. **Exam answers that are exact copies of, or highly similar to, sentences from course materials will be investigated as a possible violation of the Student Code of Conduct, and the student may be subject to penalty.**

Topics and Reading Assignments

Introduction and Week 1: Introduction; Moral Reasoning in the Medical Context

Aug. 31 – Sept. 9 Optional reading: “Moral Reasoning in the Medical Context” (Use this as a reference to help with questions you may have from the week one lectures, or read to give yourself greater depth of understanding about the material.)

Week 2: Foundations of the Health Professional-Patient Relationship

Sept. 11 “The Refutation of Medical Paternalism”; “Four Models of the Physician-Patient Relationship”

Week 3: Decisional Capacity and the Right to Refuse Treatment

Sept. 18 “Deciding for Others: Competency”
Sept. 18: Quiz on first two weeks material

Week 4: Choosing for Others and Advance Directives

Sept. 25 “The Severely Demented, Minimally Functional Patient”

Week 5: Obligations to Treat or Not Treat

Oct. 2 “Erring on the Side of Theresa Schiavo”; “Human Non-Person”:
Terri , Bioethics, and Our Future”
Case analysis exercise due October 2

Week 6: End-of-Life Decisionmaking and Physician-Assisted Suicide (or Aid-in-Dying)

Oct. 9 “Physician-Assisted Suicide: A Tragic View”

Week 7: Review and Exam

Oct. 16 No assigned reading; review study guide

Oct. 20 **Mid-term Exam (available 7:00 a.m. to take any time during a two-hour block but must be completed by 10:00 p.m.)**

Week 8: Defining Health and the Goals of Medicine

Oct. 23 “Is Ugliness a Disease?” “Anyone for Tennis, At the Age of 150?”

Week 9: The Morality of Abortion

Oct. 30 “Why Abortion is Immoral”; “Why Most Abortions are Not Wrong”

Week 10: Prenatal Testing and Reproductive Decisionmaking

Nov. 6 “Procreative Liberty”
Case Analysis Exercise Due Nov. 6

Week 11: Human Cloning

Nov. 13 “Will Cloning Harm People?”

Week 12: Thanksgiving Holiday Week

Nov. 20 Catch up; no new assignments

Week 13: Stem Cell Research

Nov. 27 “The Point of a Ban”

Week 14: Human Subjects Research

Dec. 4 “Racism and Research”

Final Exam

Thursday, December 14 (available 7:00 a.m.; must be completed by 10:00 p.m.)