

St Francis Xavier University
Philosophy 336 / Nursing 336 – Ethics in Health and Medicine - 2014-15

Professor: William Sweet

Office: 707 Nicholson Tower

Telephone: 867-2341

E-mail: wsweet@stfx.ca

Office Hours: Tuesday 9.15-11.15; Wednesday and Thursday, 3:45 p.m.-5:00 p.m., and by arrangement

This class is scheduled to meet in the 'A3/B3/P2' time block (Thursday 9.15-12.05).

Information on the course, on assignments and examinations, etc., will be periodically posted on the course moodle page at <http://moodle.stfx.ca>

This course introduces students to ethical theories and values, and to the critical examination of contemporary issues arising in health care and medicine. Issues to be discussed may include: the concept of health; the ethical responsibilities of professionals and professional integrity; freedom, autonomy, and consent; death, dying, and euthanasia; abortion; infanticide; research involving human subjects; the allocation of scarce medical resources; confidentiality and privacy; reproductive technologies and rights; medical and non-medical drug use.

The aim of this course is to:

- Introduce students to ethics
 - Increase ability in understanding the meaning of values and principles that are central to medicine and health care
 - Develop ability in moral reasoning that can be applied to a health care context
 - Introduce students to ethical analysis and the critical discussion of some contemporary moral issues in ethics bearing on health care
 - Develop the ability to evaluate critically popular views in health-care ethics
 - Have students develop a deeper understanding of professional ethics and professional responsibility
 - Have students develop a deeper understanding of the ethical life
-

Course Outline:

1. Introduction

- a. What is ethics?
- b. Personal and professional ethics, and codes of ethics
- c. Ethical decision making and addressing conflicts
- d. The relation of practice to theory
- e. Characteristics of an ethical theory

2. Theories about ethics

- a. relativism, subjectivism, and conventionalism
- b. egoism
- c. legalism
- d. amoralism
- e. objectivism

3. Ethical theories

- a. 'religious' ethics
- b. deontology (Kant)
- c. consequentialism (Mill)
- d. theories of rights (Locke)
- e. virtue theory (Aristotle)
- f. ethics of care (feminist theories)
- g. nature and natural law theory (Maritain)

4. Ethical Values and Professional Values and Responsibilities

Introduction

- a. promoting health and well-being
- b. preserving dignity and respect
- c. providing safe, compassionate, competent and ethical care
- d. promoting and respecting informed decision-making
- e. promoting social well-being and justice
- f. professional and personal integrity
- g. accountability

5. Applications

- a. care for oneself and the right to one's body
- b. euthanasia and assisted suicide
- c. abortion and infanticide
- d. regulation of reproduction / parental licensing
- e. distribution of medical resources
- f. moral conscience and providing care

Texts:

Principles and Values in Biomedical Ethics by Dr William Sweet.

Chapters from the textbook will be posted on moodle, and should be printed. Pages from the text should be placed in a binder and brought to class.

Some additional readings will be made available on moodle.

Method of Evaluation:

mid-term test - late October – 10%

mid-year examination – December - 25 %

2 short essays – beginning of February and late March – 20 %

final examination – April - 35 %

attendance and class notes – 10 %

Method of the course and the role of the student:

The class will have a 'lecture and discussion' format. The professor will introduce a topic with a summary of the relevant arguments or a commentary on a text. This will be followed by questions and discussion of the material by the class as a whole (e.g., points of clarification or criticism and of comparison; comments on the relations between or among different issues).

Students are expected to have prepared the readings before class, to attend all of the classes and to participate in discussion. In conformity with University regulations, students who have more than 6 hours of unjustified absence in a term may be reported to their Dean.

It is essential that students be prepared to ask and answer questions in class.

Laptops and other technologies

Laptops, smartphones, and similar technologies are **not permitted** unless you have my prior, explicit permission. Unauthorized use or related activities will result in being asked to leave the classroom.

Students with disabilities

Students who believe they may need accommodations in this class are encouraged to contact the Centre for Accessible Learning [Bloomfield Centre room 421; (902) 867-5349] as soon as possible to ensure that accommodations are implemented in a timely fashion.

Email and office policy

I can respond to short messages through email, and I try to check e-mail once a day. **I do not, however, provide grades or answers about course content by email.** Students should make use of my office hours and ask questions in class. Urgent requests (e.g., to meet) are best made by telephone. If I am not in when you call, please call later or drop by.

Writing to a course instructor is not the same as writing to a friend. For example, if you send me an e-mail message, please mention the specific topic of your message in the "subject" line. Use proper English. Begin the communication with an appropriate salutation, e.g., "Dear Professor Sweet" (A poorly written and misspelled message reflects badly on the author.) Sign the communication with your name and the course in which you are enrolled.

Policy on plagiarism and academic dishonesty

St. Francis Xavier University values academic integrity. **All forms of academic dishonesty (including plagiarism) are unacceptable and will be sanctioned.** For the university policy on plagiarism, please visit http://www.sites.stfx.ca/registrars_office/academic_integrity

Writing Centre

Students are encouraged to take advantage of the resources of the Writing Centre, particularly with regard to organizing study time, writing papers, preparing for examinations, etc. For more information, please see <http://sites.stfx.ca/writingcentre/>