Contemporary academic bioethics began in 1960, when the invention of the Teflon-lined Scribner Shunt at the University of Washington made possible long-term dialysis treatment for chronic renal failure patients (as seen above). Initially, UW had only a small number of shunt-equipped dialysis machines, and a very large number of patients who would die without dialysis. They faced the question: which patients should get the scarce time on the machine?

We will consider that question, as well as a wide variety of other philosophical and ethical questions that arise concerning health care and the life sciences.

Professor

Dr. Samuel Asarnow ("Sam")
Office: Old Main 100
Office Hours: Tuesday, 1:15-3:30pm, or by appointment.
E-mail: sasarnow@macalester.edu

Time and Location

Time: Tues/Thurs, 9:40-11:10am
Room: Old Main 002
Course Objectives

In this course, you will:

- Learn about the difficult ethical problems that face health care providers, life scientists, and policymakers concerned with health care and medicine.
- Develop your ability to identify and assess arguments in favor of and against controversial ethical positions.
- Develop your ability to discuss controversial and emotion-laden ethical questions while being respectful, caring, honest, and rigorous.
- Develop your ability to craft rigorous and persuasive philosophical arguments.
- Develop the distinctive skill of writing a philosophy paper.

Required Readings

Many readings will be drawn from Bioethics: An Anthology, 2nd Edition, edited by Helga Kuhse and Peter Singer (Blackwell 2006). You can buy this book at the Highlander or via many online retailers. I recommend purchasing the book, but it will be possible to complete the readings without doing so. A copy of the book is available on reserve at the library. In addition, I have included full citations for all of the papers in the anthology on the syllabus below. If you trust your research skills, you should be able to find most of them online. Other readings will be found on Moodle, available at https://moodle.macalester.edu. If you have any problems accessing Moodle, please let me know.

All reading assignments will be posted to Moodle. On any given day, if you want to know what to read for the next class, check the Moodle, which will be kept up to date.

Assignments and Grading Basis

Participation and Reading Reactions – 10%

You are expected to attend every class, and to participate when appropriate. What counts as participation? Certainly, asking questions and responding to questions that the professor asks. But so does listening thoughtfully to the conversations that develop in class. Conversations in office hours with the instructor and course assistant also count as participation.

A Reading Reaction is an approximately 300 word reflection on one or two of the readings from the week. Your goal is in a Reading Reaction is to demonstrate to me that you are thinking actively about the reading you choose. Here are some good things to do
in a reading reaction: raise a question about a difficult part of the reading; try to answer a question the author of an article asks; criticize an argument from the reading; summarize an especially difficult passage from the reading; explain why you don’t understand something from the reading. **You will be expected to complete 8 Reading Reactions this semester.** Reading Reactions are due via e-mail on Thursday before class. Everyone is expected to turn in a Reading Reaction after the first full week of class (on September 10).

Submit your Reading Reactions via e-mail to sasarnow@macalester.edu. Please write “Reading Reaction” (sans quotes) in the subject line of the e-mail. Reading Reactions are graded on a 0/1/2 basis: a grade of 1 indicates an interesting and careful Reading Reaction; a grade of 2 indicates an exemplary reading reaction; a grade of 0 indicates an insufficiently thoughtful Reading Reaction.

**Argument Reconstruction – 15% (Due Friday, October 2)**

A short (approximately 1200 word) attempt to reconstruct a philosophical argument from one of our readings.

**Short Paper – 25% (Due Friday, November 6)**

A short-ish paper (1600 words) on any of the topics we have discussed so far.

**Long Paper**

First Draft: 20% (Due Friday, December 4)

Second Draft 30% (Due Friday, December 18)

A long-ish paper (3000 words) on any topic we have discussed so far.

**Accommodations**

I am committed to making this course work for everyone. If some element of this course won’t work for you and you need an accommodation for a disability, please contact the Office of Student Affairs, ideally at the beginning of the semester. You can contact the Office of Student Affairs at (651) 696-2220. In addition, all students should feel free to contact me at any time (after class, via e-mail, in office hours, etc) to chat about how the course is going and to let me know if there is anything I can do to make the course more accessible for you.
Office Hours

My office is Old Main 100. My office hours are on Tuesday from 1:15-3:30pm, and by appointment. I encourage all of you to come to office hours, and to make appointments if that time doesn’t work for you. Some good reasons to come to office hours include: you are confused about a reading; you are totally lost in class; you want additional readings because you aren’t feeling challenged enough; you strongly disagree with a reading or with something someone said in class; you have nothing else to do on a Tuesday afternoon and you are bored; you just watched season 5, episode 4 of Friends and you want to talk about whether Pheobe has an adequate response to Joey’s argument for psychological egoism.

Tentative List of Topics and Readings

This list is subject to change. **On any given day, if you want to know what to read for the next class, check the Moodle, which will be kept up to date.**

Week 1

Thursday, September 3: Introduction to Bioethics and Philosophical Ethics

Week 2

Tuesday, September 8: Microallocation I

- Organ Procurement and Transportation Network, “How Organ Allocation Works” (Moodle)

Thursday, September 10: Microallocation II

Week 3

Tuesday, September 15: Macroallocation I


Thursday, September 17: Macroallocation II


Week 4

Tuesday, September 22: Macroallocation III

- Readings TBD (will be on Norman Daniels’ “Prudential Lifespan Account”)

Thursday, September 24: Markets in Donor Organs


Week 5

Tuesday, September 29: Altruistic Organ Donation

Thursday, October 1: Surrogacy I


**Week 6**

Tuesday, October 6: Surrogacy II


Thursday, October 8: Prenatal Sex Selection


**Week 7**

Tuesday, October 13: Prenatal Diagnosis of Disability I


Thursday, October 15: Prenatal Diagnosis of Disability II

Week 8

Tuesday, October 20: Prenatal Diagnosis of Disability III


Thursday, October 22: No Class (Fall Break)

Week 9

Tuesday, October 27: Serie Center Mid-Course Interview

Thursday, October 29: Genetic Enhancement I


Week 10

Tuesday, November 3: Genetic Enhancement II


Thursday, November 5: Genetic Enhancement III

Week 11

Tuesday, November 10: Abortion I


Thursday, November 12: Abortion II


**Week 12**

Tuesday, November 17: Abortion III

- Elizabeth Harman, “"How is the Ethics of Stem Cell Research Different from the Ethics of Abortion?" *Metaphilosophy* 38:2-3 (2007) (Moodle)

Thursday, November 19: Euthanasia I


**Week 13**

Tuesday, November 24 – No Class

Thursday, November 26 – No Class (Thanksgiving)

**Week 14**

Tuesday, December 1: Euthanasia II

- M. John Rowe III, “Beliefs,” *Journal of the AMA* 314:9 (Moodle)
Thursday, December 3: Euthanasia III


**Week 15**

Tuesday, December 8: Conscientious Refusal


Thursday, December 10: Wrap-Up