

# Medical Ethics

PHL 214A

9:30-10:45 TR

The questions we take up in this course are both varied and “messy.” What kind of relationship ought to exist between the patient and individuals providing medical care? When, if ever, is experimentation on patients allowable? What about experimentation on animals? Under what conditions should genetic testing be permitted? How should we allocate scarce resources (organs for transplantation, for example)? Do we have a moral obligation as a society to provide health care or health insurance for everyone in our borders or just citizens?

Is it morally permissible to help patients die? Would allowing such practices undermine our commitment to quality health care?

What issues of gender fairness currently arise in medicine? How does race affect important questions in bioethics? Does an illness like AIDS justify us in creating different ethical standards for treatment, confidentiality, or anything else?

Decisions must be made daily on some of these hard questions; it is not always possible to wait until we have more time to reflect. Nevertheless, it behooves us as individuals and as a

*In this course, we will examine a series of ethical problems, some involving the use of new technologies and capabilities and others as old as the practice of medicine itself.*

society to keep reflecting on these questions, aiming for ever clearer understandings of what is best in the situations with which we are confronted. During his or her lifetime, only an exceptionally fortunate individual can avoid facing at least several of the issues we will address. Individuals with careers in health services or in areas responsible for making public policy will confront not only the personal questions affecting each of us, but may also be answerable for decisions that affect the well being of many others. Furthermore, as citizens in a democratic society,

we are all morally obligated to consider these problems and their implications for social policy. Therefore, for many reasons, careful examination of the issues in this area is well worth the effort involved. And, as with all difficult questions, it is best not to wait until the problems actually arise in our own lives before we begin considering what ought to be done.

In lieu of a final exam, students will be responsible for a project investigating an ethical issue of their choice in this area.

**Course Prerequisite:** PHL 101 or 110 or permission of instructor.

Please contact Dr. Paul at [linda.paul@wilkes.edu](mailto:linda.paul@wilkes.edu) with any questions about the course.