

PHIL 1722: Health Care Ethics (Online)
Stoner/Spring 2021

Health Care Ethics introduces basic ethical theories, principles, and decision-making guidelines used in health care ethics. It examines moral issues confronting health care practitioners, patients, and others involved in medicine. The course includes philosophical analysis of cultural differences regarding medical practices, contemporary moral decision-making on topics such as disclosure, confidentiality, human cloning, medical research, abortion, transplantation and organ markets, allocation of limited resources, conscientious objection, research on human subjects, and euthanasia. The course is open to all students interested in health care ethics.

Successfully completing Health Care Ethics will require you to:

1. Evaluate arguments about a variety of moral issues in health care, such as assisted-suicide and euthanasia, disability and genetic screening, conscientious objection, justice in human research, abortion, truth-telling and confidentiality, and genetic manipulation and human enhancement.
2. Explain the value and limitations of professional ethics codes as guides to moral decision-making.
3. Explain the value of philosophical reflection on moral issues in healthcare.
4. Explain moral principles and moral theories commonly applied in bioethics, such as the principle of beneficence, the principle of autonomy, the principle of utility, prominent moral theories, and the social and medical models of disability.
5. Develop and defend a view about a moral issue in healthcare.
6. Engage in productive dialogue about controversial and complex moral issues.

Overview of the Course Design

Instructor

Dr. Ian Stoner
ian.stoner@saintpaul.edu

Office hours (in Zoom): Mondays 1:30 – 2:30, Tuesdays 10 – 11:30, and Wednesdays 10 – 11:30.
Book an office hours appointment here: <https://ian-spc.youcanbook.me>

Required Texts

Doing Practical Ethics: A Skills-Based Approach to Moral Reasoning by Ian Stoner and Jason Swartwood (Oxford University Press, 2021).

I will post all other required and recommended course materials on D2L.

Grading

I have designed this course to be fully self-paced. You will begin with access to a single “episode.” After you have completed that episode’s requirements, you will unlock access to the next episode in the sequence. There are seven episodes in all, plus a course-introduction mini-episode. Your grade at the end of the semester will be determined by the highest episode you successfully completed.

Highest episode completed Final course grade

0	F
1	F
2	D
3	C
4	C
5	B
6	B
7	A

Skills, Topics, and Capstones

Each episode of the course has three components: a skills training component, a topic training component, and a capstone assignment. The skills are taught from the *Doing Practical Ethics* textbook. The topics are covered by readings and videos posted to D2L. The capstone assignments are application tasks that you will complete and submit to me for a grade.

When you unlock a new episode, you will receive instructions on which skills you must practice first. When you have mastered those skills, attempt the skills exam. If you score better than 85% on that skills exam, you will unlock the topic module for that episode. When you have understood the topic content, attempt the topics exam. If you score better than 85% on the topics exam, you will unlock that episode’s capstone assignment. The capstone assignment asks you to apply your newly acquired skill and topic knowledge to a specific controversy in health care. If you score better than 85% on the capstone assignment, you will unlock the next episode in the sequence.

Limits on Multiple Attempts

You may attempt all exams and assignments 3+2+1... times. You will begin with 3 attempts to complete these tasks satisfactorily. If you do not pass an exam or assignment after 3 attempts, you must book an office hours appointment with me. After we meet in office hours to discuss your questions and points of confusion, I will add 2 more exam attempts. If you do not pass the exam after 3+2 attempts, you must book an office hours appointment with me before each additional attempt.

Role-Playing Element

Throughout the course, we will imagine that we are members of the Center for Medical Ethics at a fictional hospital in the Twin Cities called Mount Chaos Hospital. We will imagine that you are a new intern and I am the center’s director. You will assist me in providing ethical guidance in the many controversies that divide the Mount Chaos community. To contribute to that project, you will need to

learn a set of argumentation skills, as well as factual information and philosophical background relevant to these controversies.

The role-playing element of the course helps structure the material I will ask you to learn and helps make it clear how the skills and content you will learn in this course will equip you to reflect on and discuss real-world controversies. It also, I hope, will make the whole experience more fun.

Course Map and Recommended Calendar

Episode 0: Course Introduction

This episode explains the structure of the course and its policies, provides suggestions for how you should approach it, and lists the resources available to support your studies.

Required completion date for all students: 11:59pm on Monday, January 18th. School policy requires all students enrolled in online classes to participate within the first week. If you do not complete the Episode 0 exam by the deadline, I am required to file an FN (Failure to Attend) grade for you.

Episode 1: A Case of Cultural Refusal to Treat

Skills: Illustrative examples and counterexamples

Topic: The appropriate role of sacred texts and cultural practices in moral reasoning

We have all grown up in cultures that teach us a variety of ways to avoid thinking about and discussing controversial issues. Episode 1 discusses problems with two of the most common avoidance techniques: appeals to sacred texts, and appeals to cultural differences. In the capstone assignment, you will contribute to a discussion about a controversial case in which parents have refused, on religious grounds, chemotherapy for their young child. With chemotherapy he will almost certainly live; without it, he will almost certainly die. Should we take the parents to court to try to force them to treat their child against their will?

Recommended completion date for students seeking an A: January 29.

Episode 2: Mount Chaos's Staff Debates HB42

Skills: Analyzing Arguments from Principle

Topic: Suicide and Euthanasia

Historically, there has been broad consensus in the USA that it is never morally permissible for caregivers to help their patients die. Over the last two decades, that consensus has weakened, and in 2020, Maine became the tenth jurisdiction to allow physician-assisted death. When, if ever, is it morally permissible for a health-care professional to help a patient die? What public policies best respect our moral judgments concerning individual cases of physician-assisted death? In the capstone assignment, you will contribute to a discussion about whether physician-assisted death should be legalized in Minnesota.

Recommended completion date for students seeking an A: February 12.

Episode 3: A Controversial Take-Over Bid

Skill: Analyzing Arguments from Analogy

Topic: Abortion

Few topics in health care ethics are as prominent in public debates as abortion. Under what circumstances is it morally permissible for a person to terminate a pregnancy? In the capstone assignment, you will contribute to a discussion about whether Mount Chaos hospital should accept a bid to be purchased by a Catholic hospital group that bans all abortion procedures at its hospitals.

Recommended completion date for students seeking an A: February 26.

Episode 4: The Case of the Life-and-Death Wait-List

Skill: Evaluating Arguments from Principle

Topic: Allocating organs for transplant

People who need liver transplants vastly outnumber available transplantable livers, which makes the question of how to order the transplant wait-list a question of life-and-death. In the capstone assignment, you will evaluate arguments for and against changing Mount Chaos hospital policy to one that de-prioritizes patients who need a liver transplant because of alcohol-related liver failure.

Recommended completion date for students seeking an A: March 12.

Episode 5: The Case of the Refusing Pharmacist

Skill: Evaluating Arguments from Analogy

Topic: Conscience refusals

Most of us have at some point faced a conflict between the expectations of our job and our sense of right and wrong. We can thus understand the conflict faced by medical professionals whose job requires them to do things they think wrong. But when, if ever, should we acknowledge that they have a *right to refuse* to do their job, based on their own conscience? In the capstone assignment, you will evaluate arguments for and against disciplining a Mount Chaos pharmacist who consistently refuses to fill prescriptions for birth control.

Recommended completion date for students seeking an A: April 2.

Episode 6: Two Questions of Disability Split the Mount Chaos Community

Skills: Writing original Arguments from Principle and Analogy

Topic: Disability

“Disability” is difficult to define. Episode 6 first introduces three well-established views about what disabilities are, and what role they play in the lives of disabled people. In the capstone assignment, you will write your own arguments about two controversies currently unfolding at Mount Chaos. First, should our doctors administer a growth-attenuation treatment at the request of the parents of a child with severe cognitive disability? Second, how should the hospital respond to a rape accusation from the children of a woman in Mount Chaos’s memory care facility?

Recommended completion date for students seeking an A: April 16th.

Episode 7: A Call for Papers

Skill: Writing a position paper

Topic: Your choice of several options

In the final episode, you will write a full position paper on one of several controversial topics. Writing a position paper involves developing and evaluating the best arguments on both sides of the controversy. Completing this task will require you to refine and integrate the skills you practiced in the previous episodes.

Recommended completion date for students seeking an A: May 7.

The deadline to submit any materials for any Episode: noon on Wednesday, May 12.

Course Policies

Accessibility. I want this course (in both content and assessment) to be accessible to all students regardless of impairments and disabilities. If you have a disability that I can better accommodate, please consider meeting with me to talk about it. Improvements to accessibility are improvements to the course, and students in future semesters will owe you a debt of gratitude (that will, of course, go unpaid) for taking the time to give me your feedback on accessibility.

Testing accommodations require you to register with Access & Disability Resources. Please email accessresources@saintpaul.edu or call 651.350.3008 to set up a time to connect and to request reasonable accommodations. (Accommodations are never retroactive, so it is important to connect with Access & Disability Resources at the beginning of the semester.)

Office hours. Office hours are times each week that I have reserved to meet with students. This semester, because of the COVID-19 pandemic, I will hold all of my office hours in zoom. I ask that you book appointments at least two hours ahead of time here: <https://ian-spc.youcanbook.me> . After you book an appointment, you will receive a confirmation email with instructions about how to join the meeting. Talking one-on-one can often help a lot if you are feeling stuck or frustrated. Even though zoom meetings are more annoying and awkward than in-person meetings, I hope you’ll visit me in office hours. The opportunity to talk philosophy with students individually is one of my favorite parts of my job.

Emotionally intense content. A course in medical ethics is, by its very nature, a course covering emotionally intense subjects. Over the course of the semester, we will focus centrally on suicide and

abortion. We will discuss religion, racial discrimination, alcoholism, and a morally ambiguous case of sex that might actually be a case of rape. There are undoubtedly other moments, which I cannot specifically predict, that will be intense for some students.

You may at some point notice a classmate have an intense response to a reading, video, or post. As your peer works through their own emotions, be patient and kind with them, even if you don't understand the reasons for their intense reaction.

If you have direct experience with one or more of these topics, you will have a special perspective of experience that you may choose to share with others. Or you may choose not to. Those of us who do *not* have direct personal experience with a particular topic should keep in mind that we don't know who in the class does have that experience. We should all, always, conduct ourselves in discussion in a way we can be proud of even if we found out other participants in the discussion have the kind of direct personal experience that we lack.

Health care ethics tutors. Saint Paul College has tutors specially qualified peer tutors to help with health care ethics. These are students who have already taken health care ethics and done an excellent job. To book a free tutoring appointment with a health care ethics tutor, visit the Tutoring Center's booking page at this comically long url:

<https://outlook.office365.com/owa/calendar/WritingandReadingCenter@MinnState.edu/bookings/>

If you have questions about the Tutoring Center, email them at tutoring@saintpaul.edu or call them at 651-403-4366. They are good at their jobs and excited to work with you.

Ways to contact me. For questions regarding course material, post them to the relevant course discussion board. During the work week I usually respond to posts within 36 hours, and you might get help from peers faster than that.

For questions that aren't about course content, or for cases when you are struggling to put together your thoughts coherently enough for a discussion board post, the best option is to schedule an office hours meeting with me. A short conversation can usually accomplish more than a long exchange of emails.

If you have a question that isn't appropriate for the course forums, and my office hours won't work for you, then email me. (If you email me a question that would be appropriate to post to the discussion board, I will ask you to do that, and I will respond on the message board.) When you email me, please include your name and the course you are taking in your email. That will help me respond promptly.

Please do not use D2L's instant messaging function or my college-assigned phone number; I do not monitor them.

Ways I will contact you. For class-wide announcements, I will use D2L's "Announcement" feature. If I need to reach you individually, I will email your Saint Paul College email address. Most of your other instructors will do the same. Please make sure that you check your SPC email address regularly.

Important dates. A full refund is available until January 15.

The last day to withdraw from this course is April 20.

If, for any reason, you decide not to complete the course, please officially withdraw as soon as you have made your decision. If you do not withdraw officially (and I cannot do it for you), you will receive a failing (F) grade for the course.

As per school policy, if you do not participate for two consecutive weeks of class, I am required to assign you a grade of FW (Failure to Withdraw) for the course. Please make sure you leave some evidence of your participation in this class every week—watch a video, attempt an end-of-module exam, post on the discussion board—and do not put it on the back burner for more than a week.

If you have a medical, family, or other situation causing trouble for you in this class, please contact me as soon as you can, so we can arrange a way to avoid running afoul of these college rules.

Incompletes: Incompletes are *not* for cases in which students have fallen behind and need more time to achieve their goal-grade. Incompletes are an emergency remedy for a sudden and unpredictable disruption that prevents a student from completing required end-of-semester tasks—for example, a car accident on the way to the final exam. Since this course is self-paced throughout the semester and there is no required last-minute work, there is virtually no circumstance in which an incomplete would be appropriate.

Help with D2L. If you are new to D2L Brightspace, consider attending one of the Student Technology Orientations listed at <http://www.saintpaul.edu/studentservices/d2l-brightspace>. If you have technical troubles accessing D2L, e-mail the ithelpdesk@saintpaul.edu.

Academic integrity. Collusion, plagiarism, and other forms of academic dishonesty are corrosive not only to the health of Saint Paul College as an institution, but also to a student's ability to learn. Students who violate basic ethical principles of academic integrity wrong their honest peers, de-value their own degrees, leave themselves unprepared to apply skills they have only pretended to learn, and damage the reputation of Saint Paul College.

I encourage you to work with friends and peers at coffee shops, in the tutoring center, during my office hours, in online hangouts, and on the discussion forums. But the work you submit for grades, whether exams or assignments, should represent your own work and no one else's. If I discover that one of your submitted exams includes work you did not do for yourself, I will fail you for that exam, and stop your progress in the course at that point. I will also file a report of academic dishonesty with the college.

Plagiarism involves passing off the work, words, or ideas of other people as your own. If I discover you have plagiarized any part of any written assignment, I will fail you for that assignment, stop your progress in the course at that point, and file a report of academic dishonesty with the college. If you have any questions about what constitutes plagiarism, contact me to ask about it before you submit the assignment.

I have noticed that some instances of plagiarism are the result of a student feeling desperate to complete an assignment. Instead of plagiarizing, ask me for help—that's what I'm here for.

For a more thorough statement of school policies regarding academic integrity, including a more detailed discussion of plagiarism, see: <https://www.saintpaul.edu/studentservices/academic-integrity-policy>