

*School of Arts & Science*  
*Humanities*

**Phil 250 Section 1, Biomedical Ethics**  
**Fall 2008**

**COURSE OUTLINE**

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*Ω Please note: This outline will not be kept indefinitely. It is recommended students keep this outline for their records.*

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**1. Instructor Information**

- (a) Instructor: Karen Shirley
- (b) Office hours: Tues. Thurs. and Fri.: 11:30-12:20; Wed.: 11:30-1:20
- (c) Location: Y320
- (d) Phone:370 3518      Home: 383 8164

**2. Intended Learning Outcomes**

At the end of the course, students will be able to

- 1) Describe and evaluate traditional ethical theories in relation to ethical practice in healthcare and nursing.
- 2) Identify the theoretical underpinnings and consequences people's positions on ethical issues.
- 3) Develop skills in ethical reasoning and judgment.
- 4) Describe the relationship between the CAN Code of Ethics and ethical theories, including an understanding of the role of professional values in ethical decision making.
- 5) Describe how ethical decision making is enacted in professional practice.
- 6) Through discussion and writing, resolve ethical dilemmas that arise in nursing practice.

**3. Required Materials**

- (a) Texts

*Philosophy 250 Handout* (Available in the bookstore)

If your grammar needs work, you may wish to purchase a small style guide with a section on common errors in grammar and usage.

## 4. Course Content and Schedule

### Week 1: Sept 4:

**First Hour:** course outline; Division into debate groups

**Second and Third Hours:** lecture on meta-ethical theories

### Week 2: Sept. 11

**Readings:** p. 51 – 86 and 415 - 420

#### Study Q

1. You will be asked to describe an ethical or a meta-ethical theory which I pick out of a hat at the beginning of the exam.

**HW:** An example of a strong argument with true premises.

**Third Hour:** Applying the theories in moral dilemmas

### Week 3: Sept. – 18

**Readings:** p. 112 - 156

#### Study Q

2. TBA

**HW:** An example of a weak argument with true premises.

**Debate:** Therapeutic touch should be an insured procedure.

### Week 4: Sept. 25

**Readings:** p. 157 – 188 and 421 -423

#### Study Q

3. Give a prescriptive definition of ‘health’ and defend it in terms of its good consequences and its fit with lexical usage.

**HW:** lexical, a prescriptive and a persuasive definition of ‘professional’.

**Debate:** Pedaphiles are not morally responsible for their illegal sexual behaviour with children.

### Week 5: Oct. 2

**Readings:** p. 189 – 223 and Fallacies 1 and 2 on p. 423

#### Study Q

4. Using a principle of distributive justice - your own or one discussed in class - explain what types of procedures should and shouldn't be insured. Ensure that you acknowledge and defend any controversial or unusual consequences of you position. Examples of *types* of procedures are cosmetic procedures, procedures required as a result of dangerous choices (for example, smoking or careless lifting), reproduction-related procedures, etc..

**HW:** An example of an argument that commits the fallacy of *argumentum ad hominem* and another one that commits the fallacy of appeal to authority.

**Debate:** Canada should give more money to needy people in other parts of the world, even if that means putting less money into the Canadian health care system.

## **Week 6: Oct. 9**

**Readings:** p. 224 – 251 and fallacies 3 and 4

### **Study Q**

Same as above

**HW:** An argument that commits the fallacy of equivocation and one that argues from ignorance.

**Debate:** Whoever helped Sue Rodriguez to die acted immorally.

## **Week 7: Oct. 16 Exam 1**

## **Week 8: Oct 23**

**Reading:** p. 252 – 288 and fallacy 5

### **Study Q**

1. Critically assess the doctrine of double effect.

**HW:** An example of an argument that commits the fallacy of hypothesis contrary to fact.

**Debate:** An anencephalic newborn is not morally considerable.

## **Week 9: Oct. 30**

**Readings:** p. 289 – 325 and fallacy 6

### **Study Q**

2. Present and defend your view on the moral status of the human fetus and newborn.

**HW:** An argument that commits the fallacy of *argumentum ad populum*

**Debate:** Paying someone more than expenses to be a surrogate mother is immoral.

## **Week 10: Nov. 6**

**Readings:** p. 326 – 347 and fallacy 7

### **Study Q**

3. When, if ever, is it morally acceptable to sterilize a person without informed consent?

**HW:** An argument that contains a faulty analogy

**Debate:** It is always immoral to sterilize someone against his or her will. (Do not consider sexual predators.)

## **Week 11: Nov. 13**

**Readings:** p. 348- 400b and fallacy 8 and 9

### **Study Q**

4. Is it morally acceptable for a nurse to participate in a circumcision of a baby boy when the proxy decision-maker has chosen to have his or her baby circumcised?

**HW:** An example of an argument that commits the fallacy of *Post Hoc Ergo Propter Hoc* and one that is an appeal to pity.

**Debate:** Winnipeg's Riverview Health Centre did the morally right thing when it imposed a DNR order on Andrew Sawatzky, against his wife's wishes.

## **Week 12: Nov. 20**

**Readings:** p. 401 – 414 and fallacy 10

### **Study Q**

5. Under what circumstances is it morally acceptable for a nurse to tell a client that a person the client has had contact with or will have contact with is HIV positive? Why?

**HW:** An argument that presents a fallacious slippery slope.

**Debate:** If, after persistent efforts to deter an HIV positive sex worker from working, the worker continues to do so without notifying customers of his or her condition and without engaging in safe sex, then it is morally acceptable for the police to incarcerate the sex worker against his or her will.

Note: the incarceration need not take place in jail.

## **Week 13: Nov. 27**

**Readings:** p. 25 – 50 and fallacy 11

### **Study Q**

6. Suggest one change to the CNA Code of Ethics which would improve the Code. Explain why the change is an improvement. (A trivial change will get a trivial mark!)

**HW:** Confusing correlation with causation.

**Debate:** Nurses are always morally obliged to abide by the Code because they have implicitly or explicitly promised to do so.

## **Week 14: Dec. 4**

**Review class:** review will be carried out on the basis of students' questions. Questions should be specific. That is, you may not ask me to go over a whole study question. Rather, you should ask for clarification of a specific point related

## 5. Basis of Student Assessment

### Summary

2 exams, one of which will be held in the final exam period - PLAN YOUR HOLIDAYS ACCORDINGLY!!.....	60%
Debate.....	20%
Critical thinking homework .....	10%
Verbal participation in debate question periods.....	10%
Bonus critical thinking questions on exams.....	4%

### Formatting Assignments and Exams

- Put the following information on each assignment:
    - your student number; b) your section number
  - Write on both sides of the page, where more than one page is required, and double-space.
- Note:** Keep *all* marked assignments in case there is a discrepancy between your record of your marks and my record of your marks.

### Details of Evaluation

**Exams:** There will be two exams which are worth 30% each. The exams are closed-book. However, you are encouraged to bring a dictionary and/or style guide. Each exam will consist of one of the study questions from the relevant section below. There will also be a bonus question based on the critical thinking section of the handout. It is worth 2%. Thus, it is theoretically possible for a student to end up with 104% at the end of the course.

**Homework:** These assignments are intended to help you to hone your critical thinking skills. Students do not need to do them all. Each homework assignment is marked out of 2% of your final grade. You may do them all if you want to in order to try to get a total of 10% or you may be lucky and get 10% after doing 5 assignments. You may pick which homework assignments you wish to do but they must be handed in *within five minutes of the class starting* on the day they are listed on the schedule below. Given the number of homework assignments you can do, there is no acceptable excuse for handing in late homework assignments.

The subject of the homework assignment must be a nursing issue. You are also encouraged to make these assignments witty.

**Debates:** You are required to participate in a debate (during the seminar) which is worth 20% of your final grade.

During the first class, students will be divided into groups of two to four people. One or two people in each group will take either the pro or con position on a chosen topic. Each group will be given a topic and a date upon which the group will debate the topic in the seminar period.

You and your interlocutor may wish to get together to debate the topic ahead of time so that you have an opportunity to refine your objections and responses. However, in my experience, debates in which the pro and con sides script the debate beforehand suffer as a result. You will be graded on the strength of your arguments, the knowledge you show on the topic and your ability to present your arguments in a way that helps other students understand the relevant facts and arguments.

**Do not read out your part of the debate. If you do read, you will automatically lose 20%.** You may *occasionally* refer to notes.

Handouts are forbidden.

If you are at a loss as to what arguments have been made on the topic, see your textbook, especially the references at the end of relevant papers. If you use the internet, be careful to verify any factual claims made by advocacy groups. Once you have an idea of what issues are at stake and of some of the arguments that have been presented on the topic, you should spend time *thinking for yourself* on the topic. What do *you* think the truth of the matter is? What are the best justifications of your position?

## Structure of Debates

Concision is a virtue in philosophy.

### First,

1. Pro side: *one strong* argument in favour of the claim. (Speak for up to two minutes.)
2. Con side: objection to the above argument. (Speak for up to thirty seconds.)
3. Pro side: response to the above objection. (Speak for up to thirty seconds.)
4. Con side: objection to above response or a second objection to the pro side's original argument. (Speak for up to thirty seconds.)
5. Pro side: response to the second objection. (Speak for up to thirty seconds.)

### Second,

6. Repeat steps one through five above, beginning with the con side this time.

### Third,

7. Pro and con sides now answer questions put to them by the class.

## 6. Grading System

Percentage	Grade	Grade Point Equivalency
90-100	A+	9
85-89	A	8
80-84	A-	7
77-79	B+	6
73-76	B	5
70-72	B-	4
65-69	C+	3
60-64	C	2
50-59	D	1
0-49	F	0

Temporary grades are assigned for specific circumstances and will convert to a final grade according to the grading scheme being used in the course. See Grading Policy E-1.5 at [camosun.ca](http://camosun.ca) for information on conversion to final grades, and for additional information on student record and transcript notations.

## LEARNING SUPPORT AND SERVICES FOR STUDENTS

There are a variety of services available for students to assist them throughout their learning. This information is available in the College Calendar, at Student Services or the College web site at [camosun.ca](http://camosun.ca)

## STUDENT CONDUCT POLICY

There is a Student Conduct Policy **which includes plagiarism**. It is the student's responsibility to become familiar with the content of this policy. The policy is available in each School Administration Office, at Student Services, and on the College web site in the Policy Section.