

Medical Ethics - Moral health care dilemmas from a European and comparative perspective

Center for European Studies

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Full course description

Those who are working in the medical profession are often confronted with decision-making procedures that go far beyond the technological aspects that are involved in the cases under investigation. Doctors and nurses are aware of the fact that their fields of operation are characterised by moral parameters as well and they know that ethical reflection has to come in where scientific deliberation is no longer able to answer all the questions that are connected to the medical problems they have to deal with. This means that quite frequently a medical assessment needs the help of an ethical evaluation to cover completely the appraisal of a particular health situation and that doctors and nurses should be conscious of the moral status and implications of the conclusions they draw.

The aim of this course is to give students an introductory and philosophical investigation of the question if, when and how ethical considerations can or must play a role in the practice of the medical professions. Topics that will be addressed are for example: euthanasia, embryo research, HIV and Aids, imperilled new-borns, gen therapy and cloning, involuntary psychiatric treatment, and allocation of limited medical resources.

It wants to make students aware of the fact that the health sciences are not operating in a moral vacuum and that a good knowledge of both the older and recent ethical debate in this particular field is of the greatest significance. There will be lectures, philosophical discussions and the study of practical cases (some with guest speakers from the field) that reflect the most important problems and topics that make up the moral challenges of the medical discipline of today.

Disclaimer: trips and visits related to the course are conditional. E.g. Dutch travel advice should be positive regarding the region that will be visited and institutions should be able to accept visitors. In case a proposed trip or visit cannot continue due to circumstances, alternatives may be organized.

This course consists of 32 class hours divided over 7-8 weeks. Students earn 6 ECTS credits when they obtain a passing grade. Students who need more credits can sign up for the extended course format, which includes an Independent Study Project (ISP) worth an additional 3 ECTS. The maximum number of credits that can be obtained is 9 ECTS.

Course objectives

Students will be schooled in philosophical techniques that form the basis of sound ethical reasoning. After the course students will have a good working knowledge of the most important ethical problems, questions, approaches, answers and theories that are related to the fields in which medical professionals are working. They can give an independent philosophical analysis of a medical case or of a case which is related to this and they will be able to properly justify the ethical answers and solutions that are being looked for. They know how to present their findings both in a written and in an oral form.

Prerequisites

None.

A minimum number of 8 students is required for the course to take place.

Recommended reading

Albert R. Jonsen: *Clinical Ethics: A Practical Approach to Ethical Decisions in Clinical Medicine* (Lange Clinical Science).

Albert R. Jonsen: *A Short History of Medical Ethics*.

Bunge, Mario. *Medical Philosophy: Conceptual Issues in Medicine*. World Scientific (2013).

G. Pence, 'Medical Ethics: Accounts of Ground-Breaking Cases, McGraw-Hill, New York (2014).

Leslie Stevenson, David L. Haberman, Peter Matthews Wright: *Twelve Theories of Human Nature*, Oxford University Press (2012).

R.K. Lie, P.T. Schotsmans: *Healthy Thoughts: European Perspectives on Health Care Ethics*, Leuven 2002.

Richard Huxtable, Ruud ter Meulen: *The Voices and Rooms of European Bioethics*, Routledge, 2015.

CES students receive their books on loan from CES. Students participating in the Maastricht Summerschool (MSS) can either borrow the text books from CES, the university library or buy it themselves.

PHI2002

Period 2

28 Oct 2024 - 20 Dec 2024Period 5

7 Apr 2025 - 6 Jun 2025

ECTS credits:

6.0

Instruction language:

English

Coordinator:

[H.M.S. Timmermans](#)

Teaching methods:

Assignment(s), Lecture(s)

Assessment methods:

Final paper, Participation, Presentation

Keywords:

Medical ethics ■ Medical Philosophy