

# Phil 335: Medical Ethics

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Winter term, 2019

Office: 154 Susan Campbell Hall  
Email: smclay@uoregon.edu  
Office hours: Tuesday's from 9:00am-11:00am or by appointment  
Class Schedule: MW 2:00-3:50.

## Course Description

In this course, we will consider how our understandings of health in public and/or medical discourses can both facilitate and impede the coping or healing of those living with illness. This class will begin by our critically examining the military metaphors and hero narratives that pervade western public and medical health discourses (e.g., “she lost her battle with cancer”; “Zika virus war”). Through reading philosophical literature in medical ethics – as well as the narratives of individuals living with illness – we will consider the following questions: Can the militaristic framing of health and illness have a negative impact on the coping of those who are ill? (For example, does celebrating some patients as having “won a war” frame others as “losers”?) What is health? What is illness? What concepts of personhood underlie our health discourses? Do we need to rethink our concepts of health and illness? What is an ethical medical discourse? How should the medical field thematize the body? Do we need to rethink patient autonomy? What is an ethical medical relationship?

## Learning Goals and Expectations

- Students will be exposed to – and gain an understanding of – key topics in medical ethics
- Students will further develop their writing, reading and critical thinking skills.

## Organization of Classroom and Readings

Classes will incorporate both presentation of material by me, and discussion. The balance and relation of these components will vary (we might start with discussion or end with it, or move in and out of it). For each class, a reading is assigned and it is expected that you read and study it before class so that you are prepared to think about it and questions arising from it. Discussion and lecture presumes that you are familiar with the text.

## Course Requirements

(1) *Readings* (see reading list below). During class, I will presuppose your familiarity with the readings. Take notes on readings, **\*bring the relevant texts to class\***, and come with questions. All readings are available on Canvas, or I will provide the link on the syllabus.

(2) *Attendance*. I do not give out grades directly based on attendance. However, I am aware of your attendance patterns. And, we are studying difficult texts, so engaging with the reading material in class is crucial for your understanding it. Students who skip class tend to receive a D or fail the class (due to not understanding the texts and not participating).

(3) *Participation* (see rubric below). Class discussion will provide you with the space to try out and experiment with new and old ideas, and work through the assigned reading. I expect you to come to class prepared to contribute to discussion. Note that participation is not the same as simply being present in class. Nor is participation a substitute for attendance: you will neither learn more nor sound smart by skipping often, and then dominating the class when you return. Participation will be worth 20% of your final grade.

(4) *Questions for Consideration*. Through the term, you are responsible for writing four “Questions for Consideration” (QFCs). Your focus should be on one or two of the assigned readings of the day you choose to write your QFC for (i.e., Monday or Wednesday). To write a QFC, you should select a quote/passage from the reading that seems philosophically interesting or important, provide the source (page number or section) of that quote, and then ask a question about any philosophical aspect of the quote. There are different ways of doing this: One way to approach the QFC is to use the assignment to bring up and grapple with a question or confusion you have RE the material. You can also ask a more critical question (is there something problematic about it?), or you could ask/think about whether the text helps us better understand certain phenomena in the world (e.g., health, sickness, death, gender, oppression, surgery, doctor/client relationships, addiction, mental health, etc.). Use this assignment to grapple with a question that will help facilitate your philosophical thinking and understanding, as well as interest.

A-level questions are philosophically insightful questions, followed by a reason you are asking the question, and hazard an educated guess as to the answer. “Educated” guesses are guesses well-informed by the readings. A-level QFCs should also not contain grammar/spelling mistakes. Examples of QFC assignments will be posted on Canvas. QFCs should be 150-300 words. Feel free to tie the readings/your questions to events in your personal life or to issues/interests relevant to you (just make sure you do so in a philosophically informed way). I also encourage you to bring up your QFCs in class!

QFCs are due by midnight before the class you are writing the QFC for. I.e., if you are writing a QFC for Monday, you must hand it in by midnight on Sunday. And, if you write one for Wednesday, you must submit it by midnight on Tuesday. I’m asking you to submit the day before because I often incorporate QFCs into lecture. Note that you cannot turn in a QFC and Ethics Reflection Journal on the same day. QFCs are worth 10% of your grade

(5) *Ethics Reflection Journals*. Throughout the term, you are responsible for writing four ethics reflection journals. For this assignment, you will critically apply a theme (or themes) from a reading to a current issue in medical ethics. Possible topics you could write on are, e.g., euthanasia, transphobia in healthcare, health insurance, autonomy, confidentiality, informed consent, abortion, autonomy, ableism. There are different ways of approaching the journal: you could demonstrate how the insights or ethical theories from the reading can help address a certain medical issue. You could also use the reading to criticize a certain practice or policy in healthcare. Or, alternatively, you could use a current medical issue to challenge a theory from the reading. Make sure that you explain to your reader what the current medical issue is, and why it’s important.

Your journal should include at least one (properly cited) quotation. A-level journals should not contain grammar and/or spelling mistakes. Journal should be from 150-300 words. Examples of journals will be posted on Canvas.

Journals are due by midnight before the class you are writing the journal for. I.e., if you are writing a journal for Monday, you must hand it in by midnight on Sunday. And, if you write one for

Wednesday, you must submit it by midnight on Tuesday. Note that you cannot turn in a QFC and Ethics Reflection Journal on the same day. Journals are worth 10% of your grade

(6) *Tests*. During the term, there will be two in-class tests. These exams will be worth 30% of your final grade (15% each).

(7) *Final paper or project*. At the end of the term, you will write one 5-7 page paper. This paper will be due during exam week, and will be worth 25% of your final grade. See paper writing guidelines on Canvas. Prompts will be posted one week before the deadline. Alternatively, students are welcome to propose to me an alternative assignment/project to complete in place of the essay (e.g., a podcast, an ethics report). The alternative assignment would have to involve the same amount of work at the paper, and would have to be approved by me by Wednesday of week nine.

(8) *Quality of Failure*. To understand this assignment, see: [www.insidehighered.com/views/2012/08/21/essay-importance-teaching-failure](http://www.insidehighered.com/views/2012/08/21/essay-importance-teaching-failure). In this course, I want to encourage engaging with philosophy as an activity in which you dare to think, and therefore risk failure, as well as to encourage learning from self-conscious reflection on one's own failures. For this assignment, keep a journal throughout the class and, when you notice a particular failure that you run into and think is significant, productive, etc., add an entry that: a) records the date; b) describes/narrates the failure and your process of coming to notice it; c) records your reflections on the failure, e.g., points about what's behind it, what you were missing, what you can learn from it, how you work, etc. At the end of the term, write a one page (double spaced) reflective essay synthesizing these points and what you learned from them. Assign yourself a letter grade assessing the quality of failure in the course (how well you did risking, catching, assessing and learning from failures). This reflective essay will be worth 5% of your final grade.

## **Grading**

### *Paper assignments*

A = Excellent. No mistakes, well-written, distinctive in some way or other, and making an attempt to offer an original argument.

B = Good. No significant mistakes, well-written, but not distinctive in any way.

C = Okay. Some errors, but a basic grasp of the material.

D = Poor. Several errors. A tenuous grasp of the material.

F = Failing. Problematic on all fronts indicating either no real grasp of the material or lack of effort.

### *Participation*

A = To achieve an A grade the expectations are that the student has near perfect attendance, she/he is recognized as a leader in discussion and consistently contributes to and brings the conversation to a deeper level, without dominating the discussion to such an extent that it inhibits participation by other students.

B = To achieve a B grade expectations are that the student will have very good attendance at lectures (around 95% of the time). Takes a very active role in discussion and remarks are consistently helpful and on topic.

C = To achieve a C grade expectations are that the student will have good attendance (present around 90% of the time). Participates in discussions, but not consistently.

D = To achieve a D grade expectations are that the student will only attend class around 80% of the time. Participates in discussion sporadically.

F = Student has poor attendance and/or is not a positive contributor to discussion.

## Guidelines and Procedures

*Important Advice:* If a special condition or circumstance in your life (e.g., illness, a family emergency, mental health) may or will affect your performance, please let me know about it as soon as possible. *It will be treated with the strictest confidence.* Please do not wait until the condition or circumstance is impending or has already happened before telling me about its impact on you. If something unanticipated occurs, bring it to my attention and we will arrange for accommodations.

*Technology:* You may use laptops or tablets in class, but if I notice that you are using these forms of technology for something other than taking notes/doing the readings, you will no longer be able to use technology in class and may be asked to leave. Please do not use cellphones during class.

*Plagiarism:* Plagiarism is unacceptable. If you copy someone else's work and put it forward as your own, I will know, and you will receive an F in the course. See: <http://researchguides.uoregon.edu/citing-plagiarism>

*Late Policy:* If you think that a circumstance in your life will prevent you from turning in an assignment on time, please let me know **at least 24 hours in advance.** Otherwise, all late assignments will receive a late penalty of 3% per day late.

*Gender language and human diversity.* In addition to all the other reasons for using gender inclusive language and language that attends to human diversity, there are philosophical reasons for this as well. Philosophy demands that we think very carefully, clearly and rigorously about human life. To do this well, we have to attend to the diversity of human life. Otherwise, we build and reinforce prejudices that betray who we are as human beings. Using gender inclusive language in your writing and speaking reminds us that human beings are diverse in gender, and that not all of them are "he." And this reminds us of other differences in mind, e.g., substituting "she" where "he" might have been traditionally expected, alternating systematically between the two, using "she/he," and so on. Also note that you can go beyond "she" and "he" pronouns, using "zie" instead of "he/she," or "hir" instead of him/her. For helpful guidelines, google: *Warren, Virginia L. "Guidelines for the Nonsexist Use of Language."* Using gender inclusive language in your papers is a requirement for this course (i.e., when writing, you should not simply be using the pronoun "he" to refer to all individuals).

*Accessibility:* If you have a documented disability, please contact me in advance. If you need accommodations in this class, I will work with the Accessible Education Centre to find a solution for you.

**Assigned Readings** (Class schedule and readings are subject to revision. I will let you know ahead of time if this happens)

Week	Topic	Assigned Readings	Notes
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<p><b>1</b></p> <p>1/7 &amp; 1/9</p>	<p>Introduction to the class</p>	<p><b>M:</b> Introduction to the course. We will read the following pieces in class (I will provide paper copies): Elliot Kukla, “In my Chronic Illness I Found a Deeper Meaning,” <a href="https://www.nytimes.com/2018/01/10/opinion/in-my-chronic-illness-i-found-a-deeper-meaning.html">https://www.nytimes.com/2018/01/10/opinion/in-my-chronic-illness-i-found-a-deeper-meaning.html</a>; Suleika Jaouad, “Life Interrupted: Cancer is Awkward” <a href="https://well.blogs.nytimes.com/2012/05/03/life-interrupted-cancer-is-awkward/">https://well.blogs.nytimes.com/2012/05/03/life-interrupted-cancer-is-awkward/</a></p> <p><b>W:</b> Nora L. Jones, “Embodied Ethics: From the Body as Specimen and Spectacle to the Body as Patient” (12 pages)</p>	
<p><b>2</b></p> <p>1/14 &amp; 1/16</p>	<p><b>M:</b> Military metaphors in public and medical discourse</p> <p><b>W:</b> Military metaphors: how discourse shapes (and excludes) lived experience</p>	<p><b>M:</b> Watch “Nixon Signing the National Cancer Act of 1971,” <a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=E2dzEDnGqHY">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=E2dzEDnGqHY</a>; Nie et al. “Healing Without Waging War: Beyond Military Metaphors in Medicine and HIV Cure Research”, pages 1-9; Fuks, “The Military Metaphors of Modern Medicine”, (8 pages); Carly Weeks, “Jack Layton didn’t lose a fight: he died of cancer”, <a href="https://www.theglobeandmail.com/life/health-and-fitness/health/conditions/jack-layton-didnt-lose-a-fight-he-died-of-cancer/article4250996/">https://www.theglobeandmail.com/life/health-and-fitness/health/conditions/jack-layton-didnt-lose-a-fight-he-died-of-cancer/article4250996/</a></p> <p>Recommended: Camus, “Metaphors of cancer in scientific popularization of articles in British Press”</p> <p><b>W:</b> Jackie Stacey, <i>Teratologies</i>, “Heroes”, pages 1-15; Carla Willig, “Unlike a Rock, a Tree, a Horse or an Angel” (9 pages).</p> <p>Recommended: Arthur Frank’s <i>Wounded Story Teller</i>, chapter 4 “The Restitution Narrative”</p>	<p>RE the Nie reading: <b>you only need to read until page 9.</b> We’ll be covering the rest later</p>

3 1/23	<b>W:</b> Military Metaphors and Stigmatization: moving beyond metaphor	<b>M:</b> Enjoy the holiday!  <b>W:</b> Susan Sontag, <i>Illness as Metaphor</i> , chapters 1, 2, 6, 7, 8, 9 (read pages 3-20, 43-87)	
4 1/28 & 1/30	Military metaphors and stigmatization: a need for a new language	<b>M:</b> Jackie Stacey, <i>Teratologies</i> , “Metaphors”, pages 44 (start at new section at bottom of page)-64  <b>W:</b> Nie et al., “Healing Without Waging War: Beyond Military Metaphors in Medicine and HIV Cure Research”, pages 10-22	
5 2/4 & 2/6	Medical discourses, autonomy, and selfhood	<b>M:</b> <u><a href="#">FIRST TEST</a></u>  <b>W:</b> Carla Willig, “Cancer diagnosis as discursive capture: Phenomenological repercussions of being positions within dominant constructions of cancer” (6 pages); Nicolae Morar and Jonathan Beever, “The Porosity of Autonomy: Social and Biological Constitution of the Patient in Biomedicine” pages 34-39  Helpful reading to think back to today: Willig’s “Unlike a Rock, a Tree, a Horse or an Angel” (Specifically: think about how Willig’s insights RE death and vulnerability complicate our traditional notions of selfhood and autonomy).	<u><i>Your first test is on Monday in class. Good luck!</i></u>
6 2/11 & 2/13	<b>M:</b> How do we responsibly define health and illness?  <b>W:</b> Naturalistic Accounts of Health and Illness	<b>M:</b> Havi Carel and Rachel Cooper, <i>Health, Illness and Disease: Philosophical Essays</i> , “Introduction” (20 pages)  <b>W:</b> Christopher Boorse, “Health as a Theoretical Concept” (25 pages)	
7 2/18 & 2/20	<b>M:</b> Normativist accounts of health and illness  <b>W:</b> The shortcomings of	<b>M:</b> Elseltijn Kingma, “What is it to be Healthy?” (10 pages)  <b>W:</b> Havi Carel, <i>Illness: Cry of the Flesh</i> , “Introduction” (14 pages)	

	naturalism and normativism: the need for a middle ground.		
8 2/25 & 2/27	<b>M:</b> Existential accounts of health and illness	<b>M:</b> Havi Carel, <i>Illness: Cry of the Flesh</i> , “The Body in Illness” (20 pages)  <b>W:</b> <u><a href="#">SECOND TEST</a></u>	<u><i><b>Your second test is on Wednesday in class. Good luck!</b></i></u>
9 3/4 & 3/6	<b>M:</b> Vulnerability and the self: Other and the normal/abnormal dichotomy  <b>W:</b> Vulnerability and the self: Other and the normal/abnormal dichotomy	<b>M:</b> Robert Crawford, “Boundaries of the Self and the Unhealthy Other” (17 pages)  Recommended: Margrit Shildrick, “The Self’s Clean and Proper Body”  <b>W:</b> Carel, <i>Illness: Cry of the Flesh</i> , “The social world of illness” (12 pages)  <b>Strong recommended:</b> Eli Clare, <i>Brilliant Imperfection</i> , “Ideology of Cure” and “Violence of Cure” (5-31)	
10 3/11 & 3/13	<b>M:</b> The relational self: a medical ethics of vulnerability	<b>M:</b> Ron Amundson, “Against Normal Function”, pages 33-52; Juengst, “Metagenomic Metaphors: New Images of the Human from ‘Translational’ Genomic Research” (excerpts)  <b>W:</b> Robyn Bluhm, “Vulnerability, Health, and Illness”, pages 147-160; Nancy Potter, “Moral Tourists and World Travelers: Some Epistemological Issues in Understanding Patients’ Worlds” (10 pages)	<u><i><b>Final paper due via email on Wednesday of exam week.</b></i></u>  <u><i><b>Quality of Failure due by Friday morning of exam week.</b></i></u>