

PHIL 543 EPID 625: Medical Ethics

Topic for 2014: The Ethics of Human Experimentation

Time: Monday, 10:35 a.m.–1:25 p.m.

Room: 3647 Peel, Room 102

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Office Hours: by appointment

Course Overview

Some of the earliest and foundational debates in bioethics grew out of controversies surrounding human experiments. This class provides an introduction to the ethics of conducting research on human beings. Though there is a particular focus on clinical trials, the course surveys issues in public health research, experimental psychology, and vivisection. Also covered: (1) scandals! (2) regulation; (3) ethical theory and principles; (4) empirical methods in ethics.

Required Readings

All readings will be available in a course packet, available for purchase at the McGill Bookstore. In addition, students will be expected to read key research ethics documents / policies the Tricouncil Policy Statement, 45 CFR 46, and CIOMS. These are easily accessible over the web.

Course Requirements

1. *In-class participation:* One of the most important skills as scholar in bioethics is the ability to identify important gaps or contradictions in an argument, and to formulate a research program deriving from a body of work. Students are expected arrive at class prepared with several critical questions that point to tensions within or between papers or that identify major unresolved issues in the materials. Students can take a holiday for submitting questions for two sessions (plus the introductory class, of course). These questions must be submitted at the start of class. Students should also be able to describe scholarly approaches or analogies that might inform analysis of a particular issue. Students will be expected to occasionally bring in materials from outside the assigned readings. **Contribution to final grade: 32.5%.**

2. *Presentation:* Each student will be responsible for a short presentation- 15 minutes, and not a minute more. Students should identify a topic within the subject of the session. For example, for the week of “Risk,” a student could give a presentation on Risk Perception and Informed Consent; for the week of “International Research,” students could give a presentation on competing definitions of exploitation. In addition to reading and absorbing the assigned readings, students will need to further background research and access material not covered in the readings. The student must be prepared to critically engage both the assigned as well as presented material, and raise questions for

class discussion. Students can use powerpoint if they wish. Students must provide me a one page outline of their presentation. **Contribution to final grade: 20%.**

3. *Final paper*: This involves a well researched, well argued, and focused essay (3000-3500 words) due the last class of the term. Papers must list wordcount on coverpage- >3500 words is not accepted. You must discuss your topic with me beforehand. These papers should be written as if they were to be submitted for publication; you should aim to absorb the style and structure of argument used in the assigned readings. Final papers should not be summaries of the published literature; instead, they should strive to make a contribution to the literature on research ethics. This means that you should perform literature searches using standard scholarly databases, (e.g.,PubMed or Philosopher's Index), and spend a considerable amount of time identifying key gaps in the literature that you might try to tackle. The paper must involve ethical analysis, and should not simply provide a summary of what others have said. I will encourage students who write outstanding papers to submit their articles for publication. **Contribution to final grade: 32.5%.**

4. *Midterm Exam*: Students will receive a midterm exam lasting 1 hour. The exam will cover material from each session up to then, *including the first session*. The exam will consist of several short answer questions about the history, policies, and practices in research ethics, and several short essay questions that test recall of various topics discussed or require you to apply principles already discussed to new questions. **Contribution to final grade: 15%**