

PHILOSOPHY 3C03: ADVANCED BIOETHICS
Department of Philosophy
McMaster University

Term: Winter 2018
Course hours: Fridays 2:30 pm - 5:20 pm
Location: BSB 117
Instructor: Dr. Kalina Kamenova
E-mail: kalinak@mcmaster.ca
Phone: 905-525-9140 x 20877
Office: University Hall 307A
Office hours: Fridays 1:30 pm - 2:30 pm

Course Objectives

Course description:

Over the past two decades, human enhancement has emerged as a major topic of debate in applied ethics. This highly contentious debate has been stimulated by advances in biomedical science which make possible to manipulate various aspects of human biology, alter the genetic legacy we pass onto our children, and even reshape what it means to be a human being. In this course, we examine what human enhancement means, the state of ethical debate, the social and political consequences of human enhancement technologies, the appropriate scope of their application (i.e. therapy vs. enhancement), concerns about safety and fairness, competing views of justice and human flourishing, and intellectual movements in response to the possibility for radical transformation of the human condition through biotechnology (i.e. bioconservatism, transhumanism).

Course objectives:

By the end of this course, students should be able to:

- Gain substantial knowledge of key concepts and debates in contemporary bioethics as they apply to the topic of human enhancement.
- Apply ethical theory to complex questions and practical problems concerning the legitimate scope and limits of biomedical interventions for manipulating, enhancing and reshaping human biology.
- Understand social, political and cultural contexts and values that influence the development, adoption and regulation of human enhancement technologies.
- Identify policy challenges and evaluate benefits and risks associated with applications of different enhancement biotechnologies.

- Apply research and analytical skills to locate information, critically read and evaluate data and information sources (e.g. primary and secondary sources), and successfully complete a research project.

Textbooks, Materials, & Fees

Jürgen Habermas. *The Future of Human Nature*. Translated by W. Rehg, M. Pensky & H. Beister. Cambridge: Polity Press, 2003.

Michael J. Sandel. *The Case against Perfection: Ethics in the Age of Genetic Engineering*. Harvard University Press, 2009.

Both books are available in the Campus Bookstore. Additional required readings will be posted on Avenue to Learn.

Method of Assessment

Course evaluation:

- 25% Short Essay (due February 9 in class)
- 25% Proposal and Annotated Bibliography (due March 2 in class)
- 30% Research Paper (due April 6 in class)
- 20% Attendance and Participation (throughout the term)

Assignment description:

Short Essay - 25% (due February 9 in class)

Students will write a short critical essay (5 pages, double-spaced) on concept of “ethics of the species” developed by Jürgen Habermas in *The Future of Human Nature* (2003) as a normative critique of philosophical defenses of human enhancement through embryo screening and genetic manipulation (the so-called ‘liberal eugenics’). Liberal eugenics emphasizes individual choice and reproductive autonomy, and asserts that genetic interventions to select or improve children are permissible and, in some cases, morally desirable. In this essay, the students are expected to reconstruct Habermas’s arguments against liberal eugenics and evaluate his position that producing genetically enhanced persons violates the liberal principles of autonomy and equality. In doing this, students will address Michael Sandel’s communitarian critique of Habermas’s notion of the ethical self-understanding of the species developed in his book in *The Case against Perfection* (2009). The essay will conclude with the students’ personal take on this debate. This assignment, as well as all other assignments for the course, should be formatted in accordance with the APA’s 6th edition style guide, e.g., double spaced on standard-sized paper (8.5" x 11") with 1" margins on all sides, left aligned, font 12 pts Times

New Roman. Students may use the following electronic resource on the APA formatting and style guide: <http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/560/01/>

Proposal and Annotated Bibliography - 25% (due March 2 in class)

Students will conduct independent research to develop a proposal for a research paper on a selected topic (list of topics will be uploaded to Avenue to Learn). Note that the topic must be approved by the Instructor prior to the assignment submission. The proposal will present: 1) an outline of the intended research or analysis, including background or context; 2) thesis statement/argument; 3) methodology or philosophical perspective used to analyze the topic (interdisciplinary approaches are highly encouraged); and 4) expected conclusions. It should include an annotated bibliography of 5 academic sources for the paper (e.g., peer reviewed journal articles, scholarly books, credible web-based sources). The proposal should not exceed 5 pages, double-spaced, including bibliography and annotations.

Research Paper - 30% (due April 6 in class)

Based on the proposal and feedback on it from the instructor, students will complete a research paper. Papers should be about 3000 words (approximately 8-10 pages), excluding the abstract and the bibliographical references. The papers should be formatted in accordance with the APA's 6th edition style guide and consist of four major sections: Title Page, Abstract, Main Body, and References.

Attendance and Participation - 20% (throughout the term)

Students' attendance and participation will be evaluated. Consistent attendance is essential for success in this course. Participation in class discussions is a key aspect of students' learning. Active involvement in class can greatly enhance learning outcomes as students are exposed to different interpretations on course topics and benefit from peer learning. Students learn to articulate critical arguments, clarify errors and misunderstandings, and tend to remember better the material studied. It is expected that students will complete the assigned readings prior to each class and will contribute thoughtful opinions to the class discussions. Students are welcome to contact the Instructor for interim feedback on their participation grades.

Policy on Missed Work, Extensions, and Late Penalties

Extensions on assignments will be granted on a case-by-case basis. If an extension is needed, the student must contact the instructor via email *prior* to the due date of the assignment. Extensions will not be granted after the due date, except for extenuating circumstances (e.g. bereavement, hospitalization, serious incidents).

The late penalty for any assignment not submitted on time will be 5% per day.

When McMaster Student Absence Form (MSAF) will be used for an assignment, the student must send the instructor an email to work out an alternate date to complete the missed coursework. Any late submissions after that time will be subject to the stated late penalties.

Topics and Readings

Weekly schedule

January 5	Course Overview
January 12	Human Enhancement Technologies: Myth and Reality
January 19	Human Enhancement Ethics: The State of the Debate
January 26	Philosophical Critiques of Liberal Eugenics I: Habermas
February 2	Philosophical Critiques of Liberal Eugenics II: Sandel
February 9	Genome Editing and Assisted Reproduction
February 17	Sex Selection and Human Enhancement
February 23	Mid-term recess: No classes.
March 2	Well-Being, Disability and Enhancement
March 16	Good Friday: No classes.
March 23	Cognitive and Mood Enhancement
March 30	Life Extension
April 6	Bioconservatism vs. Transhumanism

Please Note the Following Policies and Statements:

Academic Dishonesty

You are expected to exhibit honesty and use ethical behaviour in all aspects of the learning process. Academic credentials you earn are rooted in principles of honesty and academic integrity.

Academic dishonesty is to knowingly act or fail to act in a way that results or could result in unearned academic credit or advantage. This behaviour can result in serious consequences, e.g. the grade of zero on an assignment, loss of credit with a notation on the transcript (notation reads: "Grade of F assigned for academic dishonesty"), and/or suspension or expulsion from the university.

It is your responsibility to understand what constitutes academic dishonesty. For information on the various types of academic dishonesty please refer to the Academic Integrity Policy, located at www.mcmaster.ca/academicintegrity

The following illustrates only three forms of academic dishonesty:

1. Plagiarism, e.g. the submission of work that is not one's own or for which other credit has been obtained.
2. Improper collaboration in group work.
3. Copying or using unauthorized aids in tests and examinations.

Email correspondence policy

It is the policy of the Faculty of Humanities that all email communication sent from students to instructors (including TAs), and from students to staff, must originate from each student's own McMaster University email account. This policy protects confidentiality and confirms the identity of the student. Instructors will delete emails that do not originate from a McMaster email account.

Modification of course outlines

The University reserves the right to change dates and/or deadlines etc. for any or all courses in the case of an emergency situation or labour disruption or civil unrest/disobedience, etc. If a modification becomes necessary, reasonable notice and communication with the students will be given with an explanation and the opportunity to comment on changes. Any significant changes should be made in consultation with the Department Chair.

McMaster Student Absence Form (MSAF)

In the event of an absence for medical or other reasons, students should review and follow the Academic Regulation in the Undergraduate Calendar Requests for Relief for Missed Academic Term Work. Please note these regulations have changed beginning Fall 2015. You can find information at mcmaster.ca/msaf/. If you have any questions about the MSAF, please contact your Associate Dean's office.

Academic Accommodation of Students with Disabilities

Students who require academic accommodation must contact Student Accessibility Services (SAS) to make arrangements with a Program Coordinator. Academic accommodations must be arranged for each term of study. Student Accessibility Services can be contacted by phone 905-525-9140 ext. 28652 or e-mail sas@mcmaster.ca. For further information, consult McMaster University's Policy for [Academic Accommodation of Students with Disabilities](#).

Academic Accommodation for Religious, Indigenous and Spiritual Observances

Students requiring academic accommodation based on religion and spiritual observances should follow the procedures set out in the Course Calendar or by their respective Faculty. In most cases, the student should contact his or her professor or academic advisor as soon as possible to arrange accommodations for classes, assignments, tests and examinations that might be affected by a religious holiday or spiritual observance.