

Bioethics Online ET 755Z

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Elective. Three credit hours.

Course Description

This course examines the nature and principles of ethics with an emphasis on Christian norms and applies these principles to current issues in biology and genetics.

Course Objectives

The mission of Erskine Theological Seminary is to educate persons for service in the Christian Church. The goal of this course is to contribute to the fulfillment of the Seminary's mission by encouraging Christian leaders to engage in the study of moral dilemmas related to recent developments in biology, especially genetics. The Christian application of ethical solutions requires a familiarity with systems of principles drawn from the Bible, theology, and philosophy, but the practical application of these principles and systems to real-life moral issues is the main objective.

At the completion of this course each student will:

1. Recognize approaches to bioethical decision-making;
2. Articulate a logical, biblical approach for his/her method of resolving genetic ethical issues;
3. Be able to engage and critique cultural, theological and philosophical suppositions underlying the perspectives of authors, ministers, parishioners and family members;
4. Identify avenues for participation in the cultural bioethical debates;
5. Show vision for personal ministry involvement with families facing genetic ethical dilemmas
6. Be familiar with bioethical resources for the minister.

Required Texts

You may use Erskine Seminary's Virtual Bookstore at www.ecampus.com/erskine to order your textbooks for this course. Please click the "Shop by Course" link to EDEN books to see if the books required for this course are listed under the courses shown. If they are not available on e-campus, you may order them from other online book distributors.

Kilner, J. F., C. C. Hook and D. B. Uustal (eds.), *Cutting-Edge Bioethics: A Christian Exploration of Technologies and Trends* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002).

Meilaender, Gilbert. *Bioethics: A Primer for Christians*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005).

Additional Suggested Reading

Kass, Leon R. *Life, Liberty and the Defense of Dignity: The Challenge for Bioethics*. (San Francisco, Encounter Books, 2002).

Moreland, J. P. and Scott B. Rae, *Body and Soul: Human Nature & the Crisis in Ethics* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2000).

Grading Criteria

Writing assignments will be graded according to:

1. Completeness of discussion of the issue and breadth of references cited.
2. Clarify and sagacity—thoughts stated precisely and argued thoroughly.
3. Profundity in dealing with the crucial matters of the issue(s), focusing on the primary questions and not ignoring the difficult subjects.
4. Style and Bibliographical Formatting Requirements. All papers must be typed/processed (twelve point type, double spaced, one-inch margins) and fully documented, following the standards in the "Style and Form Standards for All Masters Level Programs" (Erskine Seminary). In this course, footnotes and a bibliography are required in each paper. The paper's cover page and bibliography are not counted towards page requirements. Consult Turabian, 6th ed.

Grading Scale:

100-95	A	83-80	C
94-93	A-	79-78	C-
92-91	B+	77-76	D+
90-88	B	75-72	D
87-86	B-	71-70	D-
85-84	C+	69-0	F

Course Components

FAQ's

1. All assignments must be submitted via e-mail attachments unless otherwise notified.
2. Please use Microsoft Word when submitting assignments electronically.
3. All assignments should be clearly marked on the e-mail subject line with the student's last name and assignment number. Failure to include this information will result in a returned assignment.

COURSE PLATFORM

Erskine Seminary is accredited by the Association of Theological Schools (ATS). According to the ATS Standard 10.3.4.3, "Institutions shall ensure that distance education programs provide appropriate opportunity for collaboration, personal development, interaction among peers within a community of learning, and supervised field or internship opportunities when appropriate to the degree program." It is with this stipulation that EDEN has implemented a web-based learning platform which will serve to provide a number of collaborative learning experiences. The learning platform is Moodle and according to their website, "Moodle is a course management system designed to help educators who want to create quality online courses . . . and create effective online learning communities." You will be provided with additional information concerning Moodle tutorials, site information, and the peer mentoring program. In order to meet the online discussion component of this course, you will need:

- A computer (or access to a computer)
- High speed access to the Internet

Course Assignments

The purpose and objectives of this course will be achieved through three learning sequences:

1. E-lectures
2. Community building
3. Reading and reaction papers

See the information listed below for more information. Students must complete four written assignments. Each assignment will be worth 22.5% of the final grade. Papers not handed in on the due date will automatically be reduced by a full letter grade.

Sequence One: E-lectures

Watch all the course videos and review the PowerPoint slides.

Sequence Two: Online Journal

There is evidence to suggest that students who actively engage with others in an online environment earn higher scores than other students. Online discussions and interaction provide a rich and stimulating environment of collaboration, interaction, and community building. Students participating in online discussions tend to provide more thought-provoking comments, richly detailed responses, and insightful observations.

Each student will post an entry to the online journal each **week**. As the student completes the required reading for this course, listens to the e-lectures, or thinks through course-related issues, he or she will post an entry relating significant insights, questions, or challenges for others.

In order to facilitate community building, fellow students (if available) will respond **each week** to the journal entries as a way of encouraging each other and adding to the observations posted by their classmates. Additionally, peer mentors and/or the course professor will respond **to selected entries**. Retroactive posting will not be accepted.

Please note: Part of your grade depends on collaborative learning

Sequence Three: Read and react

- Read the required reading portions as outlined by the reading schedule (see below). I would strongly encourage you to read the selected portions PRIOR to viewing the e-lectures.
- After you are finished your written assignment you will post your work to the online classroom*. **You will also need to email your assignment to the professor.**
- You are to read the assignment of at least one other student in the course and provide feedback (unless you are the only student taking the course). This too you will post in the online classroom.
 - I want you to engage in a virtual conversation with the other student and push back on comments, assertions, assumptions, and assessments made by the student. I expect this to be a vigorous exchange of opinion and analysis.

* Steps to upload your assignment:

1. Find the "Assignment Depot" discussion forum in the online classroom.
2. Click on that link and you will find assignment listed there.
3. Click on "Add a new discussion topic" and this will take you to the upload area
4. Type in your name and reaction paper title (i.e. Joe Smith's paper) in the subject line.
5. Type a BRIEF explanation in the message section (i.e. Assignment 1)

6. Click on the “browse” feature at the bottom of that paper and find your paper.
7. Double-click on your document and select “post to forum” shown at the bottom of the screen.

Steps to download (or read) others’ assignment:

1. Find the “Assignment Depot” discussion forum in the online classroom.
2. Click on that link and you will find student postings listed there.
3. Click on the title of the student posting listed under Discussion.
4. Click on the Word document in that posting.
5. Select “open” to read the document instantly or “save” to save the document to your desktop folder.
6. Post your comments related to the paper by hitting “reply” on the discussion board. Enter your comments in message section. Hit “post to forum” when finished.

Reading/Lecture Schedule

	Reading Schedule	Lectures to view	Assignments**
Month 1	Meilaender, Chs. 1-2 Kilner, Ch. 8. Meilaender, Ch. 10 Kilner, Ch. 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Course Introduction and Overview • Ethical theories and decision-making • Christian Vision • Procreation vs. reproduction • The Need for Bioethical Vision • Gifts of the Body: Human Experimentation • Human Genetics 	Assignment 1 due
Month 2	Meilaender, Ch 4 Kilner, Ch. 7 Meilaender, Ch. 11 Meilaender, Ch 3 Meilaender, Ch. 5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Genetic Advance • Reliance on Technology: Stem Cell Research • Genetic Technology. • Embryos: The Smallest of Research Subjects • Abortion • Prenatal Screening 	Assignment 2 due
Month 3	Kilner, Ch. 2 Meilaender, Ch. 9 Kilner, Ch. 3 Kilner, Ch 4 Kilner, Ch. 5 Kilner, Ch 13 Kilner, Ch 15	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Xenotransplantation • Gifts of the Body: Organ Donation • Transgenics • Artificial Intelligence and personhood • Cybernetics and nanotechnology, • Facing the Future, • Ethical Challenges 	Assignment 3 due
Month 4 (all work	Meilaender, Ch 7 Meilaender, Ch 8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • End of Life Decisions (William Walker, M. D.) 	Assignment 4 due

for this period should be completed by the final exam date. See current schedule for dates)	Kilner, Ch. 10 Kilner, Ch. 12 Meilaender, Ch. 6 Meilaender, Ch. 12	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Refusing Treatment, Who Decides?, • Spirituality and Alternative Medicine, • The Ethic and Spirit of Care, • Suicide and Euthanasia, • Sickness and Health 	
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Assignments**

When emailing your assignments to me, be sure to include your name and assignment number in the subject line of the email.

Assignment 1 (two part paper, each part 2 – 3 pages):

Question 1: What are the differences between utilitarian and deontological ethics? Present and explain the different versions within each category. Which ethical theory do you consider the most plausible? Explain and defend your answer. (2-3 pages)

Question 2: Describe in detail a method for making moral decisions. This should include enough detail so that you can refer to your method in future assignments. (2-3 pages).

Assignment 2:

Using the method for making moral decisions from Assignment 1 and appropriate philosophical and theological evidence, write a 5 page paper answering the question: Should research on embryonic stem cells be allowed?
If you find a problem with your method from assignment 1, you should alter your approach and include a note about the change.

Assignment 3:

Write a 5 page research paper discussing the question: What is a person? Define personhood. Explore the issue from the perspective of the very young and the very old.

Assignment 4:

Choose an ethical issue related to genetics (excluding the above issues: stem cell research and personhood). Write a 5 page paper defining the issue and present an ethical argument for or against the issue using appropriate philosophical and theological evidence for your position.

Relevant Institutional and Class Policies

Conduct in Theological Discussions

Language about God and Humanity: Although God transcends the distinction between male and female, the Bible and the Church's historic creeds and confessions use masculine language in reference to God. Thus, the Seminary encourages all students to retain this masculine usage when speaking and writing about God. Furthermore, the Seminary recognizes that all human beings, male and female, are created equally in the image of God (Gen. 1:26-27), and believers of both sexes are fellow heirs of the grace of life (1 Pet. 3:7).

Accordingly, whenever students are speaking and writing about males and females, they should use language that clearly includes both men and women (for example, by saying/writing "humanity" rather than "man" or "people" rather than "men").

Registration: Once a student has completed, signed, and submitted his/her registration to the Registrar for this class, it is a binding contract, and billing will be based on this registration. If the student decides not to take this class, he/she must complete a "drop/add" form and secure the appropriate signatures. Failure to withdraw from the class properly will result in the student's receiving a grade of "F" for the course, and full tuition charges will apply. No exceptions will be made to this policy.

Late or Incomplete Work: Any work not submitted by the due date will be assessed a late penalty. The final deadline for submitting all late work is noon on the Monday after the end of exam week. Any work not received by this deadline will be given a grade of "0," unless the student has made prior arrangements to take an incomplete for the course. Incomplete (I) marks will be handled in accordance with policy statements in the Catalog. In particular, one should note that the student does not automatically have the privilege of taking an incomplete. Rather, it is the professor's prerogative to give an incomplete, and only when the student has completed most of the work for the course and has been providentially hindered from completing the remainder. Note that there is a processing fee associated with "Incompletes," and that "Incompletes" must be completed by the stated deadline or they automatically become an "F." Only the Dean may approve extensions of deadlines for "Incompletes." For further details, please read the current Seminary Catalog.

Plagiarism

Plagiarism is the use in writing of wording or ideas produced by others without crediting the author and/or source from which the material was taken. As the following statement indicates, plagiarism is a serious offense that undermines both the witness and integrity of the Christian community:

Occurrences of plagiarism shall be considered 'documented' when the instructor is able to produce documentary evidence that plagiarism has occurred, and when the instructor has reason to believe that the plagiarism was motivated by a deliberate attempt to receive credit for ideas or work not the student's own. Where such plagiarism involves the theft of the academic work of another student, whether at Erskine or any other institution, it shall be designated 'documented theft of another student's work.'

The instructor involved, in consultation with the Dean, may recommend measures deemed appropriate. In cases of documented plagiarism or documented theft of another student's work, the offending student will automatically receive the following penalties:

- Failure of the course(s) in which plagiarized or stolen work is submitted
- Dismissal from the Seminary for a minimum of one semester
- Forfeiture of the right to tuition refunds during the semester(s) affected

Before such penalties are imposed, a committee of at least three faculty members must agree that they are appropriate to the case. Appeals in such cases may only be addressed, in writing, to the President of Erskine College and Theological Seminary.