Syllabus, Philosophy 104: Bioethics, CSU-Sacramento, Fall 2015. Section 01 (catalog class number 84124; fully online*)

Instructor: Russell DiSilvestro. Contact via Blackboard “Send a message”—I respond quickly weekdays 9am-5pm; messages sent other times get replies the next business day. Expect immediate responses during virtual office hours (Fri 9:30-12:30). Other contact options include email (rsdisiv@csus.edu), phone (916.278.6766) or office appointment (3030 Mendocino Hall).

Catalogue Description: “Ethical dilemmas faced by professionals and patients in the field of medicine, e.g., patient self-determination and informed consent, discrimination in health care, euthanasia, abortion, surrogate motherhood, genetic modification, and rights to health care. Emphasis is on the well-reasoned application of general moral principles to practical medical decisions.”


Technology Requirements: Students must be able to access Blackboard on a stable internet connection.

Learning Objectives: By the end of the course, each student will be able to

✓ Develop competence in philosophical language and literature on ethical dilemmas in the field of medicine.

Practical Goals associated with this objective:

• IDENTIFY moral issues raised by the present and future capacities of biology and medicine;
• EXPLAIN how moral concepts & theories apply to complex situations in biology and medicine;
• DISTINGUISH the implications and consequences of biological and medical advances on the practices and institutions of our society and other societies;
• APPLY the moral concepts and theories to resolve the moral issues, and RECOGNIZE the relations between morality and social consequences;
• REPRESENT and EXPRESS this reasoning in the writing of clear, concise, persuasive, and effective argumentative and analytical prose;
✓ Meet the learning objectives associated with all General Education area D (Individual and Society) courses at CSUS:

• DESCRIBE and EVALUATE ethical and social values in their historical and cultural contexts.
• EXPLAIN and APPLY the principles and methods of academic disciplines to the study of social and individual behavior.
• DEMONSTRATE an understanding of the role of human diversity in human society.
• EXPLAIN and critically EXAMINE social dynamics and issues in their historical and cultural contexts.

Accessibility: Let me know me during weeks 1-2 if you have a disability requiring accommodation (documentation to SSWD, Lassen Hall 1008, 916-278-6955, see http://www.csus.edu/sswd/index.html) or if you must miss something for some reason.

Academic Honesty: Know the policy: http://www.csus.edu/umanual/student/STU-0100.htm. We also use http://turnitin.com.

Policy Regarding Exceptions: Late work will only be accepted, and missed assignments or assessments will only be excused, if there is a documented serious excuse (for example, a system-wide Blackboard crash).

Grading: Your final grade is determined by how many points you earn out of 100, with these grade floors: 93=A, 90=A-, 87=B+, 83=B, 80=B-, 77=C+, 73=C, 70=C-, 67=D+, 63=D, 60=D-. Your total points are calculated as follows (note: a small bit of extra credit may be earned for announced activities, like the most outstanding discussion board post described in ‘Discussions’ PDF):

✓ Discussions (3 points per Part x 15 Parts = 45 points): For each Part, use the online discussion board to make your own original post reacting to the target question by midnight Wednesday (1 point), your own ratings and acknowledgments of each original post of each student in your small group by midnight Saturday (1 point), and your own two thoughtful replies to any original posts of other students in your small group by midnight Saturday (1 point). Details in ‘Discussions’ PDF.

✓ Quizzes (3 points per Part x 15 Parts = 45 points): For each Part, after reading the texts and watching the online videos, take a timed online quiz before midnight Saturday (3 points). The questions come from that week’s texts and videos. I suggest taking a screenshot at the start of each, in case you have a crash, to prove you were on a desktop/laptop (not cell phone). Each quiz can only be taken once.

✓ Paper (10 points): You can expand one of your original discussion posts into a full philosophical analysis by midnight of December 12. Details in ‘Philosophical Analysis’ PDF (this assignment is based on the instructions at this link: http://www.csus.edu/phil/Guidance/How%20to%20Write%20an%20Analysis.htm; general writing standards are online at the CSUS Philosophy Department webpage: http://www.csus.edu/phil ). We will use http://turnitin.com for this paper.

* Please note: Students who do not participate in the online discussions and take the weekly quizzes during the first two weeks of semester will be