**Caring for Vulnerable Populations**

PHL281H1F: Bioethics, asynchronous with optional Q&A sessions M/W 6-7 PM EST

**Instructor:** Emma McClure, [emma.mcclure@mail.utoronto.ca](mailto:emma.mcclure@mail.utoronto.ca)

**Contact Policy:** If you email me, you must use course code (PHL281) in subject heading. I will reply to emails each weekday between the hours of 12-5 PM EST.

If you’d like to speak to me, you can make appointment during this timeslot: Fridays 9:45-10:45 AM EST and 2-3 PM EST. (See Class Policies for instructions on how to sign up.)

**Course Description:**

The Physician’s Pledge details the ethical duties of a physician. It focuses on protecting the autonomy and dignity of the patient, and it lists groups who are particularly vulnerable to mistreatment and require special attention: “I will not permit considerations of age, disease or disability, creed, ethnic origin, gender, nationality, political affiliation, race, sexual orientation, social standing, or any other factor to intervene between my duty and my patient” (World Medical Association Declaration of Geneva).

This course explores the implications of the Physician’s Pledge. How do we care for the elderly without treating them like children? Should disability be treated as a medical or a social problem? Who takes on these caregiving roles? How can medical professions be trained to resist stereotypes about race and ethnicity? What role should gender and sexuality play in medical treatment recommendations?

These issues have become particularly pressing in recent weeks. The current pandemic has shone a spotlight on health disparities within vulnerable populations. We will conclude the class with a discussion of how to balance competing healthcare needs and the opportunity we have to create a more just future, after this crisis passes.

**Course Objectives:**

* Improve critical reading and thinking skills
* Learn how to engage in ethical argumentation
* Be introduced to different topics in bioethics

**Evaluation:**

* Discussion Board Posts 12% weekly, except first and final weeks
* Summary 8% May 14
* Short Paper 1 20% May 30
* Short Paper 2 30% June 15
* Final Take-Home Exam 30% TBD

**Required Texts:**

All texts will be available on Quercus. Each class will require only 10-20 pages of reading, excerpted from longer articles and books. I can provide the longer readings, if you’re interested, but you’ll only be expected to know material in the assigned portions during papers and exams.

**Class Schedule:**

CW: Ableism, Racism, Colonialism, Sexism, Classism, Homophobia, Transphobia, Dementia, Suicide, COVID-19

Many classes will touch on these topics, and sometimes they will be discussed in depth. I know this will make reading and participation difficult for some of you, and you may not always know in advance whether you can complete a particular reading or participate in discussion forums. I am open to accommodating your needs and providing make-up assignments, as necessary. However, when possible, I think it is important to work through these topics together. As a disabled person and someone who has experienced trauma, I know the costs of having conversations around these issues, but I also know the benefits of finding solidarity. I hope you, too, can take these discussions as an opportunity for growth and healing. See Class Policies for more information and resources. Please also let me know if you require CWs that are not listed.

**Week 1. Autonomy, Care, and Dependency**

Class 1: CW: Dementia, Ableism, Suicide

* Ronald Dworkin, *Life’s Dominion*
* Tom Shakespeare, “Happiness and Disability”

Class 2: CW: Dementia, Ableism, Suicide

* Eva Feder Kittay, “Equality, Dignity and Disability”

**Week 2. Who Decides What’s “Normal”?: Physical Health**

Class 3: CW: Ableism, Suicide

* Christopher Newell, “Disability, Bioethics, and Rejected Knowledge”
* Cheryl Misak, “ICU Psychosis and Patient Autonomy”

Class 4: CW: Ableism, Racism, Colonialism

* Chris Tindal, [“A Brief History of Eugenics and Sexual Sterilization in Canada”](https://acresofsnow.ca/a-brief-history-of-eugenics-and-sexual-sterilization-in-canada/)
* Robert Sparrow, “Defending Deaf Culture: The Case of Cochlear Implants”
* Michael Sandal, “The Case Against Perfection”

*Assignment: Summary due on Quercus*

**Week 3. Who Decides What’s “Normal”?: Mental Health**

--Only One Class This Week; No Class on Victoria Day--

Class 5: CW: Ableism, Sexual Trauma, Self-Harm, Colonialism, Racism

* Roe and Davidson, “Self and Narrative in Schizophrenia: Time to Author a New Story”
* Eleanor Longden, [“The Voices in my Head” (TED talk)](https://www.ted.com/talks/eleanor_longden_the_voices_in_my_head/up-next)
* Susie Neilson, [“A Mental Disease by Any Other Name”](http://nautil.us/issue/40/learning/a-mental-disease-by-any-other-name)
* [Optional: Clifton Parker, [“Hallucinatory ‘Voices’ Shaped by Local Culture”](https://news.stanford.edu/2014/07/16/voices-culture-luhrmann-071614/)]

**Week 4. Cost to Caregivers**

Class 6: CW: Suicide, Sexism, Dementia, Classism, Graphic Medical Descriptions

* Nancy Parker, “Nurses’ Stories: The Search for a Relational Ethic of Care”
* Martha Holstein, “A Looming Dystopia”
* [Optional: Zosia Bielski, [“With a Looming Aging Crisis, Who is Helping the Caregivers?”](https://www.theglobeandmail.com/canada/article-with-a-looming-aging-crisis-who-is-helping-the-caregivers/)]

Class 7: CW: Sexism, Classism, Racism, Xenophobia

* Quill Kukla (Writing as Rebecca Kukla), “Measuring Mothering”

*Assignment: Short Paper 1 due on Quercus*

**Week 5. Racism in Medicine and Research (Un)Ethics**

Class 8: CW: Racism, Sexism, Colonialism, Homophobia, Transphobia, COVID-19

* Lauren Freeman and Heather Stewart, “Microaggressions in Clinical Medicine”
* Tayo Bero, [“In the States, Black Women are Three Times More Likely to Die in Childbirth Compared to White Women. In Canada, Things Must be Better, Right?”](https://www.chatelaine.com/living/black-birthing-experience-canada/)
* Various signatories, [“Open Letter Regarding the Need to Collect and Use-Socio-Demographic And Race-Based Data”](https://www.allianceon.org/news/Letter-Premier-Ford-Deputy-Premier-Elliott-and-Dr-Williams-regarding-need-collect-and-use-socio)
* Sachil Singh, [“Collecting Race-Based Data During Coronavirus Pandemic May Fuel Dangerous Prejudices”](https://theconversation.com/collecting-race-based-data-during-coronavirus-pandemic-may-fuel-dangerous-prejudices-137284)
* [Optional: Diana Duong, [“How Indigenous Midwives are Bringing Birthing Back Home”](https://www.chatelaine.com/health/indigenous-midwives/)]

Class 9: CW: Colonialism, Racism, Past Research Atrocities

* Leslie Young, [“What Happened to Jim? Experiments on Canada’s Indigenous Populations”](https://globalnews.ca/news/2503875/what-happened-to-jim-experiments-on-canadas-indigenous-populations/)
* Sushma Subramanian, [“Guatemala Syphilis Experiments: Worse Than Tuskegee”](http://www.slate.com/articles/health_and_science/cover_story/2017/02/guatemala_syphilis_experiments_worse_than_tuskegee.html)
* Nuremburg Code (1947)
* Declaration of Helsinki (2000)

**Week 6. International Research Ethics and LGBTQIA Healthcare**

Class 10: CW: Colonialism, Imperialism, Racism, Classism, COVID-19

* Lurie and Wolfe, “Unethical Trials of Interventions to Reduce Perinatal Transmission of the Human Immunodeficiency Virus in Developing Countries”
* Varmus and Satcher, “Ethical Complexities of Conducting Research in Developing Countries”
* Zulfiqar Ahmed Bhutta, “Ethics in International Health Research: A Perspective from the Developing World”
* [Optional: Carien du Plessis, [“How South Africa’s Action on COVID-19 Contrasts Sharply with its Response to AIDS”](https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2020/may/27/how-south-africas-action-on-covid-19-contrasts-sharply-with-its-response-to-aids-coronavirus)]

Class 11: CW: Homophobia, Transphobia, COVID-19

* Dean, Victor, and Grimes, “Inhospitable Healthcare Spaces”
* [Optional: Naith Payton, [“The Dangers of Trans Broken Arm Syndrome”](https://www.pinknews.co.uk/2015/07/09/feature-the-dangers-of-trans-broken-arm-syndrome/)]
* [Optional: Elizabeth Kuhr, [“Gay Men Restricted from Donating Plasma to UK Coronavirus Trials”](https://www.nbcnews.com/feature/nbc-out/gay-men-restricted-donating-plasma-u-k-coronavirus-trials-n1204431)]

**Week 7. Final Paper and Final Exam Review**

Class 12: Final Exam review in class

Opportunity to schedule one-on-one meetings about final papers

*Assignment: Short Paper 2 due on Quercus*

*Assignment: Final Take-Home Exam due on Quercus*

**Course Policies:**

Contact Policy:

You are required to check your university email accounts regularly. All announcements and grades will be posted on Quercus, and papers will be returned over Quercus.

I can be reached at office hours or over email: [emma.mcclure@mail.utoronto.ca](mailto:emma.mcclure@mail.utoronto.ca) If you email me, you must include the course code (PHL281) in the subject line. I will reply to emails each day between the hours of 12-5 PM EST. Expect a response within 48 hours. I may tell you that your question can’t be answered over email, and you’ll need to come to office hours instead.

Office Hours:

If you’d like to speak to me, you can make 10 minute appointment Fridays 9:45-10:45 AM EST and 2-3 PM EST. To make an appointment, you’ll use the Scheduler feature on Quercus Calendar. Here’s a how to guide: <https://community.canvaslms.com/docs/DOC-10580-4212716665> The meeting will take place over BbCollaborate.

Class Attendance and Participation:

This class takes place online. Attendance is not required, but you’ll have the option to ask questions Monday and Wednesday, 6-7 PM EST, over BbCollaborate.

You’ll participate via weekly discussion boards, run by your TAs. You’ll have the opportunity to practice participating during the first week. In weeks 2-5, you’ll be required to participate. Week 6 will be an optional make-up opportunity. If you require further accommodation (due to sickness or other unexpected disruption) please get in touch with me as soon as possible.

Late Assignments:

Late assignments may be docked a 2% penalty/day, and late papers will not be accepted more than a week past the deadline. However, the late penalty can be waived and the deadline extended if you find yourself in exceptional circumstances (due to accessibility reasons, sickness, trauma, family problems, etc). Please reach out to myself or your TA if you are struggling to meet deadlines.

Accessibility:

I am happy to provide any accommodations needed to ensure that all materials and activities are accessible to all students. Class participation and late-assignment policies were constructed with an eye towards making this class as accessible as possible. Please let me know if you require any other accommodations, at any point throughout the term. If you know that you won’t be able to perform a required activity, we can discuss alternative evaluation schemes.

Mental Health, COVID-19, and Other Traumatic Experiences:

Academic work is difficult and psychologically demanding. It's important to work hard and push yourself but it is even more important to be kind to yourself. Given the subject matter and timing of this course, you may also find yourself experiencing grief, anxiety, obsessive thinking, panic attacks, or other unexpected reactions to stress. Perhaps you are experiencing these mental health difficulties while simultaneously recovering from other trauma or grief. Here are some further resources that might help you through your particular struggles:

<https://www.oise.utoronto.ca/aphd/Home/COVID-19_Coping_Resources/index.html>

<http://discover.utoronto.ca/health-wellness>

<http://life.utoronto.ca/get-help/counselling/>

<http://mentalhealth.utoronto.ca/>

<http://www.safety.utoronto.ca>

Turn It In

Normally, students will be required to submit their course essays to Turnitin.com for a review of textual similarity and detection of possible plagiarism. In doing so, students will allow their essays to be included as source documents in the Turnitin.com reference database, where they will be used solely for the purpose of detecting plagiarism. The terms that apply to the University’s use of the Turnitin.com service are described on the Turnitin.com web site.

Academic Integrity:

The purpose of the assignments is to improve your skills in reading, writing, and critical thinking. The purpose of grades is to reflect your competency in these skills. Plagiarism undercuts these aims. You have plagiarized if you a) include writing that is not your own AND b) do not cite your sources. I will investigate suspected cases of plagiarism and academic dishonesty, in accordance with the procedures outlined in the University of Toronto’s Code of Behavior on Academic Matters (available online at: <http://www.governingcouncil.utoronto.ca/policies/behaveac.htm>).

If you have questions about what constitutes appropriate academic behavior or appropriate research and citation methods, you are expected to seek out additional information from other institutional resources. (<http://writing.wisc.edu/Handbook/QPA_plagiarism.html> is a good place to start.)

Writing Help:

Writing a philosophy essay can be difficult. We will spend some time in class talking about techniques for good writing and argumentation. More detailed information is available here: <http://www.sfu.ca/philosophy/resources/writing.html>

For in person help—especially with grammar or syntax—make an appointment at the Writing Centre: <https://writing.utoronto.ca/news/writing-centre-summer-openings/>

You may also come to my office hours to receive advice from me. I will not read full drafts, but I will comment on particular paragraphs or discuss your ideas with you. I can also help you brainstorm ideas if you’re having difficulty starting the assignment, or answer questions about the topics we’ve discussed in class.