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**Grande Prairie Regional College**  
**PHILOSOPHY AND HEALTH CARE**  
**Philosophy 3860**  
Winter ~~Spring~~ 2000

**Instructor:** Tom Enders, PhD  
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**Office Hours:** TBA

**Prerequisite:** None. No prior knowledge of medicine or ethics is required.

Not open to students with credit in Phil 264.

**Course Description:**

A philosophical examination of concepts and issues central to the knowledge and practice of health care. Topics may include: provision and allocation of health care resources, rights and responsibilities of patients and health care personnel, passive and active euthanasia, abortion, research and experimentation, disclosure of diagnosis and risks, death and suffering.

**Overview and Objectives:**

Stories in the news involving people like Sue Rodriguez, Tracy and Robert Latimer, Dr. Jack Kevorkian and Dr. Henry Morgentaler help to focus our attention on some of many difficult questions about health care. These are questions of right and wrong, good and bad, and better and worse that each of us are likely to have to deal with in our personal or professional lives or both.

The objective of this course is to introduce the student to basic philosophical concepts, theories and approaches to help the student understand and think critically about controversial issues in health care. These issues are issues of institutional and public policy, issues of professional ethics and issues in bioethics. They should challenge the student to think about: 1. public obligations and priorities; 2. the purposes of health care; 3. entitlement to make decisions about starting, shaping and ending lives; 4. the bases on which to make ethical decisions; and 5. determinants of the value of life.

When is a life no longer worth living, if ever? When does human life obtain value at the beginning of life? How expansive is the right to decide what to do with one's own body? Why value autonomy? What should the doctor reveal? How far does confidentiality extend? Whose medical needs should be met when not all needs can be met? These are just some of the questions to address in consideration of issues to be dealt with in this course.

Classroom sessions will be used for presentation of key concepts and ideas, and discussion of challenging and illustrative cases as well as general principles.

A web site will provide a glossary, supplementary information about law in Canada and elsewhere, and other information.

Each student will be required to write two short essays. The purpose of each paper will be to show clear thinking about the issue addressed, demonstrate understanding of opposing views, and formulate and defend a position of his or her own.

In the Inter-session there will be an exam after Section II as well as a final exam.

**Required texts:** To be determined. (See end of outline for short list.)

**Tentative Topic Schedule:**

- I. *Policy Issues* - including issues such as: What is health? What is "medically necessary" health care - that should be publicly funded? Is there a right to health care? Allocation of scarce medical resources. Possibly other issues of macro- and micro-level allocation.
- II. *Issues of Professional Ethics* - including: Models of the doctor-patient relationship. Paternalism. Autonomy and individual liberty. Disclosure and informed consent. Privacy and confidentiality.
- III. *Ethical Theories* - including: Religion and Morality, Relativism, Utilitarianism, Natural Law Theory, Natural Rights, an Ethic of Care... A concise introduction to the basics.
- IV. *Physician-Assisted Suicide and Euthanasia* - including: Definition of Death. Advance Directives. Assisted-suicide. Non-voluntary Euthanasia. Active Euthanasia.
- V. *Abortion and Pre-natal Issues* - including issues such as: Personhood. Sex selection. Genetic counselling. Obligations of pregnant women. Feminist perspectives.
- VI. *Research, Experimentation and Technology* - possibly including issues such as: Surrogacy. Reproductive Technology. Experimentation using fetal tissue. Experimentation using animals.

**Note:** Section I will set the context for consideration of topics in the following sections. Section II will address, among other things, the question of who has the right to decide. Section III will present theoretical perspectives on the criteria to use in making ethical decisions. Sections IV, V and VI will deal with issues that raise questions both about who is to decide, and the basis or bases on which to make decisions.

**Texts Under Consideration:**

*One of the following three Canadian texts to be selected as the main text:*

- Kluge, Eike-Henner. Readings in Biomedical Ethics: A Canadian Focus, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition. Scarborough, Ontario: Prentice Hall Allyn & Bacon Canada, 1999.
- Baylis, Francoise; Jocelyn Downie, Benjamin Freidman, Barry Hoffmaster and Susan Sherwin. Health Care Ethics in Canada. Toronto: Harcourt Brace, 1995.
- Dickens, Bernard; John Williams and David Roy. Bioethics in Canada. Scarborough, Ontario: Prentice Hall, 1997.

*One of the following is to supplement the main text:*

- Thomas, John E. and Wilfrid J. Waluchow. Well & Good, 3<sup>rd</sup> edition, Peterborough, Ontario: Broadview Press, 1998.
- Levine, Carol. Taking Sides: Clashing Views on Controversial Bioethical Issues, 8<sup>th</sup> edition, Guilford, Connecticut: Dushkin/McGraw-Hill, 1999.
- Veatch, Robert. Basics of Bioethics. Upper Saddle River, New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 2000.