

ST 62: Medical Ethics and Health Care Issues

M, W, 1:00-1:50 pm
Annunciation 106

Instructor: Liam de los Reyes

Email: liam.delosreyes@mtangel.org

Email hours: M-F 8 am – 5 pm

Office: Annunciation 214

Office Hours:

Course Description

Health care provides unique opportunities to witness to the divine charity that animates the Church in the care for both the body and spirit of those within and outside the Church. Crucial to authentic witness and care is a clear grasp of the dignity of each person and the moral principles that follow from that dignity, especially the fundamental respect for human life from conception to natural death. Protecting human dignity and respecting life in concrete and often complex medical cases demands a robust theological framework, prudential reasoning, the Church's sophisticated moral tradition, and the pastoral guidance of the local bishop. This course analyzes a variety of central medical topics—care for medical providers, beginning of life issues, disability and genetic screening, and permanently unconscious patients—by drawing on the Catholic moral tradition (ST 61) as well as theological and moral principles directly relevant to medical ethics.

Course Goals and Objectives

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

- 1) **I.2.g** Approach medical ethics and discrete medical questions by drawing on the Catholic moral tradition (ST 61) and with a clear sense of their theological, spiritual, and moral dimensions (principle summations, unit reflections, final, final portfolio).
- 2) **I.1, S.3** Explain and apply principles and norms from the Catholic moral tradition and the teaching office of the Church to provide clear moral guidance on medical questions (principle summations, unit reflections, final, final portfolio).
- 3) **I.3, I.4, P.1.D, P.5.A-B** Analyze concrete cases to assess the salient moral considerations, determine the appropriate principles/norms, and apply them with pastoral wisdom and sensitivity (in-class participation, final)

Required Texts

Gilbert Meilaender. *Bioethics and the Character of Human Life*. Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2020.

Henri Nouwen. *Adam: God's Beloved*. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 2020.

Kevin O'Rourke, OP and Philip Boyle. *Medical Ethics: Sources of Catholic Teachings*. Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 2011.

Course Requirements

Attendance and contribution

20%

A significant part of your learning in this class will be engaging in social and moral analysis with your colleagues. Discussion is central to this course and your regular attendance is required. A student who is unable to attend a scheduled class meeting for any reason should notify the instructor in advance, whenever possible. An excused absence is given on account of personal illness, a death in the family, or duties performed for the abbey and seminary (some form of verification is needed: a signed note or email from your health-care provider, formation faculty, etc.). After consulting with the instructor, the student will be permitted to make up any coursework missed. Students are allowed two unexcused absences without penalty. Your third unexcused absence will result in a 2% reduction of your participation grade, and your fourth and fifth will result each in a 4% reduction of your participation grade. More than five unexcused absences will be grounds for failure.

Your participation will be measured by your in-class contributions, questions you pose to the presenter, and any end of class quizzes or written assignments. The last ten minutes of some classes may be dedicated to some sort of writing prompt or quiz, asking you to summarize, synthesize, or in some other way reflect on the day's material. You will submit this before you leave class. Your participation will be graded on the following scale: ✓+ (100%), ✓ (85%), ✓- (70%), 0 (0%).

Summation of key principles

15%

During the semester, I will give you three, take-home assignments, that ask for structured reflections on three medical-moral principles: cooperation with evil, double effect, and ordinary v. extraordinary means. I will ask for short essay responses to a variety of questions: what is the point of the principle? How does it relate to the *telos* of human life? Are there steps or rules of thumb to follow when using it, and what are they? Or, are there certain questions and considerations relevant to the application of the principle that must be addressed, and what are they? Finally, provide an example of when this principle would come into effect in medical ethics; show its proper application in that example; and show how it facilitates the pursuit of the patient's and/or provider's *telos*.

Unit Reflections

25%

Students will compose three 400-500 word reflections on Units I-II (**due 02/09**), Unit III (**due 03/14**), and Unit VI (**due 04/27**), focusing on a specific reading(s) or topic(s) from the relevant Unit(s). These reflections can aim at bringing deeper specificity, richer comparison, or greater synthesis of readings or topics from the Unit. Students can choose, for example, to reflect on a case, conflict, or concept in more depth from the readings or compare/contrast multiple readings. Or a student may choose to provide an answer to a question s/he proposed (or proposed by another student) during class. Finally, a student might choose to reflect on the unit as a whole, synthesizing and distilling what they consider the main points/takeaways and why it matters for medical ethics.

Portfolio

10%

On the last day of class (**04/27**), students will show me either an electronic or hard copy portfolio that contains:

- The course syllabus
- Notes from class
- The three unit reflections
- The three principle worksheets

- Anything else the student deems useful.

All you have to do is have these documents put together in a neat and orderly manner. I will not be grading the quality of the work (with the exception of your notes, I will have already done that), but rather I am just giving you 10% of your grade to actually incentivize you to create a neat portfolio that you can have as a reference for your pastoral ministry. If you would like additional suggestions on what to include that might be of future use, I am happy to meet with you to customize your portfolio.

Final Exam

30%

The final is a take-home exam. It will be a comprehensive exam. Students may use books, readings, notes, and their portfolio. However, students may not work together. If a student has any questions or concerns after receiving the exam, please contact the instructor instead of another student.

Course Policies

Plagiarism Policy

All work submitted by students as their own work should indicate sources, published and unpublished, which were consulted and/or cited. It is the student's responsibility to know the proper method of citation as well as how to acknowledge sources when not citing directly. Failure to acknowledge source material is plagiarism and will be dealt with accordingly with disciplinary measures ranging from failure of the assignment, the course, or dismissal from the Seminary. In such matters, the judgment of the appropriate Academic Dean and the President–Rector is final.

Accessibility

Mount Angel Seminary is committed to providing accessibility to its services, programs and activities for students with disabilities, recognizing its responsibilities to ensure the rights of students with disabilities and to identify and maintain the standards that are required to provide its academic and formational programs. Mount Angel Seminary will strive to accommodate students with disabilities, unless the accommodation would pose an undue burden to the Seminary or compromise the mission or integrity of the program.

Students seeking accommodation(s) must:

- Provide a written statement to the Vice President of Administration requesting an accommodation that includes a description of the specific disability, how the student is limited and the expected duration of the limitation.
- Submit proper professional/medical verification of the condition(s) that necessitate the request to the Vice President of Administration.

Privacy Statement

Course materials (videos, assignments, recordings, etc.) are for use in this course only. You may not upload them to external sites, share with any person outside of this course, or post them for public commentary without my written permission.

Overdue assignments

I will accept late submissions for reading reflections, since one goal of the written reflections is simply to provide you an opportunity to synthesize the material we are working on in class. But

since the other goal is to prepare you for class discussion, it will be impossible to receive full marks for a later reflection. Late reading reflections will start from a maximum possible grade of ✓ (85%). Any other work that is late will earn a 0. I will grant exceptions for family or health emergencies, or for students who speak to me at least one week *prior* to the due date about an expected late assignment.

Respect for diversity (H.3)

This course, in both classroom discussion and written work, will be conducted according to the standard set forth by the Seminary with regard to Human Formation Goal 3: Respect for Diversity, which calls for (at a minimum) taking other cultures seriously and with respect, gender inclusive language, and respectful listening and dialogue.

Technology in the classroom

In general, laptops, tablets, and cell phones are not permitted in the classroom. Use of cell phones during a normal class day will result in a lower participation grade or, if excessive, an unexcused absence; use during any quiz will result in a 0 for the assignment.

Grading scale

A (96-100%) – Exceeds all expectations	B- (83-85%) – Usually solid work
A- (93-95%) – Superior work throughout	C+ (79-82%) – Meets all basic standards
B+ (89-92%) – Usually superior work	C (74-78%) – Meets most basic standards
B (86-88%) – Solid work throughout	C- (70-73%) – Falls short of some standards

Semester Schedule

Mon. / Jan. 10: Introduction: The theological frame of medical ethics
Reading (in class): Sirach 38.1-15

I. Catholic medical ethics and contemporary society

Wed. / Jan. 12: Religion and American public biomedical ethics
Reading: Genesis 2.4-17; Meilaender, “Bioethics and the Character of Human Life” [13]; Callahan, “Religion and the secularization of bioethics” [3]

Mon. / Jan. 17: Contemporary secular bioethics
Reading: McKenny, “Technology, Tradition, and the Origins of Bioethics” [14.5]

Wed. / Jan. 19: The bioethical question of human dignity
Reading: Psalm 8; Macklin, “Dignity is a useless concept” [2]; Schulman, “Bioethics and the Question of Human Dignity” [14]; Meilaender, “Confusions” [7] *Medical Ethics*, chapter 22 document 2. [23]
AR: Meilaender, *BHL*, chs. 13-14; Meilaender, “Equal Persons.”

Mon. / Jan. 24: Catholic Identity and Healthcare Institutions
Reading: Matthew 11.2-6; Fisher, “Identity: what role for a Catholic hospital?” [17.5]; *Medical Ethics* ch. 16, docs 1-2 [5]

AR: Pellegrino, “Prudential Judgment and Religious Commitment”; Kelly, “Christology and the Essence of Catholic Health Care”

Wed. / Jan. 26: Social witness and Catholic Healthcare
Reading: Matthew 25.31-46; *Evangelium vitae* 10-12 [2]; Paul Farmer “Health, Healing, and Social Justice” in *Pathologies of Power* [12]; *Medical Ethics*, ch. 16 doc 3 [1], ch. 40 document 1 [1]
AR: Pellegrino, “Commodification of Medical and Health Care”

II. Care for the provider: spirituality, virtue, and conscience

Mon. / Jan. 31: The medical profession, spiritual practice, and dignity
Reading: Sulmasy, “Is Health Care a Spiritual Practice?” 16-23; Sulmasy, “Dignity, Vulnerability...” [14]; *Medical Ethics*, ch. 39, I. Physicians and II. Nurses, Document 1 [5]

Wed. / Feb. 2: Conscience, conscientious objection, and cooperation
Reading: Pellegrino, “The Physician’s Conscience” [15]; *Medical Ethics*, ch. 39, II. Nurses, Document 2 [1.5]; Ashley and Deblois, “Legitimate Cooperation,” [1.5]; Griese, “Proportionate Reason,” [5] [23]
AR: Mike Delany, “General medical practice: the problem of cooperation in evil”;

Mon. / Feb. 7: The role of the pastor in health care
Reading: Joseph Kotva, “The Christian Pastor’s Role in Medical Ethics: In the Pew and at the Bedside.” [21]
AR: Verhey, “Christian Community as Context for Bioethics”

III. The beginning of life

Wed. / Feb. 9: The Gospel of Life and respect for human life
Reading: *Evangelium vitae* 18, 29-41 [15]

Mon. / Feb. 14: Moral Status of Embryos: philosophical and scientific considerations
Reading: Jones, “The Embryo in Isolation”, 224-233 [9]; Kenny, “The Beginning of individual human life” [8]

Wed. / Feb. 16: Moral Status of Embryos: theological considerations
Reading: Jones et al., “A Theologians’ Brief” [7.5]; *Donum vitae* I.1; *Dignitatis personae* 4-5, 31-2.
AR: George and Tollefson, *Embryo*; *Medical Ethics*, ch. 26

Mon. / Feb. 21: No class

Wed. / Feb. 23: The case of ectopic pregnancy
Reading: Cataldo, “Double Effect”; Pacholczyk, “When Pregnancy Goes Awry”; Condic and Harrison, “Treatment of an Ectopic Pregnancy.”; *Medical Ethics*, ch. 25.

Mon. / Feb. 28: A complex case: Abortion at Phoenix Hospital (2010)
Reading: *Medical Ethics*, chapter 4 document 3. Magill, “Threat of Imminent Death in Pregnancy”; Austriaco, “Abortion in a case of pulmonary arterial hypertension.”

Wed. / Mar. 2: Neonatal care
Reading: Lysaught, “Catholicism in the Neonatal Context,” 9-19. [10]. *Medical Ethics*, chapter 9.

Mon. / Mar. 7: Pastoral care at the beginning of life
Reading: Lysaught, “Catholicism in the Neonatal Context,” 20-22; “Abortion Grief,” 381-384 in *Catholic Witness in Health Care*.

Wed. / Mar. 9: A hard case: baby Rena
Reading: Washington Post, “While Child Suffered, Beliefs Clashed”

IV. Genetic screening and disability

Mon. / Mar. 14: Genetic Screening
Reading: Meilander, *Bioethics*, ch. 8; *Medical Ethics*, chaps. 34-35, 59
AR: Reinders, “Disability, Prevention, and Discrimination”

Wed. / Mar. 16: Disability
Reading: Hauerwaus, “Suffering the retarded.”

Mon. / Mar. 21: Disability and pastoral practice
Reading: USCCB, selections; Nouwen, *Adam: God’s Beloved*, selections; *Medical Ethics*, ch. 62, document 2 [1]

V. Gender and medical intervention

Wed. / Mar. 23: Theological analysis: is the soul sexed?
Reading: Bedford and Eberl, “Is the soul sexed?”

Mon. / Mar. 28: Gender disorder and medical intervention
Reading: Jones, “Gender Reassignment Surgery.”; Centers for Medicaid & Medicare Services, selections

VI. Patients in a Permanent Vegetative State (PVS) and End of Life Care

Wed. / Mar. 30: Framing the discussion
Reading: Cloutier, “The Pressures to Die” [24]

Mon. / Apr. 4: Ordinary vs. Extraordinary Means and Artificial Nutrition and Hydration
Reading: Grattan Brown; Henke, “A History of”, JPPII “Life sustaining treatments”; *Medical Ethics*, chs. 42, 53.

- Wed. / Apr. 6: PVS, divergent voices
Reading: Grisez, “Should Nutrition and Hydration Be Provided?” 172-185;
O’Rourke, “The Papal Allocution,” 242-251. [21]
- Mon. / Apr. 11: Principle of totality and organ transplantation
Reading: Pius XII, Address; Austriaco, “Organ Donation”; *Medical Ethics*, ch. 54.
- Wed. / Apr. 13 – Apr. 18: Blessed Holy Week, Happy Easter
- Wed. / Apr. 20: Palliative care and double effect
Reading: Meilaender, “Comforting when we cannot heal”; CHA, “Care for the Dying,”; Updike, “Killing,” selection; *Medical Ethics*, ch. 56.