Overview
As science and culture evolve, so does ethical decision-making. Innovations in science and technology add to the complexity of this evolution. This complexity is evidenced, for instance, in recent debates about genetic engineering, cognitive enhancement, new reproductive technologies, and animal and human cloning – to mention just a few. Similarly, recent developments in the cognitive sciences, have helped us understand the biology of human ethical reasoning.

We will use the tools of objective, philosophical analysis, and the framework of ethical theory, to try to make some conceptual sense of a number of practical biomedical ethics issues. The class will be broadly divided in two parts. Since we will be will be engaging in the evaluation of ethical arguments, we will review the basic elements of critical thinking (informal logic) first. Since we will be applying ethical theories throughout the semester, we will review the basics such theories secondly. As we proceed through these two broad sections, we will apply our understanding to a series of contemporary issues in biomedical ethics. The actual list of particular issues that we will use to apply our understanding, will mutate according to contemporary developments, and class composition.

Texts
A collection of readings prepared by the instructor and available in Blackboard. Readings will be assigned in advance, in class. If you miss a class meeting, you are still responsible for the readings assigned, and you may not email your instructor to find out which ones are these.

Grading
• Total Points for Semester: 100 points, Final Grade Distributed as Follows:
  o A+ (100-98); A (97-94); A- (93-90)
  o B+ (89-87); B (86-84); B- (83-80)
  o C+ (79-77); C (76-74); C- (73-70)
  o D+ (69-67); D (66-64); D- (63-61)
• Numerical Equivalencies for Grades
  o A+ = 4.0  A = 4.0  A- = 3.7
  o B+ = 3.3  B = 3.0  B- = 2.7
  o C+ = 2.3  C = 2.0  C- = 1.7
  o D+ = 1.3  D = 1.0  D- = 0.7
  o F = 0.0

Course Policies
• Studying. Materials for each class will be assigned in advance. You will be required to critically study this material (i.e. read it seriously enough to be able to participate in class discussions by answering, and by having questions regarding the material). Studying is not the same as reading. Studying is not the same as reading repeatedly either. Studying requires a careful attempt at getting the idea/s that are being put forth in every paragraph. And then, once you have those, studying requires you to reconstruct the reasoning behind the entire piece in question.
To achieve the above, you will need to underline, or write down key portions of the material, and re-write the ideas you have just extracted in your own words (you’ll do this in a separate notebook. You will go to this notebook when you’re reviewing the material. Naturally, you won’t be able to understand every piece of the material, these pieces that make no sense you will also carefully note, and you’ll use these notes to come to office hours to try to figure them out with me (see more on office hours’ policies below).
• Emails. Email inquiries are welcomed and you should expect to receive a response within 48 hours (no email responses after 4:30 pm and on weekends). All emails should be written in proper form. Please remember that you’re not chatting or writing a text message. Every email should start with a “Dear,” and end with something like a “Thank you” line, followed by your full name. You should always reply within the thread in question (i.e. do not start a new thread with every email), unless you need to start a new one for some good reason (that way, our email history is always available). Every email should provide, in your subject line, your full name and our course’s name and number.
As a good general rule, if you do not hear back from me within the time frame specified above, please write again — something went wrong.
• Withdrawal. Students whose performance is determined by the instructor to be less than required by assignments due; participation; and/or attendance will be withdrawn from the course.
• Incomplete Grades. Students should consult with the course instructor well in advance of the final examination to establish that an incomplete grade for the course is warranted. Students must have been performing minimally at “C” level and completed more than 50% of the required coursework to warrant an incomplete. According to UAF grade policy, an “I” not changed to a letter grade converts to an “F”.
• Late Assignments. Assignments are to be submitted when due unless previous arrangement has been made with the instructor to allow for mitigating circumstances. Papers submitted late
without prior arrangement might not be accepted or they might be assigned a late penalty. If graded, they will be graded before final grades are due and may not receive any comments.

Office Hours
I cannot overemphasize how necessary office hours are. The material for this class is subtly (and I would say, “deliciously”) complex. Unfortunately, it seems that we have evolved to avoid considering these deliciously complex foundational issues. Please let me help you navigate through them. In fact, and let me stress this emphatically: I do not recommend you attempt this on your own. Please do not underestimate the material.

The office-hours times posted at the beginning of the syllabus mean that those are pre-set times when I will be available for you to “drop by.” But “bropping by” can also mean a phone conversation, or a Skype conversation (you will need to get a -- free – Skype account to do this at: https://login.skype.com/account/signup-form ). Please pre-schedule a time with me via email so I can schedule for more than one student visit per office-hours period. If the standard office-hours times does not work for you, then contact me via email and we’ll figure out a time that works for both of us (just make sure you give me enough advance notice – check our email policies).

Office Hours work only when you can be precise about the points to be discussed. Typically, you should want to meet with me knowing where is it that you are getting stuck, confused, or lost. But sometimes, it’s also a good idea to meet in order to check your understanding of a critical point or position. Such rehearsals (to call them something) require as much precision as the problem-driven meetings. You should come prepared to present and defend the position or point in question in very simple, 12-year-old type of terms. For such a presentation and defense, you should be able to explain why we should accept your point (not simply claim we should accept it).

So, it is important (for both kinds of meetings!) to understand the difference between explaining something, versus simply claiming or describing something. When you are explaining something, you would not, for instance, just say: “Plato thinks that truth lays in the Realm of the Forms.” You should be able to explain that Plato argued that truth must lay outside of the realm of everyday type of stuff, because every day type of stuff is always in flux, or continuously changing. But truth, on the other hand, he continued, is change-less. So, truth, he concluded, must be in a completely different realm, a change-less, time-less one. Plato called that the realm of the “Forms” (to call it something).

Now, for the more typical, problem driven office hours meetings, the point would be to discuss those elements in the material that have you confused, even after you’ve tried to figure them out on your own. I can’t help you if you come with something like “I don’t understand anything about this or that topic.” The vaguer you are about your problems with the material, the least helpful office-hours will be (to the point that we might simply have to agree that you need to work some more before we can schedule a new office hours appointment). The state you’re aiming for is what, in this syllabus, I call one of “clear confusion.” So please understand that office hours require you to do the necessary groundwork that will put you in that state.

So, before our office hours meeting, you should do the following:
For problem-with-the-material type issues:
1. Study the required material and prepare a detailed list of all the sections that are causing you trouble (identified by page number, or some other analogous marker — like context, if you’re dealing with a lecture).
2. For each item in this list, write a small description of what is it in this section that is giving you trouble, given your understanding of the context of that section (like: “X does not make sense because I understand Y, Z, and W from our previous, or contextual studying material). (Writing “X does not make sense (period)!” is, of course, not enough.)

For rehearsal type issues: you should come prepared to explain and defend the position or point in question in very simple, 12-year-old type of terms.

*Please remember: no emails, or office hours appointments after 4:30 pm and on weekends.*

**Academic Integrity**

As described by UAF, scholastic dishonesty constitutes a violation of the university rules and regulations and is punishable according to the procedures outlined by UAF. Scholastic dishonesty includes, but is not limited to, cheating on an exam, plagiarism, and collusion. Cheating includes providing answers to or taking answers from another student. Plagiarism includes use of another author’s words or arguments without attribution. Collusion includes unauthorized collaboration with another person in preparing written work for fulfillment of any course requirement. *Scholastic dishonesty is punishable by removal from the course and a grade of “F.”* For more information go to Student Code of Conduct. ([http://www.uaf.edu/catalog/catalog_08-09/academics/regs3.html#Student_Conduct](http://www.uaf.edu/catalog/catalog_08-09/academics/regs3.html#Student_Conduct))

**DISABILITIES SERVICES**

You should also be aware that the UAF Office of Disability Services implements the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), and insures that UAF students have equal access to the campus and course materials. I will work with the Office of Disabilities staff (located at Center for Health and Counseling, Whitaker Building, 474-7043) to provide reasonable accommodation to students with disabilities.

**EVALUATION**

Three Exams (25% each) These exams will require the application of the material discussed in class. These exams will be about 1/3 of the course apart and refer to the material discussed in their particular 1/3 of the class.

Final Paper, or Final Exam (25%) This will be decided as the class progresses. If we choose a final essay (7 pages maximum), it will consist in the application of the philosophical method and theory covered in class, to a case study that was not discussed in class. If we chose a final exam, it will be of the same nature as the 3 previous one, but it will encompass the material covered in the entire class.