I. INTRODUCTION

In the USA and the varied settings of international health care delivery (e.g., as experienced in developing countries), there are increasingly complicated variables that render ethical decision-making especially difficult. Innovations in technology in particular add to such complexity, as is evident in recent debates internationally concerning genetic engineering, reproductive technologies, and animal and human cloning. This is also true in the setting of behavioral research as it is affected by research methodology appropriated from the life sciences.

Notwithstanding the more visible areas of public debate, traditional ethical issues in biomedical research and practice likewise continue to evolve as both ethical theory, medical practice, basic research, and developments in experimental psychology inform the range and applications of relevant ethical reasoning. These issues include, among others:

- the physician/practitioner-patient relationship (e.g., “Is a physician morally obligated to tell a patient he is dying of cancer?”);
- abortion and maternal-fetal conflicts (e.g., “Do parents have the authority to abort a fetus that is not of the gender they prefer?”; “Ought pregnant women not engage in behavior that will cause the fetus serious harm?”);
- human subjects research (e.g., “Does a patient’s participation in a clinical trial of a new drug entail that patient’s continued access to the drug after the clinical trial is concluded?”);
- organ transplantation (e.g., “Should a 60 year-old alcoholic with advanced cirrhosis and hepatocellular carcinoma receive a liver transplant?”);
- euthanasia (e.g., “Should laws prohibit physician-assisted suicide, as in the well-known case of Dr. Jack Kevorkian?”);
- issues related to HIV infection and AIDS policies and practices (e.g., “Is an individual morally culpable if s/he knowingly infects another individual with HIV during a sexual relationship?”; “Should orthodox public health measures applied to STDs—testing,
reporting, contact-tracing and contact notification—apply mandatorily to individuals who are HIV+?";
- perennial problems of macro- and micro-allocation of available resources in the health sector [e.g., “Should health care resources be distributed according to ability-to-pay, social merit, medical need, age, queuing (first-come, first-served), random selection?”];
- ethical issues in international health research in developing countries.

This semester our task will be to engage and evaluate ethical arguments in the context of these contemporary issues in biomedical ethics. We will begin by reviewing basics of research ethics common to any number of disciplines wherein research integrity and avoidance of scientific misconduct is an important formative interest. To this end, we will employ relevant ethical theories insofar as they provide systematic ways of engaging conceptual and practical problems of research ethics and problems in health care delivery. Although we will be employing ethical theories throughout the semester, our review of the basics will be somewhat quick-paced, insofar as I assume you are familiar with the basic ethical theories from one of the courses in ethics/values and choice required in the UAF core curriculum. Students who have yet to take such a course should devote time for careful and extended independent review of basic ethical theory, consulting me in office conferences as desired for clarifications. Since we will be engaged in the evaluation of ethical arguments, basic elements of critical thinking (informal logic) will also be presupposed and reviewed only briefly. As assigned reading warrants it, you will receive handouts with structured arguments to reinforce your efforts to reconstruct and evaluate arguments according to standards for cogency.

II. TEXTS


The text selected for this course enable us to approach our task by way of case analyses. Much of our in-class discussion will focus on such cases as a way of developing your ethical reasoning skills in combination with your attention to relevant aspects of ethical theory and the expositions of issues in the chapters assigned. Some of these cases will allow us to consider cross-cultural factors and thereby broaden our engagement of the issues beyond the American context of biomedical ethics.

III. GRADING

- For writing intensive requirements, all papers will be marked to note problems with writing mechanics (grammar, style, etc.). Students having inordinate problems will be referred to the UAF Writing Center for additional regularized consultation in review and correction of drafts prior to submittal. This is in addition to sessions with the instructor to review drafts prior to submittal for grading. Students will meet with the instructor after each paper is graded to review writing mechanics with a view to improvement in subsequent papers.
- *Total Points for Semester: 100 points, Final Grade Distributed as Follows:*
IV. COURSE PREREQUISITES, COURSE GOALS, AND STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES

A. Readings for each class will be assigned in advance. You will be expected to critically study this material before class (i.e. read it seriously enough to be able to participate in class discussions by answering and having questions regarding this material). My lectures will not repeat the reading material but critically analyze and supplement it. Attendance to class is mandatory and class participation is highly recommended.

B. Since this is a writing intensive course, the prerequisites are:

1. **For the PHIL F402W**: Junior or senior standing; a course in philosophy, science, or nursing; ENGL 111X; ENGL 211X or ENGL 213X; or permission of instructor.

2. **For the BIOL F402W**: Junior or senior standing; a course in philosophy, science, or nursing; ENGL 111X; ENGL 211X or ENGL 213X; or permission of instructor.

C. By the conclusion of the course you will hopefully appreciate that (1) there is significant philosophical debate about the ethical dimensions of biomedical practice; (2) there is distinct concern about the uniqueness of problems associated with biomedical and behavioral research in developing countries; and (3) there remains the significant problem about how to reconcile or overcome the tension between universalist (global) and relativist (local) perspectives on ethical practice.

D. By the conclusion of the course you will hopefully improve in three skills, demonstrated in your oral participation in class discussion, oral presentations, and in your writing assignments: (1) exposition of text, (2) reconstruction of argument, (3) critical evaluation of argument. Inasmuch as this is a writing-intensive course, it is expected that opportunities for revision and re-writing of paper assignments will manifest an improvement in your writing style, grammar, and topic coherence.

E. Office hours, or emails, are not alternatives to missed classes. You **should not** email me requesting a report of the class material covered, or an enquiry regarding homework assignments. Emails requesting any of the above will not be answered. Any other email inquiries are welcomed and you should expect to receive a response within 48 hours.

V. SUPPORT SERVICES AND DISABILITIES SERVICES

A. Since this course requires a certain amount of writing, you are encouraged to use the UAF Writing Center as needed for assistance with the mechanics of writing, grammar review, etc. The Writing Center is located on the 8th floor of the Gruening Building.

B. 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.
C. Students having difficulties of a personal nature that interfere with normal completion of course requirements may speak with the instructor as warranted, consult a Faculty Advisor at the UAF Academic Advising Center (Gruening Building, 5th floor), or see a counselor at the UAF Center for Health and Counseling.

VI. COURSE POLICIES

A. Attendance: Students are expected to attend class regularly and actively participate in discussion of the assigned readings. Students having more than three unexcused absences may, at the discretion of the instructor, forfeit all class participation points.

B. Withdrawal: As established by the university this semester, the last day for student-initiated and faculty-initiated withdrawals (course does not appear on academic record) is Friday, 12 September. **Students whose participation is determined by the instructor to be less than required by assignments due and attendance will be withdrawn from the course.**

C. Incomplete Grades: Students should consult with the course instructor well in advance of final examination week 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”.

D. 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.