



University of Toronto
Joint Centre for Bioethics

Innovative. Interdisciplinary. International.
Improving health care through bioethics.

University of Toronto Joint Centre for Bioethics MHSc in Bioethics Course Descriptions

First Year

PHL 2146Y - Topics in Bioethics

This course explores a number of key concepts and issues using ethical theories and principles in bioethics. The approaches we will consider include: casuistry; utilitarianism (consequence-based theory); Kantianism (duty-based theory); social contract theory; ethical principles (“principlism”); virtue ethics; ethics of care; feminist ethics; and communitarian ethics. We will also introduce some (bio)ethical perspectives under the broad headings of First Nations, Asian, African, Jewish, Christian, and Islamic.

Topics to be discussed include: the nature of ethical reasoning in philosophical bioethics; the fact/value distinction; personhood and moral status; autonomy, beneficence, non-maleficence and paternalism; distributive justice and social justice; professional virtues and models of patient-practitioner relationship; gender, race and other markers of equality and difference; the possibility of a global bioethics; the ethical status of legal and religious texts and opinions/commands; cultural relativism; communities, cultures and religions in bioethics.

Course Director(s): Barbara Secker

MSC 3001Y - Foundations Seminar 1

In this course, a number of key issues and topics in healthcare ethics will be explored from a variety of disciplinary perspectives. The course will be predominantly case-based and will focus on issues that arise within the patient/healthcare provider relationship (micro/meso level). As well as, current topical ethical issues will be explored by leading practitioners in the area of bioethics.

Throughout the course, students are challenged to examine the linkages between ethical theory and practice. Students are expected to incorporate what they have learned in other courses, particularly PHL 2146Y - Topics in Bioethics (as applicable), into class discussions. Class assignments and participation will emphasize improving ethical discernment, analysis, reasoning, and writing skills. While the class seminars

offer breadth across a variety of areas, the course assignments provide students with an opportunity to explore a particular topic in greater depth.

Course Director(s): Doreen Ouellet and Kevin Reel

MSC 3003Y - Empirical Approaches in Bioethics

This course will use seminars to illustrate concepts and applications of empirical approaches to the bioethics literature. The purpose of the course is twofold: to produce educated consumers of empirical literature and provide the fundamental skills to produce contributions to the literature. The students will learn the requisite skills to find, assess and critique the empirical literature from a methodological perspective. Students will learn the basic skills of critical appraisal, as well as skills in the design and conduct of elementary scientific studies and in the preparation of grants to submit to funding agencies. The course will include discussion and evaluation of the broad range of empirical methods employed in contemporary bioethics including but not limited to: quantitative methods such as randomized control trials, cross sectional surveys, decision analysis and qualitative methods such as phenomenology and ethnography. It will also demonstrate to students how empirical methods can be used for program evaluation and quality improvement. At the conclusion of the course students are expected to be able to demonstrate the ability to: Use computerized data bases to find relevant bioethical literature; Systematically analyse and criticise literature from a methodological perspective; Design and execute a simple survey and focus group; Prepare a grant for submission to a funding agency; Organize and conduct a program evaluation.

Course Director(s): Ross Upshur

MSC 3005HF - Legal Approaches to Bioethics

The purpose of this course is to familiarize non-law students with basic legal principles, leading judgments and legislation in Canada, the U.S. and England covering a spectrum of bioethical issues, addressed primarily at the microethical level. The course has mixed formats, including lectures, small group and class discussions, as well as guest lecturers. Topics will be chosen from: legal duties to future generations and the unborn; compromised newborns and infants and wrongful life; parental powers and duties and adolescent autonomy; reproductive health and rights; consent; privacy; medically-assisted reproduction; transplantation and control of tissues outside the body; death, natural death and medically-assisted death; resource allocation; public health and epidemiology.

Course Director(s): Maria McDonald

HAD 5771H - Resource Allocation Ethics

This course will introduce students to key topics in priority setting (resource allocation) from both theoretical and practical viewpoints. The conceptual framework for the course will be 'accountability for reasonableness' (Daniels, Sabin, 2008). The pedagogic method will involve a combination of discussion-

based seminars and student-driven case studies. The goal will be for students to develop a better understanding of priority setting (resource allocation) in health care institutions and health systems.

Course Director(s): Jennifer Gibson

Second Year

MSC 3002Y – Foundations Seminar 2 (prerequisite MSC 3001Y)

This course has two broad aims: i) to foster skills for teaching bioethics and ii) to encourage students to initiate and enhance bioethical educational initiatives in their health care work environment. The culmination of the course is the development of a teaching curriculum which addresses the ethical issues in each student's health care context.

Course Director(s): Jonathan Hellmann

MSC 3004Y – Ethics Committees and Consultation

This course explores ethics in health care from an organizational perspective. Students will: a) develop an understanding of ethics practice at an organizational level, b) become familiar with the field of organizational ethics, including legal and ethical aspects of health care governance and management, c) explore strategies to address value-pluralism in institutional settings (e.g., stakeholder analysis, conflict resolution, ethics consultation), and d) build knowledge and skills to assist organizations in developing and evaluating ethics programs and structures. The role of the ethicist/ethics consultant will also be explored. Course readings are drawn from an interdisciplinary literature, including management, social sciences, business ethics, and bioethics.

Course Director(s): Jennifer Gibson

MSC3006Y – Bioethics Independent Study

The goal of this course is to introduce students to scholarly and practical writing relevant to bioethics. The main focus is on writing one bioethics commentary paper suitable for publication in a journal. The paper is expected to make an original contribution to the literature. Students will go through all the steps in writing a commentary paper, including picking a topic, developing an outline, reviewing the literature, writing a first draft, revising the paper, responding to critiques, and producing the final draft. Students will provide detailed critiques of their colleagues' papers, simulating the journal review process. We will also discuss authorship, effective writing, and media communication, as well as writing abstracts, op ed pieces, and policy reviewing.

Course Director(s): Jerome Singh and Michael Szego

MSC 1051HF – Research Ethics

“Research ethics” refers to the study of ethical issues that arise in the development, conduct, and dissemination of research resulting from scientific investigation. Although this field often encompasses human, animal and molecular studies, this course principally will focus on issues resulting from the involvement of human beings in research, with a particular emphasis on Canadian biomedical research. The objective of the course is to introduce students to some of the philosophical and practical concerns that they will face both as students and future investigators and to familiarize students with the most important concepts used in the research ethics debate and literature.

Topics will include but not be limited to: the philosophical foundation of research ethics; value and validity as ethical requirements for research; risk in research; informed consent; clinical equipoise and placebo controlled trials; conflict of interest; and genetic research. Other topics may be presented depending on student interest.

Course Director(s): Trudo Lemmens

MSC 1052HF – Practical Bioethics

MSC 1052H is a capstone course – one in which students demonstrate their ability to work as ethics specialists. Students draw upon all that they have learned in their other MHSc courses at the JCB, applying their knowledge, scholarship, and skill in persuasive presentation to an ethics project they are currently doing in their home institution or likely will do when they return. This class helps develop and demonstrate students’ readiness to take on ethics-related work. Students will have opportunities to apply their problem-solving and leadership skills, demonstrate awareness and responsiveness to the context of their workplace, and hone skills for supporting colleagues to do their best work in ethics.

Course Director(s): Martin McKneally and Sue MacRae

MSC 3008Y – Applied Learning in Bioethics (Practicum)

This course provides an opportunity to work independently in an area of bioethics that is of particular interest to course participants. Students may choose to focus learning on clinical, organizational and/or research ethics. Under the guidance of the Course Directors, students will seek out a Course Supervisor, someone who is a recognized expert in the student’s area of interest who will provide “real life” experience, and work with that Supervisor to design a course of study, including goals and objectives, that will serve as the foundation of their work in the practicum. This course of study will then be approved by the Course Director, who will act as a resource to the students as needed for the duration of the practicum. As a result, this course does not require time in the classroom; rather it is an on-site placement. As such, students will need to be self directed when working with the Course Supervisor and negotiate opportunities for learning - such as presenting ethics rounds, attending research ethics board meeting, working on a policy development committee, and so on. Finally, the practicum can provide an opportunity to further develop your ethics knowledge and skills which you will be asked to apply in Practical Bioethics” (January-March) in which you’ll be completing a “capstone” project. The capstone project is not part of the practicum but students are

encouraged to use the unique practicum opportunity to consider project ideas that could be developed into your capstone.

Course Director(s): Doreen Ouellet and Shawn Winsor
Barbara Secker (Fogarty Fellows)

MSC 3010Y – International Research Ethics

The purpose of this course is to acquaint trainees with international ethical, legal and regulatory codes governing the conduct of research involving human subjects, and with the rationale underlying these. Topics include: the current state of global health; history of international research bioethics (research controversies and the development of research policy); contemporary international research codes; contemporary challenges in regulating international, cross-cultural research; justice and research ethics; and harmonization of international codes. Pedagogic method: study of these codes will be comparative in nature. We will expect trainees to raise theoretical and practical concerns related to the interpretation and implementation of the codes, and to consider areas of conflict and agreement between various codes and perspectives. Discussion of these issues will be focused, wherever possible, upon research outside North America, usually in the home country, taking international and global issues into consideration.

Course Director(s): Solly Benatar and Bernard Dickens