**Course**: McAnulty College and Graduate School of Liberal Arts

**Syllabus**: HCE-410, **WHO DECIDES WHEN I AM ILL**, Spring 2016

**Day & time**: Tuesday and Thursday 10.50am-12.05pm

**Room**: Rockwell 302

**Credit**: 3

**Course instructor**: Joris Gielen, Ph.D.
Duquesne University, 600 Forbes Avenue, Pittsburgh, PA 15282

**Office hours**: Appointment or walk-in, 301A Fisher Hall
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**Course Description**

On November 1, 2014 29-year old Brittany Maynard took a lethal dose of medicine, which had been prescribed by her physician in Portland OR. She took this drastic step because she feared the suffering that her brain tumor would cause. Was this the right thing to do? It is generally believed that people should be able to decide for themselves when and which medical treatment they will take. However, there are many instances in which other people make treatment decisions. This happens, for instance, when laws put restrictions on certain treatments, or when people are mentally incapacitated by accident or disease. But it also happens in cases of compulsory vaccinations and when people are quarantined against their will in order to prevent the spread of contagious diseases such as SARS and ebola. Moreover, due to disparities in healthcare, people in the US do not have equal access to treatment. In this course, we will study these issues, illustrate their relevance by exploring real-life cases, and learn to analyze them. Graduate students will be required to integrate additional literature and submit slightly longer papers. This will enable them to offer a more in depth analysis of the studied issues.

**Course Objectives**

This course aims at:

- Creating awareness about the problems regarding patient involvement in decision making in healthcare
- Familiarizing students with the ethical complexities of treatment decisions at the end of life, contagious diseases, and healthcare disparities
- Imparting knowledge and skills which will enable students to critically assess cases in these three fields, and report their observations

**Learning Outcomes**

After completing the course students should be able to:
1. Demonstrate the application of reasoning and other reflective skills to make judgments about what ought to be done in a situation in the light of what is morally/ethically at stake in the situation
2. Articulate the importance of being informed, active, critical, questioning citizens in a complex globalizing society
3. Examine how social, political and economic institutions can support or undermine a justly ordered society through the study of economic inequality, or social discrimination on the basis of ethnicity.
4. Critically assess the role of the individual in decision making in healthcare
5. Relate healthcare ethics with multi-disciplinary fields in health care as a diverse, multicultural, and global enterprise (e.g., empirical research, medicine, philosophy, science)
6. Research and write brief scholarly essays that present cogent argument(s), engage scholarly literature, and demonstrate critical thinking and analysis regarding the challenges posed to autonomy in healthcare

Course Requirements

Attendance (10%)
Attendance and active participation in the class is required. Students will lose 1/20 of their grade for attendance for each of the first two unexcused absences. For each unexcused absence after that, they will lose 1/10 of the attendance grade.

Assignments (60%)
The course consists of three parts. At the end of each part, the students submit a four page reflective essay in which they formulate an answer to the ethical question which pertains to that part of the course. The due dates for these assignments have been mentioned in the course schedule. The essays should be submitted electronically through Blackboard. Submit your papers on time in order to remain eligible for the top grade. While assessing the papers, special attention will be paid to the extent to which the student has been able to achieve the first three learning outcomes, which are also part of the learning outcomes for the Social Justice theme area of the University Core Curriculum. Although all learning outcomes are relevant for all three papers, the course has been designed in such a way that the focus is put on at least one of these three Social Justice learning outcomes. In the classes which precede each paper, special attention will be paid to these learning outcomes. The three parts with their ethical questions and central learning outcomes are:

1. Treatment decisions at the end of life: Who decides about my treatment? Focus on learning outcome 1 (Demonstrate the application of reasoning and other reflective skills to make judgments about what ought to be done in a situation in the light of what is morally/ethically at stake in the situation.)
2. Contagious diseases (vaccinations, quarantine, and isolation): Who decides about preventive measures involving me? Focus on learning outcome 2 (Articulate the importance of being informed, active, critical, questioning citizens in a complex globalizing society.)
3. Disparities in healthcare: Who decides when I fall ill? Focus on learning outcome 3 (Examine how social, political and economic institutions can support or undermine a justly ordered...
society through the study of economic inequality, or social discrimination on the basis of ethnicity), but also learning outcomes 1 and 2 are important.

Adopt the following specifications for the papers:

- Mention your name in full at the top of the first page
- Font size 12
- Margins 1” all around
- Double spacing
- Number all pages
- Add references to your text following the rules of your main discipline. The references should be given as endnotes and do not count towards the total number of pages.

Exam (30%)
There will only be a final exam, and no midterm exam. For the final exam, the students will be given an ethical case which deals with one of the three parts of the course. The students will be asked to analyze this case using the knowledge and insights which they have gained from the course. While assessing the exams, special attention will be paid to the extent to which students have achieved the relevant Social Justice learning outcomes.

Grades and Policies
Grades will be assigned adopting grading policy in the McAnulty College and Graduate School of Liberal Arts, as follows:

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<th>Grade</th>
<th>Point Value</th>
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<tr>
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End of term grades will be computed by weighing the grades for attendance, the three papers, and the final exam.

Blackboard: Students are requested to familiarize themselves with Blackboard because it will be used for this course. To gain access to the Blackboard site for this course, students need to be enrolled in the course and have a valid Duquesne University email address. If needed, the instructor will contact the class through Blackboard’s email feature. Blackboard will send all email to students’ Duquesne email address. Therefore, if you do not regularly check your Duquesne email account, please, ensure that you have your Duquesne emails automatically forwarded to your regular email address.

Academic integrity: This syllabus incorporates the “Expectations of Academic Integrity.” Cheating and plagiarism cannot be tolerated. All relevant policies of the McAnulty College and Graduate School of Liberal Arts apply.
Reasonable accommodations: Students with documented disabilities are entitled to reasonable accommodations if needed. If you need accommodations, please contact the Office of Freshman Development and Special Student Services in 309 Duquesne Union (412-396-6657) as soon as possible. Accommodations cannot always be granted retrospectively.

Course Schedule

Part 1  Treatment decisions at the end of life
Tue 01/05: Introduction to the course, discussion of the Brittany Maynard case, and presentation of a framework of end of life decisions


Thu 01/07: Not all treatments at the end of life are the same from an ethical perspective


Tue 01/12: Not all treatments at the end of life are the same from an ethical perspective (continued)


Thu 01/14: Decisions by competent patients


Tue 01/19: Decisions by incompetent patients


Thu 01/21: Advance directives


Tue 01/26: The legal basis of decision making at the end of life, and the limitations of substituted judgement

Readings:


Thu 01/28: The ethics of euthanasia and assisted suicide


Tue 02/02: How autonomous is a choice for euthanasia?


**Wed 02/03 12.00am written assignment due: Who decides about my treatment at the end of my life?**

Thu 02/04: peer review and discussion of the assignments

**Part 2 Contagious diseases (vaccinations, quarantine, and isolation)**

Tue 02/09: The ethical background of pandemics


Thu 02/11: Priority settings and vaccinations in pandemics


Tue 02/16: ethics and human rights when restrictions on freedom are imposed within the context of pandemics


Thu 02/18: surveillance and limitations on social mixing and international travel during pandemics


Tue 02/23: Isolation and quarantine


Thu 02/25: SARS and Ebola

Readings:

**Tue 03/01 and Thu 03/03: Spring Break**

**Tue 03/08: Vaccination refusal**


**Wed 03/09 12.00am written assignment due: Who decides about preventive measures involving me?**

**Thu 03/10: peer review and discussion of the assignments**

**Part 3 Disparities in healthcare**

**Tue 03/15: Importance and evidence of racial and ethnic disparities in healthcare**


**Thu 03/17: Importance and evidence of racial and ethnic disparities in healthcare (continued)**

**Tue 03/22: Factors influencing healthcare needs of minorities**


**Thu 03/24: Easter Break**

**Tue 03/29: The continuing effect of racial attitudes and discrimination**


**Thu 03/31: The historical heritage of healthcare inequalities**


**Tue 04/05: The historical heritage of healthcare inequalities (continued)**

**Thu 04/07: Sources of disparities at the patient level**

**Tue 04/12:** Sources of disparities at the health systems level


**Thu 04/14:** Sources of disparities in the clinical encounter


**Fri 04/15 12.00am written assignment due:** Who decides when I fall ill?

**Tue 04/19:** peer review and discussion of the assignments

**Thu 04/21:** Revision

**Thu 04/28:** Finals