Outline

Empirical studies have shown that attitudes to bioethical issues are often influenced by religion. Moreover, in the past few decades, religious authorities have expressed outspoken opinions on bioethical issues not only in Christianity, but in other religions too. However, there are substantial differences between religions in the ways in which bioethical arguments are constructed. Insight in this religious diversity is important to understand bioethical debates in non-western contexts as well as the bioethical attitudes of people belonging to religious minorities (e.g. Hindus, Buddhists, Sikhs, Muslims) in western countries. In the first part of the course, students become aware of the existence of deep structural differences between religions in the field of bioethics. In the second part, the differences are further explored through the study of (non-Christian) religious answers to a concrete bioethical issue. In the third part, the observations from the previous parts are applied to assess whether and how these answers differ from Christian answers.

Course Objectives

a) Course Description

This course follows a seminar format which after an introductory lecture in the first session devotes most of class time to presentations by students, group discussion and development of the research essay. Through their own research and the critical input of other students the students become aware of structural differences between religions in the field of bioethics. Moreover, the students become particularly familiar with bioethics in one religion (Hinduism, Buddhism or Islam).

b) Competencies

Upon completion of the course students should master the following competencies, as should be demonstrated in specific research projects and presentations, class participation and in the research essay:

a. The ability to critically question representations of Hinduism, Buddhism and Islam in bioethical discussions in general and in scientific bioethical literature in particular
b. The capacity to critically compare and explain bioethical attitudes in different religions
c. The capability to succinctly and convincingly communicate (orally and in writing) about bioethics in Hinduism, Buddhism or Islam
d. A capacity for argument formation, literature integration, and critical analysis when writing a research essay in the field of comparative religious bioethics.

e. The ability to function with confidence and understanding in a multireligious medical context

c) General HCE Program Learning Outcomes

The following HCE Program Learning Outcomes pertain to this course.

Fundamental Knowledge. Students can understand and analyze the ways in which various religions approach bioethical issues.

Multi-disciplinary Study. Students can critically relate religious healthcare ethics with multi-disciplinary fields in health care as a diverse and global enterprise (e.g., empirical research, medicine, philosophy, science).

Scholarship. Students can research and write scholarly essays, teach and communicate effectively, and present academic papers that present cogent argument(s), engage scholarly literature, and demonstrate critical thinking and analysis in the field of comparative religious bioethics.

Ethical Leadership. Students can function with expertise and provide ethical leadership in complex bioethical cases which involve persons with different religious backgrounds.

Course Procedures

a) Research Projects and Required Readings

a.1) General Procedure

For this seminar, the students have to complete four written assignments: three research projects (each 7 pages and an oral presentation) and one research essay (30 pages plus end notes & bibliography). Students will prepare and submit these assignments as per the schedule below.

i. Research Project #1, week 1-3, due Thursday, September 11

ii. Research Project #2, week 4-8, due Thursday, October 16

iii. Research Project #3, week 9-12, due Thursday, November 13

iv. Research Essay, week 13-16
   - Option to submit mid-term essay. For students who want to be assisted in their progress, a draft of the essay can be submitted for feedback by Thursday, November 15.
   - Final version is due Wednesday, December 10.

Focus. Students choose one religious tradition (Hinduism, Buddhism or Islam) which they will study throughout the course, i.e. for the research papers, seminar presentation and research essay. As one of the aims of this course is to thoroughly acquaint the students with bioethics in a religious tradition which is new to them, students are asked to choose a religious tradition in which they have not immersed themselves before either personally or academically.
**Reading Requirements.** Each Research Project will require students to critically engage the equivalent of 2 or 3 books to (a) master the relevant knowledge and (b) engage in critical reading and writing.

**Literature integration.** Students should include approximately 30 notes in each 10-page research project referring to the texts assigned for the project and integrating other relevant literature. Endnotes and bibliography as well as title page and table of content do not count within the 10 pages.

**Research competencies.** The research competencies in the course are identified by the three Research Projects: (a) systematic analysis of the nature of bioethics in Hinduism, Buddhism or Islam, (b) applied analysis, and (c) comparative analysis. Each Research Project will demonstrate that the student has mastered the specific competency.

**Relation of Projects with Essay.** The three Research Projects may be integrated into the Research Essay but not in a manner of cut-and-paste from one to the other. The Research Essay typically demonstrates that the student has mastered a specific research competency. While the research papers are focused on one specific competency, the course essay must demonstrate all three competencies. The course essay furthermore is based on a self-selected thesis different for each student, while the topics of the research papers are given and similar for all students.

a.2) **Research Project #1: Systematic analysis of the nature of bioethics in Hinduism, Buddhism or Islam**

By critically engaging the assigned texts, the students determine which approach, theme or authority best characterizes bioethics in the studied religion. The students choose a title for their paper which refers to that aspect. In the paper, they explain why this aspect is central.

**Required readings.** Depending on which religion students have chosen as the focus of their research, they study the following literature. The journal articles will be available through the Gumberg Library e-reserves. The link to the readings is: [http://guides.library.duq.edu/er.php?ecid=11479](http://guides.library.duq.edu/er.php?ecid=11479). The password is: crb.

1. **Hinduism**

2. **Buddhism**
a.3) Research Project #2: Applied analysis
For this research project, the students apply their observations from the first Research Project to a concrete bioethical issue. Students are free in their choice of that bioethical issue, but have to inform the instructor about their choice at the end of the second session. In the title of the research paper, students express the connection between the bioethical issue and the central aspect which they have identified in the first research project.

Required readings

1. Hinduism

2. Buddhism

3. Islam

a.4) Research Project #3: Comparative analysis
For this Research Project, the students continue working on their focus religion and the bioethical issue which they studied for Research Project #2. They assess to what extent the approach of Hinduism, Buddhism or Islam to that issue differs from or agrees with Christian approaches. The title of the paper should somehow reflect the nature and magnitude of the observed interreligious differences.

Required readings for all students

b) Research Seminars
There will be four seminars. After the introductory first seminar, in each of the seminars, the focus will be on one of the three research competencies. For these sessions, students will be requested to prepare a presentation of maximum 15 minutes of their research papers. Power point or overhead may be used (but no need); the allotted time may not be exceeded. Each student will do one formal presentation in the course. In the first seminar, a schedule of these presentations will be made so that students know on which day they are expected to do their presentation. Other students may be invited to discuss their project and to comment on their colleagues’ presentations.

1. **Week 1: Mon Aug 25. Seminar #1: introduction**
   i. Introduction to the course
   ii. Introduction to Comparative Religious Bioethics, with special attention to Sikhism and Jainism
   iii. Discussion of research essay requirements and course essay
2. **Week 4: Mon Sept 15. Seminar #2: systematic analysis of the nature of bioethics in Hinduism, Buddhism or Islam (Research Project #1)**
   i. Discussion of progress on research essays
   ii. Presentations of completed Research Project #1
   i. Discussion of progress on research essays
   ii. Presentations of completed Research Project #2
   i. Discussion of progress on research essays
   ii. Presentations of completed Research Project #3

c) Research Essay
The research essay will require students to substantively apply the Research Competencies of this course to a particular issue (theoretical or practical). For the essay, students choose a bioethical issue (either the same or different from Research Paper #2 and #3). Taking into consideration the approaches of two different religions (one of them is the religion on which they have focused in the Research Projects), as well as observations from philosophy and empirical and medical research they attempt to formulate a balanced answer or advice to that problem. In a critical and honest way, students pay attention not only to commonalities between religions, but they also try to find a way to deal with differences.

Requirements:

1. Start to reflect on the thesis of your course essay from the beginning of the course.
2. Thesis and 1-page outline with basic bibliography to be submitted by Monday, September 29.
3. Students will receive feedback in Seminar #3.
4. Progress will be reported in Seminar #4.
5. Submit a copy of the essay by date assigned.
6. The course essay length should be 30 pages, double-spacing; the main body of text; title page, table of content, endnotes and bibliography do not count within the 30 pages.

7. Students must adopt the format of the Chicago Manual of Style, as required by the College for dissertation submissions.

8. Students can quote from publications in any language, but need to provide an English translation.

9. Select an Essay Title that reflects a research thesis and includes a reference to the proposed solution.

10. Make a Title page and a separate Table of Content.

11. Present a brief Introduction and Conclusion.

12. Notes to the references made in the essay.
   a. Use end notes (as opposed to foot notes at the bottom of the page).
   b. Do not use notes for narrative explanations – they belong in the main text.
   c. There should be approximately 100 end notes in the essay.

13. Bibliography. List all the references in alphabetical order. Only list items actually referred to in the essay.

14. Divisions and subdivisions. Use major divisions (headings) and subdivisions (subheadings), evenly distributed throughout the essay, to lay out the sequence of concepts and arguments.

15. Use of online references. Online references must be accurately identified with complete web address etc., including the date of access. Students are requested to critically deal with content from the internet.

**HCE Handbook.** The Center for Healthcare ethics has developed a Handbook of Policies, Procedures, and Guidelines to guide students in all curriculum related matters.

**Course grade.** There will be no examinations. The course grade will be assigned based on the quality of the course research essay and the three research projects. The grade will be a combination of 10% for each of the three research projects and 70% for the final essay.

No midterm grades will be assigned. End of term grades will be assigned adopting grading policy in the McAnulty College and Graduate School of Liberal Arts, as follows:

A  4.0  distinguished scholarly work  
A-  3.7  
B+  3.3  
B  3.0  normal progress towards degree  
B-  2.7  
C+  2.3  
C  2.0  warning; student subject to departmental action  
F  0.0

**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.