

College: McAnulty College and Graduate School of Liberal Arts

Syllabus: HCE-645/745, **COMPARATIVE RELIGIOUS BIOETHICS**, Fall 2020

Course: Monday 3:05-5:45 pm Fisher Hall 713

Office hours: Wednesday 10am-noon, Friday 1pm-3pm: email for Zoom meeting. Appointments possible outside these hours.  
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Course instructor: Joris Gielen, Ph.D.  
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## 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 their development of bioethics. In the second part, the differences are further explored through the study of (non-Christian) religious answers to a concrete ethical issue at the end of life. In the third part, the observations from the previous parts are applied to assess whether and how these answers differ from Christian (Roman Catholic) answers.

## Course Objectives

### a) Course Description

This course follows a hybrid format that after an introductory lecture in the first session devotes most of class time to group discussion (in class or on Blackboard), presentations by students, and development of the research essay. Through the course lectures, 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). Most of the instruction will take place through weekly online modules on Blackboard. The class group will meet five times throughout the semester through the HyFlex model. The focus of these meetings will be on the development of the argument that students will present in the course essay. The students will present their course essay in the final two meetings of the course.

## **b) Competencies**

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

- a. Systematic analysis of the nature of bioethics in Hinduism, Buddhism or Islam: the ability to critically reflect upon the nature of bioethics in Hinduism, Buddhism, or Islam and question representations of these religions in bioethical discussions in general and in scientific bioethical literature in particular
- b. Applied analysis: the capability to succinctly and convincingly formulate arguments about applied healthcare ethics in Hinduism, Buddhism or Islam
- c. Comparative analysis: the capacity to critically compare and explain bioethical attitudes in different religions

## **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 that involve persons with different religious backgrounds.

## **Course Procedures**

### **a) Research Projects and Required Readings**

#### **a.1) General Procedure**

For this course, the students must complete three written assignments: two research projects (7 pages plus end notes and bibliography), and one research essay (25 pages plus end notes and bibliography). Students will prepare and submit these assignments as per the schedule below.

- i. Research Project #1, due Wednesday, September 30
- ii. Research Project #2, due Wednesday, November 4
- iii. Research Essay, due Wednesday, December 9
  - Submit Essay thesis, a 500 words abstract, outline, and basic bibliography, by Wednesday, October 28.

- 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 Wednesday, November 25.
- Final version is due Wednesday, December 9.

For the HyFlex sessions, students will prepare a brief presentation (10-15 min) of their research papers. They summarize their argument on three slides which they will use to present their research in class. At the end of the course, the students will also prepare an interactive 20-minute presentation of their research essay, which they will present in the two final class sessions.

Focus. Students choose one religious tradition (Hinduism, Buddhism or Islam) that they will study throughout the course, i.e. for the research papers, seminar presentation and research essay. Students are encouraged 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 two books to (a) master the relevant knowledge and (b) engage in critical reading and writing.

Literature integration. Students should include approximately 25 notes in each research project referring to the texts assigned for the project. The students should bear in mind that the literature builds up progressively, i.e. while developing research project two and the research essay students may find it helpful to refer to the literature of the preceding projects, too. Endnotes and bibliography as well as title page and table of content do not count towards the prescribed number of 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 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 papers typically demonstrate 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 that refers to that aspect, and, in this way, reflects a research thesis. In the paper, they explain why this aspect is central. The required readings for this paper are those of course part 1.

### **a.3) Research Project #2: Applied analysis**

For this research project, the students apply their insights from the first course part to a concrete bioethical issue at the end of life. In the title of the research paper, students express the connection between the bioethical issue and a central aspect of normative bioethics in the religion that they are studying. The required readings for this paper are those of course part 1 and 2.

## b) Online Modules

The weekly online modules will consist of prerecorded lectures and videos, and discussion forums on Blackboard. Modules will open to students on Mondays 3.05pm. It is very important that all students actively engage in the online weekly discussion forums. In order to facilitate discussion, the forum topics will be available to students when that week's module is made available to the students. For every discussion topic posted by the course instructor, students are required to write one response to the instructor by Wednesday 11.59pm, and a minimum of one response to posts by peers by the end of the week. Forum participation accounts for 10% of the total grade. The scoring rubric for the forum will be available on Blackboard under the Course Syllabus tab.

## c) HyFlex Meetings

Throughout the semester, there will be five synchronous meetings:

- Mon Aug 24 3.05-5.45pm: introduction
- Mon Sept 28 3.05-5.45pm: 3-slide presentations RP#1
- Mon Nov 2 3.05-5.45pm: 3-slide presentations RP#2
- Mon Nov 16 3.05-5.45pm: Presentations course essay
- Week 14: Mon Nov 23 3.05-5.45pm: Presentations course essay

In Starfish, students indicate whether they will attend these meetings in person in Fisher Hall 715 or through Zoom. If professional commitments prevent students from attending these meetings, they may watch the recording of the meeting afterwards. The focus of the meetings will be on student presentations (cf. below). Students who cannot attend a meeting for professional reasons should submit a video recording of their presentation to the instructor on the day of the meeting by 10am. The three presentations account for 10% of the total grade. For the grade, the instructor will assess clarity of the presentation, slide design, and responses to questions from the audience.

## d) Course Schedule

Week 1: Mon Aug 24 3.05-5.45pm. HyFlex class: Introduction to the course requirements, procedures and theme, normative (bio)ethics in Jainism

### Part 1 Systematic analysis of the nature of bioethics in Hinduism, Buddhism and Islam

Required readings. The journal articles will be available through Blackboard.

#### 1. Hinduism

- Schweiker, William, ed. *The Blackwell Companion to Religious Ethics*, Blackwell Companions to Religion. Oxford: Blackwell, 2004, pp. 323-367.
- Coward, H. G., J. J. Lipner, and K. K. Young, eds. *Hindu Ethics: Purity, Abortion and Euthanasia*. edited by K. K. Young, McGill Studies in the History of Religions. Albany: State University of New York Press, 1997, 139 pages. (\$23)
- Clooney, F. X. "Back to the Basics: Reflections on Moral Discourse in a Contemporary Hindu Community." *The Journal of Medicine and Philosophy* 20, no. 4 (1995): 439-57.
- Desai, P. N. "Medical Ethics in India." *J Med Philos* 13, no. 3 (1988): 231-55.
- Pandya, S. K. "Medical Ethics in India: Then and Now." *Acta Neurochir Suppl* 74 (1999): 35-46.

- Gielen, Joris. "Normative Bioethics in Hinduism." In *Dealing with Bioethical Issues in a Globalized World: Normativity in Bioethics*, edited by Joris Gielen, 75-93. Cham: Springer International Publishing, 2020
- Sarma, D. " "Hindu" Bioethics?". *Journal of Law, Medicine & Ethics* 36, no. 1 (2008): 51-58.

## 2. Buddhism

- Schweiker, William, ed. *The Blackwell Companion to Religious Ethics*, Blackwell Companions to Religion. Oxford: Blackwell, 2004, pp. 278-322.
- Harvey, Peter. *An Introduction to Buddhist Ethics: Foundations, Values and Issues*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000, 478 pages. (\$34)
- Hongladarom, Soraj. "Normativity in Buddhism and Its Application in Bioethics." In *Dealing with Bioethical Issues in a Globalized World : Normativity in Bioethics*, edited by Joris Gielen, 95-113. Cham: Springer International Publishing, 2020.

## 3. Islam

- Schweiker, William, ed. *The Blackwell Companion to Religious Ethics*, Blackwell Companions to Religion. Oxford: Blackwell, 2004, pp. 237-277.
- Brockopp, Jonathan E., ed. *Islamic Ethics of Life: Abortion, War, and Euthanasia*. edited by Frederick M. Denny, Studies in Comparative Religion. Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2002, 264 pages. (\$23)
- Aramesh, Kiarash. "Normativity in Islamic Bioethics." In *Dealing with Bioethical Issues in a Globalized World: Normativity in Bioethics*, edited by Joris Gielen, 13-29. Cham: Springer International Publishing, 2020.

Week 2: Mon Aug 31. Normative (bio)ethics in Sikhism

Week 3: Mon Sept 7. Normative (bio)ethics in Hinduism

Week 4: Mon Sept 14. Normative (bio)ethics in Buddhism

Week 5: Mon Sept 21. Normative bioethics in Islam

Week 6: Mon Sept 28 3.05-5.45pm. HyFlex seminar, 3-slide presentations RP#1

Week 7: Mon Oct 5 Religion and end-of-life decision-making in India

## Part 2 Applied Analysis

### Required readings.

For all students: Broeckaert, Bert and Flemish Palliative Care Federation. "Treatment Decisions in Advanced Disease – A Conceptual Framework." 2009. Retrieve from [http://palliatief.be/accounts/143/attachments/Research/conceptual\\_framework\\_bb.pdf](http://palliatief.be/accounts/143/attachments/Research/conceptual_framework_bb.pdf).

Specific readings:

## 1. Hinduism

- Crawford, S. Cromwell. *Dilemmas of Life and Death: Hindu Ethics in a North American Context*. New York: State University of New York Press, 1995, 233 pages. (\$35)

- Crawford, S. Cromwell. *Hindu Bioethics for the Twenty-First Century*. Suny Series in Religious Studies. edited by H. Coward Albany: State University of New York Press, 2003, 226 pages. (\$24)
2. Buddhism
- Keown, Damien. *The Nature of Buddhist Ethics*. New York: Palgrave, 2001, 269 pages. (\$45)
  - Keown, Damien. *Buddhism and Bioethics*. New York: Palgrave, 2001, 208 pages. (\$53)
3. Islam
- Sachedina, Abdulaziz Abdulhussein. *Islamic Biomedical Ethics: Principles and Application*. Oxford: Oxford university press, 2009, 296 pages. (\$ 26)
  - Brockopp, Jonathan E., and Thomas Eich, eds. *Muslim Medical Ethics: From Theory to Practice*. edited by Frederick M. Denny, Studies in Comparative Religion. Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2008, 314 pages. (\$25)

Week 8: Mon Oct 12. Treatment Decisions in Advanced Disease – A Conceptual Framework

Week 9: Mon Oct 19. EOL ethics in Hinduism

Week 10: Mon Oct 26. EOL ethics in Buddhism and Islam

Week 11: Mon Nov 2 3.05-5.45pm. HyFlex seminar, 3-slide presentations RP#2

### Part 3 Comparative Analysis

Required reading for all students: Kelly, David F. *Medical Care at the End of Life: A Catholic Perspective*. Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 2007. (\$23)

Week 12: Mon Nov 9. Roman Catholic EOL ethics and Islam, Hinduism, and Buddhism

Week 13: Mon Nov 16 3.05-5.45pm. HyFlex seminar, Presentations course essay

Week 14: Mon Nov 23 3.05-5.45pm. HyFlex seminar, Presentations course essay

### e) Research Essay

The research essay will require students to substantively apply the Research Competencies of this course to a particular bioethical issue. For the essay, students choose a bioethical issue (either the same or different from Research Paper #2). 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. Students who have registered for HCE-745 compare the approach of Roman Catholicism and the religion on which they focused in the Research Projects.

#### Requirements:

1. Start to reflect on the thesis of your course essay from the beginning of the course.
2. Thesis, a 500 words abstract, outline, and basic bibliography to be submitted by Wednesday, October 28.
3. Students will receive general feedback in class and individual feedback through Blackboard.

4. Submit a copy of the essay by date assigned.
5. The course essay length should be at least 25 pages, double-spacing; the main body of text; title page, table of content, endnotes and bibliography do not count towards the 25 pages.
6. Students must adopt the format of the *Chicago Manual of Style*, as required by the College for dissertation submissions.
7. Students can quote from publications in any language, but need to provide an English translation.
8. Select an Essay Title that reflects a research thesis.
9. Make a Title page and a separate Table of Content.
10. Present a brief Introduction and Conclusion.
11. 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.
12. Bibliography. List all the references in alphabetical order. Only list items actually referred to in the essay.
13. Divisions and subdivisions. Use major divisions (headings) and subdivisions (subheadings), evenly distributed throughout the essay, to lay out the sequence of concepts and arguments.
14. 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 two research projects, 10% for class presentations, 10% for participation in online forums, and 60% 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.