

PHIL 5180, Seminar on Selected Philosophical Issues

Time: F 14:30-17:30

Location: LSK 204

Lessons are arranged on 6, 13, 20 and 27 March 2015

Course Overview

Course Title: Philosophical, Ethical and Policy Issues at the End of Life

We begin with the philosophical, ethical and practical implications of different definitions of death, understood as a biological event or process. Next, we consider the implications of different theories of personal identity for determining when death has occurred. The next topic is whether there is a right to die, and a right to be assisted in dying. Finally, we will consider whether individuals should be able to request assistance in dying to avoid severe dementia via advance directives (ADs). This raises the question of precedent autonomy: whether the wishes of the competent individual should determine what is done to the no-longer-competent person.

Learning outcomes

Participants will develop a critical understanding of the topics covered. They will be expected to articulate the different views presented and to defend their own ideas both orally and in writing.

Topics

Topics to be covered include: the definition of death, the implications of different conceptions of personal identity for the determination of death, assisted death, and precedent autonomy.

Learning activities

Between 30 and 100 pages of reading per week. The heaviest reading is for Week 4, so students should begin reading for that week in advance.

A short essay (shorty) on an assigned topic is due each week. The shorties will be the basis for class discussion.

Details of course website:

Available under CJIShields.com. Assigned readings will be posted on the course's E-learning platform.

Contact details for teacher

Name: Steinbock, Bonnie (Tang Chun-I Visiting Professor)

Office location: ???

Telephone: ????

Email: bonnie.steinbock@gmail.com

Required work by week

March 6: The Definition of Death

Assigned Readings:

1. Case study: Jahi McMath

http://www.mercurynews.com/breaking-news/ci_24729226/oakland-girl-13-declared-brain-dead-after-tonsil?source=pkg

http://articles.philly.com/2014-10-24/news/55364267_1_brain-death-christopher-dolan-nailah-winkfield

2. Alan Shewmon, 1998. "Brainstem Death, 'Brain Death' and Death: a Critical Reevaluation of the Purported Equivalence." *Issues in Law & Medicine*, Fall 14(2): 18 pages

3. Robert D. Truog and Franklin G. Miller. 2014. "Changing the Conversation About Brain Death," *AJOB* 14 (8): 9-14.

4. James Bernat. 2006. "The Whole-Brain Concept of Death Remains Optimum Public Policy," *Journal of Law, Medicine & Ethics* 34 (1): 35-43.

5. David Magnus, Benjamin Wilfond and Arthur Caplan. 2014. "Accepting Brain Death," *New England Journal of Medicine* 370 (10): 891-894.

March 13: Death and Personal Identity

1. Jeff McMahan. Spring 2006. "An Alternative to Brain Death," *Journal of Law, Medicine & Ethics* 34 (1): 44-48.

2. David DeGrazia. Autumn 2003. "Identity, Killing, and the Boundaries of Our Existence," *Philosophy and Public Affairs* 31 (4): 413-442

March 20: Assisted Death

1. Case study: Brittany Maynard,

<http://www.cnn.com/2014/10/07/opinion/maynard-assisted-suicide-cancer-dignity/>

[http://www.pbs.org/newshour/bb/right-die-movement/#.VF aBUQDC6Wo.facebook](http://www.pbs.org/newshour/bb/right-die-movement/#.VFaBUQDC6Wo.facebook)

<http://www.usatoday.com/story/news/nation-now/2014/11/02/brittany-maynard-/18390069/>

2. Case study: Barbara Mancini, <http://www.cbsnews.com/news/ending-life-barbara-mancini-end-of-life-debate/>

3. Timothy E. Quill. 1991. "Death and Dignity: A Case of Individualized Decision Making," *New England Journal of Medicine* 324 (10): 691-694.

4. John D. Arras. 1997. "Physician-Assisted Suicide: A Tragic View," *Journal of Contemporary Health Law and Policy* 13: 361-389.

March 27: Precedent Autonomy

1. Case study: Gillian Bennett, <http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/british-columbia/gillian-bennett-suffering-with-dementia-dies-leaving-right-to-die-plea-1.2742440>

2. Ronald Dworkin. 1993, excerpts from *Life's Dominion*, pp. 189-259

3. Agnieszka Jaworska. 1999. "Respecting the Margins of Agency: Alzheimer's Patients and the Capacity to Value," *Philosophy & Public Affairs* 28 (2): 105-138.

4. Paul T. Menzel and Bonnie Steinbock. 2013. "Advance Directives, Dementia, and Physician-Assisted Death," *Journal of Law, Medicine & Ethics* 41 (2): 484-500.