

THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT TYLER

Course Syllabus

Course Information

PHIL 4301: Bioethics, Spring 2026

Instructor: Gregory L. Bock, Ph.D.

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Catalog Description

A philosophical exploration of ethical issues that arise in medicine and other health-related fields

Required Textbook

Case Studies in Biomedical Ethics 2nd Edition, by Veatch, Haddad, and English (only the 2nd edition is acceptable) ISBN: 9780199946563

Student Learning Outcomes:

Upon completion of the course, students will be able to...

1. explain several different theories of normative ethics.
2. apply normative ethics to bioethical cases.
3. identify the four principles of biomedical ethics.
4. defend a point of view on an end-of-life case.
5. defend a point of view on a beginning-of-life case.
6. carefully and accurately articulate a point of view different from one they hold.
7. demonstrate critical thinking skills in an essay on an ethical issue.
8. demonstrate a deeper understanding and sensitivity to the cultural and religious beliefs of stakeholders in the healthcare system.

Grading

Attendance: 50 points

Group Activities (6@10 pts each):	50 points (lowest dropped)
Group Presentation:	100 points
Exams (3 @ 100 pts each):	200 points (lowest dropped)
TOTAL:	350 points

Grading Scale Percentages

A=90-100%, B=80-89%, C=70-79%, D=60-69%, F=less than 60%

Assessment

Attendance At the start of the semester, each student has fifty points for attendance and one free unexcused absence. Each unexcused absence after the first is penalized five points per day against the attendance grade up to fifty points. Excused absences will not count against the fifty points but need to be accompanied with documentation (e.g. a doctor's note). This documentation must be submitted when the student returns to class and no later. After losing fifty points, no further points will be deducted even if there are more absences. Students may not see points deducted in the grade book immediately or even until the end of the semester, so it is the student's responsibility to be aware of the number of attendance points remaining and make sure that the attendance sheet is accurate on a weekly basis.

Group Activities During class, especially after the first exam, students will participate in group activities. The group activities will vary but will involve moral reasoning about the cases and possibly presenting them to the class. Groups will record their work on paper and turn it in at the end of class. Students who are active in their groups and stay until the end will receive credit. Make-ups are only allowed with a valid excuse, e.g. a doctor's note.

Group Presentation Students will work together to analyze, research, and present a case from the textbook. Presentations will occur after the second exam. Make-ups are only allowed with valid excuse, such as a doctor's note.

Exams There are three essay exams. These exams will be given during class time. A case from the textbook will be put on the screen, and students will demonstrate how much they have learned by analyzing the case and defending a point of view. The grade will be based on how well the student analyzes the case and defends their point of view. Ethical principles from Part 2 of the textbook must be applied no matter the case or the exam.

Course Policies:

Late work policy: Make-ups will be allowed with a valid excuse, e.g. a doctor's note. A make-up for a group report will take the form of an essay.

Communication policy: The best way to communicate with the instructor is through UT Tyler e-mail (gbock@uttyler.edu) or in Canvas. Students can expect replies within 48 hours excluding weekends and holidays. Students who do not receive a reply within this timeframe should attempt to contact the instructor again. The instructor communicates with the class via Canvas emails and announcements. It is important that students check their email and allow push notifications for class announcements.

Class conduct policy: The subject matter of this class can make some people hot under the collar. This said, all comments and behavior must be classroom appropriate. What does "classroom appropriate" mean? It does *not* mean that students cannot express unpopular opinions. It means practicing reasoning and logical argumentation. It means being civil and listening with respect. Insults, snide comments, name-calling, cutting someone off, derogatory tones, sarcasm, ridicule, cussing, vulgarity, personal attacks, racial slurs, misogynistic remarks, etc. will not be allowed. If you are unsure about what counts as disrespectful, consult the instructor or the Golden Rule. The instructor will act as the final word on what is or is not classroom appropriate. Violators may be ejected from the class.

Cell phone policy (face-to-face sections): Mobile devices can be used in the classroom if it is related to what is going on in class. They are permissible as long as they don't distract you or your classmates from the lesson.

Arriving late or leaving early policy (face-to-face sections): Arriving on time can sometimes be challenging. It is better to be late than never; however, late arrivals and early departures can be disruptive. If becomes a regular issue, points will be deducted from the attendance grade.

Extra credit policy: Extra credit may be available at various times during the semester, but it is only made available at the discretion of the instructor and never upon request.

"It is what it is" final grade policy: Grades are final once the final grade percentage has been calculated in Canvas at the end of the semester. No changes will be made unless the instructor has made a mistake. Grades are not bumped up unless the student is within .5% of the next letter grade. For example, an 89.5% is an A. An 89.4% is a B. No extra credit opportunities will be given during the last week of class. The conditions for an "incomplete" are stated in the university handbook: "(a) the student has been making satisfactory progress in the course; (b) the student is unable to complete all course work or final exam due to unusual circumstances that are beyond personal control and are acceptable to the instructor; and (c) the student presents these reasons prior to the time that the final grade roster is due." The terms and deadline for satisfying an "incomplete" will be set by the instructor.

A.I. Policy: AI is permitted only for specific assignments or situations, and appropriate acknowledgment is required. For the readings, you may use AI to better understand what the authors say and what the philosophical ideas mean. For group activities and the presentation, you may use AI to research a topic and brainstorm your group's ideas, but you may not use it to write your group presentation or reports for you. Everything you write in class must be in your own words. You may use AI to study for the exam too, but you may not use AI during the test, and your essay must be in your own words and express your own opinion.

Plagiarism policy: Plagiarism will not be tolerated. Plagiarism is taking credit for material that is not your own whether it is copied from a classmate, textbook, or online source (such as ChatGPT). Plagiarism is cheating, and cheating is the way of the Dark Side. If that isn't enough of a deterrent in itself, plagiarizing will result in an F on the assignment and a possible F in the course. It could also mean suspension from the school. So, students should be sure to use proper citations and do their own work. If students are not sure whether something constitutes plagiarism, they should contact the instructor to ask about it before submitting the assignment. The penalty will apply whether the act of plagiarism is intentional or not.

UT TYLER HONOR CODE

I embrace honor and integrity.

Therefore, I choose not to lie, cheat or steal, nor to accept the actions of those who do.

(By the way, it is really bad karma to cheat in an ethics class)