

Lecture I.1: Introduction to the course

Course: Ethics in Medicine

Book: Steinbock, Arras and London, *Ethical Issues in Medicine*, 7th edition

Instructor: Dr. Mary Rorty, substituting this semester for Dr. Silvers.

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(see website for more information)

Filling in for Dr. Silvers who has been running this course for over 10 years.

The course will pretty much follow her format...

Introduction to the course:

Book: I understand you can get it as an e-book from McGrawHill.com for about half the price of the new hard copy.

Philosophy course: one of several approaches to the issues we consider

Ethics course: one of several philosophical areas of concentration

Applied ethics: NOT so much theoretical as concerned with cases

Specific area of application: health care--

Which is itself --a business;

--a political issue

--intersection of several professions

--a social arena with multiple roles:

patients, providers—but also

employers, employees, researchers,

policy makers, suppliers, administrators

And all these things can be engaged on multiple levels:

Mini—individuals with various reactions to any issue

Micro—interpersonal and personal/ institutional interactions

Meso—institutional level

Macro—larger social context in which h/c occurs

So we find ourselves in the course of the semester adopting the perspective/standpoint of people in all these roles, on all these levels,

--which is part of our objective: to foster your moral imagination: increase the range and scope of your way of looking at difficult issues.

We will have no lack of material.

For instance, every Tuesday the NY Times has a science section. In that section today, we have stories about:

Progress of crack babies (it's good news)

Drugs for malaria (it's bad news)

A person who wrote a book about pretending to be a mental patient (it drove her crazy)

A look at the life of some polio sufferers now in their 60s

Post-operative recommendations for how to recover from prostate surgery...

But that's just the science times. On page 1 there's a story about changes in medicare, about anti-smoking laws, on errors by the NY state health commissioner. On the op ed,

an attack on the FDA. And we haven't even hit the business pages, where two big drug companies are combining...

We clearly can't do it all. We can do some things; and I will try to set out clearly for you what I want you to get out of any particular issue we deal with: be it standard of care, or history of how we got to where we are on some issues.

But the more vocal YOU are about what you are interested in and what you want to get out of this course, the more likely it is to be a good experience for us all.

Discussion: hard, because there are so many of us.

Writing: hard. This is a writing intensive general education class; and you will be expected to write a LOT. I'm kind of concerned about that; I know from my own experience and from past courses that not everyone writes well. I will try to provide opportunities for accumulating grade points on something other than your deathless prose: one of the main ways of doing so will be quizzes.

Reading is hard too. I have some frustrations with this book; it sometimes seems to me that the object of the various articles our editors have compiled is to confuse things and make the simple more difficult. It doesn't help that the authors of our various articles come from different disciplines, with different standards of professional publication. The page expectation is not very high—but expect the reading to be slow hard work.