DUQUESNE UNIVERSITY

HEALTHCARE ETHICS
Spring 2017

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Course Description:
Philosophy asks fundamental questions about reality, knowledge, language, society, personhood, consciousness, religion, and other aspects of our lives. This course is aimed to be a survey of the main ethical positions in philosophy and how they relate to healthcare. Ethics asks the fundamental question: “how should I live?” It is the branch of philosophy that is concerned with what human beings ought to do, how they ought to act. Under this falls determining what is good and what is bad, or deciding to act in a certain way as opposed to another. Ethics deals with the reasoning for our choices. Some philosophers think that the recent rapid developments in science and technology have caught us off guard regarding our ethical preparation for such advances. It has become, in many cases, difficult to determine what the course of action ought to be taken regarding healthcare choices. Healthcare ethics is aimed at closing this gap. In this course, we will read works of various important philosophers to discuss and learn about some of the important questions that have been asked throughout the history of philosophy with regard to ethics, and then apply these to issues specific to the medical environment. We will examine specific cases involving conflicts regarding the decisions that health care professionals and others have to make which concern, in some cases, the life or death of patients.

Course Objectives and Learning Outcomes:
The goals of this class can be split into two categories: skill-based and content-based. On the content-based side, we will learn what some of the key figures in the history of philosophy said about some significant questions and we will form familiarity of important pieces of writing. The skills we will develop will focus on applying these often abstract ideas and reasonings to everyday scenarios. In doing so, we will learn to justify actions and decisions by using rigorous and effective philosophical argumentation.

Required Texts:
ISBN: 9780872204645
ISBN: 9780872201668
ISBN: 9780872206052
ISBN: 9780078038457