

Modern Technology & Bioethics – Syllabus

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About me

During my first semester at Northeastern, I was required to take an elective course in the humanities. To fill this elective, I took “Introduction to Contemporary Moral Issues.” Approximately a month and a half into the course, I decided that I would like to get an ethics minor, hopefully focusing in the bioethics region, a topic that I thought would fit well with my biochemistry major. I now am taking courses to fill this ethics minor, and am quite frankly just as excited to be taking “Moral Philosophy” and “Moral & Social Problems in Health Care” as I am for “Genetics & Molecular Biology” and “Organic Chemistry I.”

Course description

This course will take a look at modern technological advances and their ethical implications. While looking at these advances, several philosophical lenses will be discussed, such as different forms of consequentialism, utilitarianism, and virtue ethics.

This course will not only focus on the ethical implications of the advances, but the advances as well. It will serve two purposes: providing the students with philosophical windows through which they may look at the world, as well as expose them to new advances in the field of science.

Class Material

The first two or three classes will be spent discussing three of the philosophical approaches to right and wrong.

Utilitarianism – Mill

Deontology – Kant

Virtue Ethics – Hursthouse

Once these approaches have been discussed, the class will then launch into applications of these theories.

Examples of the applications may include:

Genetically Modified Organisms (GMO's) & Food.

Genetic Enhancement.

Pressure on developing countries (corn-based gasoline).

Treatments of diseases.

Anti-aging technology.

Students will be posed an application (wording below) in order to gauge what advances they are interested in, and the class material for the remainder of the course – after the first two or three classes – will be structured around those interests.

Assignments

There will be little to no assignments given, and if one is, it certainly will not be mandatory. The only assignments given may be reading an article from *The New York Times* for a class discussion of the topic in question.

Application question

What new advances in science do you find controversial, and/or feel are worth discussing in class?