

BCRE21 Contemporary Ethical Issues

Semester: B

ECTS Credits: 5

Duration: 11 weeks

Contact Hours: 22

Quota: None

Prerequisite subjects: None

The course analyses contemporary biomedical debates in their underlying philosophical and theological principles, values, and views of the human being.

The course examines the different Irish, European and international argumentations and legislations that these debates have produced. Issues at the beginning and at the end of human life, the possible conflict between parents' and children's perspectives, and the visions of society and humanity implied in positions on advance care directives, on the new reproductive technologies, genetics, healing, enhancement, and cloning will be discussed. Films and excerpts from (what used to be?) science fiction will provide additional avenues to the topics.

Learning Outcomes:

On successful completion of this course, students will be able to:

Distinguish social, individual, and professional ethical perspectives on concrete issues in biomedical ethics

Relate the content of the principles invoked, such as 'dignity,' 'autonomy', 'embodiment', and 'privacy', to different schools of moral thought

Distinguish an empirical from a transcendental understanding of human dignity and its consequences for concrete ethical issues

Trace differences in European debate and legislations to two traditions of thinking about autonomy

Know about basic documents regarding medical research on human subjects: World Medical Association Declaration of Helsinki (1964), and its subsequent updates, and the Convention on Human Rights and Biomedicine (Council of Europe 1997).

Explain the positions taken on the question of human enhancement by authors from the Rawls School and by J. Habermas.

Recognize links between argumentations in Christian Ethics on God as creator and humans as co-creators to systematic theological positions on the doctrine of God

Develop a critically reflected position of their own in relation to the concrete ethical issues under debate

Argue for their position on which language to use in public discourse on biomedical ethics

Know how to handle academic bibliographies and textbooks, and how to structure an academic essay, demonstrating the ability to reconstruct an argumentation.

Indicative Reading:

R. Ammicht Quinn et al., "Women in the Practice of Reproductive Medicine and in Bioethical Discourse – an Intervention," in *Concilium* 2006/1, *A Time for Change?* (London: SCM Press, 2006), 119-136 (Documentation)

A. Buchanan, N. Daniels et al, *From Chance to Choice* (Cambridge: CUP, 2001). *Cambridge Handbook of Human Dignity. Historical Traditions, Philosophical Interpretations, Legal Implementation and Contemporary Challenges*, ed. by M. Düwell, J. Braarvig, R. Brownsword, D. Mieth (Cambridge: CUP, 2014)

J. Habermas, *The Future of Human Nature* (London: Polity Press, 2003)

O. O'Neill, *Autonomy and Trust in Bioethics* (Cambridge: CUP, 2002), 28-48 (Ch. 2: Autonomy, Individuality and Consent)

J. Picoult, *My Sister's Keeper* (London: Hoffer, 2005) Russell, C./Hogan, L./Junker-Kenny, M. (eds), *Ethics for Graduate Researchers* (Oxford: Elsevier, 2012).

Assessment: One 3,000 word essay

Name of Lecturer:

Prof Maureen Junker-Kenny