RELIGION 11
Introduction to Religion and Morality: Bioethics

Texts to Buy at Wheelock Books:

Chris Bohjalian, *Midwives* (Vintage PB)
Søren Kierkegaard, *Fear and Trembling* and *Repetition* (Princeton PB)
Ronald Munson, *Intervention and Reflection: Basic Issues in Medical Ethics*, 8th ed. (Wadsworth)

(All other required readings are available electronically on the Blackboard site for this course. Readings in the “Assigned Readings” folder on Blackboard are listed in the order they appear in the syllabus.)

Course Objectives:

One aim of this course is to examine the moral teachings and ethical methods of some of the major religious traditions that have shaped our culture. By focusing on some contemporary problems in bioethics — attitudes toward homosexuality, stem cells, cloning, human genetic engineering, the treatment of impaired newborns, and society’s treatment of the dying — we hope to understand and evaluate the contributions of these religious traditions. Beyond this exploration of different teachings, however, lie two more basic questions. How do we reason or think about complex moral questions? And, what does religion bring (or not bring) to morality?

Course Requirements:

1. Four unannounced short-answer tests in class. These have one purpose only: to ensure that you keep up with the reading that is essential to class discussion. Each test represents 7% of the course grade and all the tests together constitute 20% of the course grade. Note: this means that you can miss one of these tests and still receive more than the full 20% that this course requirement
represents. Apart from a written Dick’s House medical excuse or equivalent dean’s excuse, there is no exemption from these tests.

2. Presence in class and thoughtful and informed participation in class discussions (quality of contribution counts; not quantity). This requirement is important since a number of class sessions involve cases in biomedical ethics. When indicated by the instructor, cases should be prepared in advance. Class participation constitutes 10% of the course grade.

3. One bioethics essay (35% of the course grade). The purpose of this essay is to develop your ability to analyze ethical and ethico-religious issues with clarity and rigor. The essay is to be based on one of the cases in a list of cases to be distributed by the instructor.

Your essay must not exceed 7 pages in length (12 point type Palatino, double-spaced, 1 inch margins) including references or notes. The essay is due as a PDF document in the Bioethics Essay Drop Box on Blackboard no later than 4:00 PM, Friday, Nov. 6. Please place your name and class only on a separate page attached to the very end of the essay. This page does not count against the 7-page limit.

4. Participation on one of the teams in the class “Ethics Bowl” competition. The total team grade points will be divided equally among team members (unless team members choose unanimously to distribute the available grade points otherwise). This constitutes 15% of the course grade.

5. A take-home final examination (20% of the course grade). This essay should respond to the question “Does ethics need religion?” Whatever answer you offer should take into account all relevant course readings, especially those in Parts I and III of the course. Your essay must not exceed 6 pages in length (including references; 12 point Palatino type, double-spaced, 1 inch margins). The essay is due as a PDF document in the Take-Home Essay Drop Box on Blackboard no later than noon, Sunday, Dec. 6. Please place your name and class only on a separate page attached to the very end of the essay. This page does not count against the 6-page limit. As a precaution since some of you will be leaving following exams, email this exam essay to me as well: ronald.m.green@dartmouth.edu

[Note: Exceptional circumstances may require changes in this syllabus and revision of requirements and assignments.]
Honor principle

You should be aware of and conform to the Dartmouth Honor Code as expressed in the ORC. This means:

Exams: All work must be your own. At the time of the exam, you may not assist or receive assistance from any other student or use notes of any sort.

Papers: All research and writing should be done by you [If in doubt, see http://www.dartmouth.edu/~sources/]. All references and ideas are appropriately cited.

Accommodations for disabilities

I encourage students with disabilities, including “invisible” disabilities such as chronic diseases, learning disabilities, and psychiatric disabilities to discuss with me after class or during my office hours appropriate accommodations that might be helpful to them.

Late Policy

Bioethics essays and take-home final examination are due (as PDF documents) in the appropriate drop box on Blackboard. Extensions without late penalty will be granted only in exceptional circumstances (e.g. documented illness). Late assignments will be accepted, but a full letter grade will be deducted for each 24-hours that the assignment is late.

X-Hours:

The course X-hour is from 3-3:50 PM on Wednesdays. We will be using several of these X-hour time slots, as indicated below, for discussions, films, or visiting speakers. In some cases we may also use the X-hour for a voluntary additional discussion hour, which will be announced in advance. In the meanwhile, keep the X-hour free and available on: 9/30, 10/7, 10/28, 11/11 and 12/2.

Note: In the current schedule, there is no class meeting on Nov. 24, the Tuesday before Thanksgiving. In the event that the H1N1 flu epidemic seriously disrupts our schedule, however, we may need to use this date for a class meeting. I hope to be able to determine what we will be doing as early as possible to allow for making travel plans.
Topics and Reading Assignments:

I. Can Ethics be Religious?

Sept. 24 Introduction

A. Divine Command: For and Against

Sept. 29, Kierkegaard and the “Teleological Suspension of the Ethical”


*** Wed, Sept. 30, X-hour: Reserve for possible use for voluntary discussion***

B. The Conflict of Religious Ethics

Oct. 1, 6 The Debate over Homosexuality


***Video, Bill Moyers, “The New Holy War” (In class October 1)***

Oct. 8  The Challenge of Impaired Newborns

**Reading:** Munson, Ch. 10

***Video, “Dreams and Dilemmas” (In class)***

***Guest Lecturer: Dr. George A. Little (October 8th, in class)***

Oct. 13  Human Cloning and Gene Manipulation


***Guest Lecturer: Professor Everett Hamner (October 13th, in class)***

Oct. 15  Death and Dying: The Case of Terri Schiavo


II.  *Toward an Ethic of “Mere Reason”*

A. **Methods of Moral Reasoning**

Oct. 20, 22  Theoretical Options

**Reading:** Munson, “Introduction,” Part V (pp. 740-791); Ronald M. Green, *The Ethical Manager*, Chs. 2 and 3

B. **Applying Reason to Complex Biomedical Issues**

Oct. 27  Truth telling and Confidentiality in Medical Decision Making
***Oct. 28, (X-hour): Additional class meeting: Thomas Aquinas and Natural Law
Reading: St. Thomas Aquinas, Excerpts from the “Treatise on Law” (re-read carefully)***

***Oct. 28, (Evening): Optional Film and Discussion, “I’ve Loved You So Long” (Haldeman 41)***

Reading: Munson, Ch. 2.

Oct. 29 Issues in Death and Dying
Reading: Munson, Ch. 11 (re-read; pay special attention to the James Rachels article, pp. 720-723).

Nov. 3 The Abortion Controversy
Reading: Munson, Ch. 9; Paul B. Fowler, “The Bible Prohibits Abortion”; John M. Swomley, “The Bible Does Not Prohibit Abortion”; Michael Tooley, “Abortion and Infanticide”; Ronald M. Green, “Toward a Copernican Revolution in Our Thinking about Life’s Beginning and Life’s End”

Nov. 5 Therapeutic Cloning and Stem Cell Research

*** Friday, Nov. 6: Ethics essays due by 4:00 PM as a PDF in the Bioethics Essay Drop Box on Blackboard.***

Nov. 10, 12 Ethics Bowl Competitions
III. Exploring Human Nature, Human Destiny, and Re-exploring the Place of Religion in Ethics

4. Why Should I/We Be Moral?

**Nov. 17, 19** Humanism—and Beyond


***Film, “Triumph of the Will” (Wed., Nov. 18 X-hour)***

***No class on Tues., Nov. 24***

5. Why Are We So Often Immoral? How Can We Become Better?

**Dec. 1** Rediscovering Human Sinfulness and the Religious “Teleological Suspension of the Ethical”

**Reading:** Chris Bohjalian, *Midwives*; Francis Collins, *The Language of God*, pp. 219-224\(^B\); Ronald M. Green, “Enough Is Enough! Fear and Trembling is Not about Ethics”\(^B\)

***Wed, Dec. 2, X-hour: Reserve for possible use for voluntary discussion***

***Sunday, Dec. 6. Take-home exam essays due by noon as a PDF, in the Take-Home Essay Drop Box on Blackboard. Please send a copy to my email: ronald.m.green@dartmouth.edu***