Philosophy 321: Medical Ethics  
Spring Semester 2013  
Dr. Leah McClimans  
Flinn 207  
MW 4-5.15

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Course Material:  
*Clinical Ethics A Practical Approach to Ethical Decisions in Clinical Medicine* (CE)  
Coursepack (CP): Available at the Smarttext Kiosk 7-25 January 2013. The Smarttext Kiosk is located at 211 Main St, The Lofts. Ask for course pack #9.

Course Overview and Objectives:  
The aim of this course is three-pronged. In the first instance this course aims to introduce students to some key concerns in medical and clinical ethics. We will consider topics such as informed consent, patient autonomy, end-of-life decision-making, quality of life and elective reductions. Secondly, the course aims to provide students with some of the practical reasoning skills needed to solve the dilemmas and communication problems that characterize contemporary requests for clinical ethics consultation. Thirdly, the course aims to develop student leadership skills by educating students on the importance of leadership in high quality ethical health care.

Each topic, e.g. informed consent, patient autonomy, will be considered both in terms of its theoretical complexity and its practical application to clinical cases. Student leadership will be a theme running throughout the semester, we will first consider it as a theoretical construct and then practice it during our clinical ethics case consultations. We will also have prominent clinical ethicists coming to class (in person or via skype) to provide advice and support on clinical ethics leadership and case consultation.

The structure of the course is as follows:  
Most Monday classes will be spent examining medical ethics from a theoretical perspective, these classes will take the form of lectures. Most Wednesday classes will be spent learning the practical reasoning skills needed to solve the dilemmas and communication difficulties that characterize contemporary requests for clinical ethics consultations. These classes will take the form of mock Health Care Ethics Committee (HEC) meetings (more details below).

Learning Outcomes  
Upon successful completion of the course, students will be able to:

Recognize what constitutes an ethical concern in health care
Understand better the complexity and multi-dimensionality of medical ethical concerns

Understand the place of clinical ethics in health care

Develop the ability to reason through difficult medical/clinical ethical issues both orally, in the context of a group of their peers, and through written work.

Be better leaders.

Course Requirements:
There are 4 components to the grade for this class

1. Health Care Ethics Committee Meetings 45%
   a. Breakdown of HEC Meeting grades
      i. Attendance to meetings 5%
      ii. Feedback on consultation 15%
      iii. Knowledgeable participation 10%
      iv. Chair’s Leadership 15%

2. Two Response Papers 10% (5%, 5%)
3. Two Written Papers 30% (15%, 15%)
4. Final Exam 15%

Information and Structure of HEC Meetings: Most Wednesdays you will participate in a mock Health Care Ethics Committee (HEC) meeting. In preparation for these meetings you will be given a role (i.e. social worker, palliative care nurse, lower GI surgeon) that you will hold for the duration of the course. This is the specialty that you represent on the committee. It is your responsibility to become reasonably familiar with your role. Each week a new student will perform the leadership duties of the Chair of the HEC meeting. Everyone will have the opportunity to Chair a meeting (probably) two times. It is the Chair’s responsibility to run the meeting, e.g. take attendance, facilitate discussion and teamwork etc. and write up the committee’s recommendation.

Typically on Fridays I will email that coming week’s Chairs in the guise of a clinician requesting an ethics consultation. I will provide some details of my ethical problem/question. As the Chair you may respond via email by asking me one or two short questions in order to clarify the case. The Chair may decide to contact other members of his or her committee and ask them to do a small amount of research on a particular topic in advance of the HEC meeting (this is not required, but it is permissible).

On Wednesday the Chair will open the meeting by describing the case in question. During the meeting members of the HEC will discuss the case. By the end of the meeting the HEC should decide on a recommendation and suggested plan of action. It is the Chair’s responsibility to write this up (about 1-1.5 pages) and email it to me by noon on Friday. You will be given worksheets to help guide you through this process.

HEC Meetings and Course Outcomes
HEC meetings help students to achieve all the course outcomes. Through the weekly ethics consultation requests students develop a sense of what constitutes an ethical concern in health care. During their weekly deliberations with other HEC members they 1) come to understand better the complexity and multi-dimensionality of medical ethics concerns and 2) develop the practical reasoning skills needed to think through difficult ethical issues. The process of receiving a consultation request, meeting with other members of the HEC and writing up a recommendation provides an understanding of the role that clinical ethics plays in health care. Finally HEC meetings help students become better leaders by giving students opportunities to practice leadership (as the chair of their HEC meeting), by getting feedback on their leadership from their peers and through the opportunity to discuss leadership and ethical health care with prominent North American clinical ethicists (as well as to watch leadership roll modeled by these ethicists).

**Attendance:** You are allowed one consequence-free absence from your HEC meeting. But if you are chairing that week’s meeting and you fail to come to class, then your absence is not consequence-free. In this case you will receive a zero for your chair leadership evaluation. If, however, a genuine emergency arises and you cannot make a HEC meeting where you are scheduled to act as chair, contact me as soon as possible so I can make other contact me as soon as you reasonably can.

**Feedback on Consultation:** Well-organized HECs seek feedback on their consultation from those who referred cases to them. I will provide a rubric of the kinds of things you should think about during your consultation and then I (as the referring clinician) will provide written feedback.

**Knowledgeable Participation:** Every week non-chairs will receive a participation grade based on how well they engage with the committee’s deliberation. Every week each committee member is expected to make a significant contribution to the meeting. This means that you must speak more than once during every meeting,

**Chair Leadership Critique:** Chairs are the leaders of the HEC meeting. I provide a questionnaire for the leadership critique and every week chairs will receive a peer review of their leadership based on this questionnaire. The chair’s leadership critique grade will be based on this peer review and my own assessment.

**Response Papers:** In these assignments you will be asked to provide a short (1-2) page response to a question of my choosing. The first response paper will ask you to reflect on an aspect of leadership; the second response paper will ask you to answer a question drawn from one of our theoretical readings. These assignments are designed to get you warmed for writing the more formal papers in the second half of the semester.

**Papers:** You will be assigned two, approximately 1600 word (5 page double-spaced, Times Roman 12 point font) papers.
Paper 1: You will have a choice of topics drawn from the more theoretical readings that we discuss on Mondays. These papers are not ‘research’ papers, i.e. I do not require you to do research outside of our class readings.

Paper 2: This is a reflection paper. You will be asked to reflect on the HEC meetings that you’ve participated in and discuss the role that leadership plays or can play in the context of some of the cases you discussed.

Final Exam: The final exam will consist of mini-essay questions. These questions will come from our Monday readings although you may certainly use anything you learned during our HEC meetings to augment your answers. This exam is not cumulative.

Written Assignments and Course Outcomes
The papers and final exam help students to achieve three of the courses learning outcomes. Firstly, written assignments help students understand the complexity and multi-dimensionality of medical ethics by asking them to analyze the theoretical implications of these issues. Secondly, written work, especially the response paper, Paper 1 and the final exam help students develop their ability to reason through difficult ethical issues by asking them to articulate those reasons formally. Thirdly, Paper 2 helps students to become better leaders by asking them to reflect on the leadership dimension of their weekly case consultations.

Grading Scheme:

A = 100-90% = excellent, extraordinary, exceptional, exemplary
B+ = 89-85% = very good, commendable, admirable, praiseworthy
B = 84-80% = good, solid, shows promise
C+ = 79-75% = adequate, acceptable, ok
C = 74-70% = passable, but weak
D+ = 69-65% = very poor, unsatisfactory
D = 64-60% = marginal, seriously flawed
below D = failure

Class Conduct & Policies:

1. All cell phones and pagers are to be turned off or silenced during class (not on vibrate). All cell phones are to be put away out of view during class; there is no text messaging, web browsing, etc., during class. There will be no eating during class time. Failure to adhere to these classroom rules may result in your being dismissed from class and/or academic penalty.
2. If you fall asleep during class, you will be given one warning after which you will be asked to leave class and your participation will not be counted for that day (on HEC meeting days this means that you will also receive a zero for ‘knowledgeable participation’ and ‘consultation feedback’).
3. Assignments and examination work are expected to be the sole effort of the student submitting the work. Students are expected to follow the University of South Carolina Honor Code and should expect that every instance of a suspected
violation will be reported. Students found responsible for violations of the Code will be subject to academic penalties under the Code in addition to whatever disciplinary sanctions are applied. Cheating on a test or copying someone else’s work, will result in a 0 for the work, possibly a grade of F in the course, and, in accordance with University policy, be referred to the University Committee for Academic Responsibility and may result in expulsion from the University.

4. If you find the readings for this course difficult; please come to discuss difficulties me early and often. I am here to help you.

5. Papers are due at the beginning of class (by 4.05pm) or before class via email. If you are absent when an assignment is due, you must have submitted the assignment prior to the due date to receive full credit. If an assignment is not handed in on time, even by a minute, then it is late. Points are taken off as follows: Up to 24 hours from the due date = -10 points; 24 to 48 hours late = -20 points; 48 to 72 hours late = -30 points; More than 72 hours late = -50 points. However, late assignments will not be accepted if they have already been graded and returned to the other students. Paper extensions will only be granted in the event of a documented good reason, for instance, severe illness, family emergencies or other unavoidable events including dangerous weather conditions and car accidents.

6. Students are expected to attend each scheduled class meeting, to be on time, and to be prepared for each class session. The University attendance policy specifies that students may miss up to 3 class meetings (10% of class time) without penalty. (Only one of those absences can occur on a HEC meeting day.) The 4th total absence will result in a grade penalty of one letter grade. The 5th absence will result in a deduction of 2 letter grades.

7. Students who are absent from any final examination will be given the grade of F on the course if they have not offered an excuse acceptable to the instructor. Re-examinations for the purpose of removing an F or raising a grade are not permitted. If the absence is excused, students will be assigned a grade of I, and may complete the course under the conditions specified by the instructor in the "Assignment of Incomplete Grade" form. A student with excused absence from a final examination in one semester may take the deferred examination at the next regular examination period provided the examination is taken at the convenience of the professor. The examination must be taken within one calendar year from the time the absence was incurred. Deferred examinations will be granted only in case of absence certified as unavoidable because of documented illness or other cause, rendering attendance at final examinations impossible.

8. Reasonable accommodations are available for students with a documented disability. If you have a disability and may need accommodations to fully participate in this class, contact the Office of Student Disability Services: 777-6142, TDD 777-6744, email sasds@mailbox.sc.edu, or stop by LeConte College Room 112A. All accommodations must be approved through the Office of Student Disability Services.

9. Amendments and changes to the syllabus, including evaluation and grading mechanisms, are possible. The instructor must initiate any changes. Changes to the grading and evaluation scheme must be voted on by the entire class and
approved only with unanimous vote of all students present in class on the day the issue is decided. The lecture schedule and reading assignments (daily schedule) will not require a vote and may be altered at the instructor’s discretion. Grading changes that unilaterally and equitably improve all students’ grades will not require a vote. Once approved, amendments will be distributed in writing to all students via Blackboard.