Jewish Medical Ethics  
PHL 141  
American Jewish University Campus in Israel  
Young Judaea Year Course  

This course aims to take contemporary ethical issues arising from technological and medical advances, and study them from an abstract philosophical approach. The aim is not to give any practical ‘rulings’ on these matters, but rather to stimulate and encourage philosophical thought about these issues through the eyes of traditional Jewish sources and contemporary texts. We will look at issues such as reproductive technologies, abortion, organ donation and receipt, genetic screening, euthanasia and other issues.

Students will be evaluated based on quizzes (15%), a mid-term paper in which the students will explore a medical dilemma not addressed in class while utilizing the theories and concepts learned (40%) a final exam (30%), and attendance, participation and class preparation (15%).

Class Sessions and Readings:

Class 1  
Introduction

- Steinberg, Avraham, “Medical Ethics in an Interreligious Comparison: Judaism,” Symposium of Medicine and Ethics (EthikMed), Supplement 1, S112-S115, 1998

Class 2  
When Does Life Begin and Abortion

- Cornelia Dean, "Telling the Stories behind Abortions", New York Times November 6, 2007
- Traditional sources on Abortion
- "Oklahoma is sued over required Ultrasounds for Abortions", The New York Times, October 11, 2008

Class 3  
Procreation and Contraception

- Traditional sources on Procreation and Contraception
- Fred Rosner, Contraception
- Elliot Dorf, Preventing Pregnancy

Class 4  
Fertility Treatment

- Yardena Cope-Yossef, "Fertility Treatment – How Far?"
- Mordechai Halperin, "In-Vitro Fertilization, Insemination and Egg-Donation" Assia–Jewish Medical Ethics, 1988
- Wasting Sperm
- Deborah Allen, "Whose Baby Is It?" 2002
• Joseph Gitlin, Surrogacy

Class 5
Genetic Testing

• Danirl Eisenberg, "Genetic Screening for Breast Cancer Genes", Aish.com, 1995
• "Screening for Breast Cancer", The Journal of Haoacha
• Tamar Traubman, "Tay-Sachs, the Jewish Disease,' almost eradicated", Haaretz, January 18, 2005.

Class 6
Designer Babies

• Richard Grazi & Joel Wolowelsky, "Sex Selection and Halakhic Ethics: A Contemporary Discussion," Tradition
• Jodi Piscott, My Sister's Keeper, Washington Square Press, NY 2004
• Shaoni Bhattacharya, "Five "designer babies" created for stem cells," The New Scientist, May 5, 2004
• "Hadassah launches pro stem cell lobbying" The Jerusalem Post, February 24, 2005.

Class 7
AIDS and Transgender in Halacha

• Fred Rosner, "AIDS: A Jewish View" Biomedical Ethics and Jewish Law
• Rebecca Rosengerg, " University is Rattled by Transgender Prof," New York Post, September 8, 2008.

Class 8
Definition of Death and Euthanasia

• "When The Lord Takes Away" – Rabbinic sources on the definition of death
• Fred Rosener, "Euthanasia"
• "Extinguishing The Candle", Rabbinic sources on euthanasia.

Class 9
Organ Donation

• Julie Gruenberg, "Reluctance to donate organs persists, despite new views", Jewish News Weekly.
• Mathe Wagner, "Chabad Rabbi who aided Chernobyl children dies," The Jerusalem Post, September 22, 2008
• Neta Sela, "Ultra Orthodox rabbis slam organ donation bill," Ynet.com, March 27, 2008
• Michele Chabin, "Organ Donation: Legal, But Still Controversial," The Jewish Week, September 30, 2008
Class 10
Medical Data from Nazi Experiments

- Baruch Cohen, "The Ethics Of Using Medical Data From Nazi Experiments"

Class 11
Final and Closing Remarks

Mid-Term Project - A written paper (5 -8 pages, 12 font, 1.5 spaced, bibliography) due January 12th. In this paper, students are expected to discuss the Jewish ethical concerns relating to a medical dilemma not addressed in the syllabus through an evaluation of both primary and secondary sources. Possible topics include, but are not limited to the following: cosmetic surgery, conjoined twins, cost of health care, drug addiction, distribution of scarce medical resources, triage, informed consent, malpractice, and treatment of the mentally ill.

Suggested Bibliography


“Advance Directive for HealthCare,” State of New Mexico


Cytron, Barry D., and Schwartz, Earl, When Life is in the Balance: Life and Death Decisions in Light of the Jewish Tradition, United Synagogue of Conservative Judaism Department of Youth Activities, New York, 1986


Dorff, Elliot N., Matters of Life and Death: A Jewish Approach to Modern Medical Ethics, Jewish Publication Society, Philadelphia and Jerusalem, 1998


Halperin, M. and Fink, D, editors – The Proceedings of the First International Colloquium: Medicine, Ethics, and Jewish Law, July, 1993, Dr. Falk Schlesinger Institute for Medical Halachic Research at Shaare Zedek Medical Center, Jerusalem, 1996

Halperin, Mordechai, Fink, D., and Glick, Shimon, editors, Assia – Jewish Medical Ethics, Dr. Falk Schlessinger Institute for Medical-Halachic Research at Shaarey Zedek Medical Center, Jerusalem, 1988, Vol. 1, No. 1
“Health Care: It Takes a Hevrah,” Responsum from the Conservative Movement’s Committee on Jewish Law and Standards

“Heart Transplants in Israel,” Decision of the Chief Rabbinate Council of Israel


Jacob, Walter, and Zemer, Moshe, editors, Death and Euthanasia in Jewish Law: Essays and Responsa, Freehof Institute of Progressive Halacha, Rodef Shalom Press, Pittsburgh and Tel Aviv, 1995


“Jewish Medical Directives for Health Care,” The Committee on Jewish Law and Standards, The Rabbinical Assembly


Kennedy, Ian, and Grubb, Andrew, Medical Law: Text and Materials, Butterworths Law, New Zealand, 1994


“Living Will,” http://www.ccernet.org/resp


“Organs for Sale? With So Many People in Need of Organs, Why Can’t They Buy Them?” ABC News.com, August 8, 2004


Rosner, Fred, and Bleich, J. David, Jewish Bioethics, Hebrew Publishing Co., Brooklyn, 1979

Rosner, Fred, Biomedical Ethics and Jewish Law, Ktav Publishing House Inc., Hoboken, 2001


Steinberg, Avraham, “Medical Ethics in an Interreligious Comparison: Judaism,” Symposium of Medicine and Ethics (EthikMed), Supplement 1, S112-S115, 1998

“Telling the Truth to Terminal Patients,” Moment Magazine, October 1992, pp. 22-23


“The Halachic Living Will,” Agudath Israel of America


“When is Abortion Permitted?” http://www.ccarnet.org/resp/


Internet Sites:

http://www.ama-assn.org

http://www.bioethics.com/

http://www.ccarnet.org/resp/

http://www.darchenoam.org/ethics/bioethics/

http://www.hods.org/

http://www.jlaw.com/Articles

http://www.medethics.org.il/

http://www.organdonor.gov/

http://www.organdonor.gov/

http://www.pathcom.com/~mjyeres/medethic.htm