Summer, 2014

Instructor: Dylan M. Smith, Ph.D., Associate Professor of Preventive Medicine, Center for Medical Humanities, Compassionate Care, and Bioethics.

Office: HSC Level 3 Rm 080G. E-mail: Dylan.M.Smith@Stonybrook.edu Phone: 638-2021

Office hours: Mondays, 4-6 or by appointment. I will work with anyone’s schedule to be available, including during evening hours if needed. Right before class is often a convenient time.

Meeting time and place: Mondays, Tuesdays, and Wednesdays, from 6-9pm, Preventive Medicine Conference Room (Level 3-067, HSC).

Course description and format:

The formal study of bioethics attempts to define ethical courses of action in a world ever increasing in complexity. But in day to day practice, ethical outcomes are expressed through the individual decisions—and resulting actions—of human agents. How do people form these judgments? How do these judgments, in turn, affect behavior in ethical domains? We will explore current scientific approaches to these questions with several areas of emphasis, including a) situational (as opposed to individual) determinants of ethical behavior, b) cognitive and neuroscientific approaches to understanding judgment and decision making in ethical domains, and c) empirical approaches to quantifying the effects of ethically based policy decisions. See course schedule below for more details.

Each class, I will assign several readings, which we will discuss, as a group, in the next class. I may also supplement these discussions with some lecture material, though the primary class activity will always be group discussion. Students will write brief (one to two-page) responses to these readings and submit them to me prior to class. These responses will help frame the discussion, so I especially encourage students to frame these responses as questions they would like to see elaborated upon during discussion.

Grading:

Grades will be based on weekly responses to readings and class participation (33%) a midterm essay (5-7 pages, double spaced, 33%) and a final essay (5-7 pages, double spaced, 33%).

Weekly responses must be received by 10am on the day of the class meeting. Responses that are received on time, are clearly written, and provide thoughtful comments or questions will receive full credit (8 points). Responses that are cursory, superficial, or poorly written will receive half credit (4 points). Weekly responses received after 10am but before class time will receive a 4 point deduction. Responses will not be accepted after class time. Given the summer format with several classes in a week, I will make the entire week’s readings available ahead of time, allowing you to use the extra days between Wednesday and the following Monday to “get ahead” on the week’s assignments.
There are 11 responses due over the course, but I will drop the lowest grade so only 10 will count, for a total of 80 possible points (yes, this means you could skip one, if you wanted, without affecting your grade).

**Class participation:** I will also grade each student on class participation—that is, for participation in group discussion. I will provide this grade twice, at mid term, and at the end. Grading will be out of 10 possible points at each time point (so 20 total). Students who make regular contributions to class discussion will receive full credit. Students who rarely make contributions and/or spend class time on the internet can expect low participation grades.

The two essays (mid-term and final) are each worth 100 points. Essays received after their respective due dates will receive a 5 point penalty for each day late.

**Blackboard:** For this course, I use the Blackboard educational platform for all assignments and grading. All written work (that is, weekly responses and essays) must be submitted through the site, no exceptions. Enrolled Stony Brook students automatically have access to this course through the following website: [https://blackboard.stonybrook.edu](https://blackboard.stonybrook.edu). Use your netid and password to logon.

**Attendance policy:**

This is a reading/discussion based seminar. There is no way to actively engage the course material without attending class and participating in the discussion. Therefore, attendance is mandatory. Students who miss class will not receive credit for that week’s response and will receive a proportional deduction to their participation grade. However, I realize that things happen. Therefore, on up to 2 occasions, a student who must miss class can still receive full credit for the response and avoid the deduction for participation if the response to that week’s reading is received on time. After 2 missed classes, students cannot receive credit for any additional missed classes.

**Policy on academic honesty:**

Any student caught engaging in plagiarism, either with respect to other students or any other existing material, will be dismissed from the course with a failing grade, and will be subject to University sanctions (i.e., expulsion). No exceptions will be made. I will discuss this further in class to ensure there is no confusion about what constitutes plagiarism. If there is ANY doubt in your mind whether something you are doing constitutes plagiarism, don’t do it. Or, simply contact me before turning in your assignment so we can discuss the matter.
Course Schedule, Summer, 2014

Part I: The power of the situation: implications for ethical behavior

5/27 Course introduction
5/28 Milgram and obedience to authority part I
6/2 Milgram and obedience to authority part I
6/3 Zimbardo on situational determinants of (un)ethical behavior part I
6/4 Zimbardo on situational determinants of (un)ethical behavior part II
6/9 Zimbardo on situational determinants of (un)ethical behavior part III Essay #1 assigned
6/10 Intergroup processes (Sherif, The Robbers Cave study)

Part II: The psychology of ethical decision making

6/11 Prejudice, discrimination, and disparities in health care / Essay #1 TOPIC DUE for approval
6/16 NO CLASS; Essay #1 due by 9pm
6/17 Biases in judgment and implicit motivation / Research methods Part 1
6/18 Moral judgment and decision making / neuroethics

Part III: Current topics in empirical bioethics

6/23 Groupthink / Research methods Part 2: Research ethics / Essay #2 assigned
6/24 Affective forecasting errors as challenges to autonomy / Living wills
6/25 Ethics and Personality / Essay #2 TOPIC DUE for approval
7/1 Open; topic TBD
7/2 Essay #2 due by 12pm