HCB598: ROLE OF VIRTUE ETHICS IN MEDICINE

Winter, 2015

Weekday Evenings (M-F), 6:00-8:45 p.m., HSC L3-067

Course Director, Dr. Craig C. Malbon

craig.malbon@stonybrook.edu; 631-444-3077

Description

Aristotle’s Nicomachean Ethics and the role virtue ethics are central to many religious traditions including Buddhism, Christianity, Confucianism, and the philosophical traditions. Key virtues include honesty, courage, generosity, prudence, justice, compassion, benevolence, loyalty, and hospitality. The course will explore real and potential role of virtue on the development of virtuous physicians. The courses texts offer two diametrically opposed views on the role of virtue in medicine, i.e., one is that virtue can be channeled into training of medical professionals, whereas the other is that bioethics has extracted virtue from medicine. Through readings, documentaries, dialogue and active leadership of sessions by students, the course will interrogate the claims as well as possibilities for a role of virtue in medicine. This course includes a brief practicum: students will be asked to pick two virtues to model in their own lives, following the guidelines outlined by the Greeks (e.g., Aristotle) and more contemporary adherents (e.g., Benjamin Franklin).

Class structure and operation

Class will meet over the Winter Break intersession. Well-informed, active discussion including all members of the class is the very essence of the course. Class members will be asked to volunteer to act as a discussion leader for either the position “for” or “against” the topic for one session. Attendance is a must, as is prior reading in advance of the course. Students should set aside adequate time to read and reflect on the readings before class. Crafting a thoughtful, respectful position on each nightly topic will be essential for good class discussion.

Grading of course performance

Grading of the course breaks down as follows:

30%: Attendance/Participation Grade---you start with an “A+”

1 missed class = A for this section.
2 missed classes = B for this section.
3 missed classes = C for this section.
4 missed classes = D for this section

Plus the best two scores (75% as aggregate) of the three brief utrum papers submitted.
35%: Utrum paper 1 (on *Virtue Ethics as a Paradigm for One’s Living*)
35%: Utrum paper 2 (on *Application of One Virtue to Medicine*)
35%: Utrum paper 3 (on *Application of a Second Virtue to Medicine*)

Please note: all utrums are to be at least 3, but not more than 5, pages in length.

**Academic honesty**

In keeping with the best traditions of learning, cheating and/or plagiarism are strictly to be avoided. Ideas that you make use of from other sources require acknowledgement. Use of Internet-only sources is to be avoided and use of simple citations to websites is not acceptable. Even in the event that you are paraphrasing someone else’s views, please be sure to provide the source.

**Books/readings will be on hand for loan or purchase from the course instructor to enable reading in advance of each class session:**


**I. What are Virtues? What Can Aristotle Teach Us Today?**

**Tuesday January 06, 2015:** Introduction to course by Prof. Craig Malbon

Readings: Marcum chapter 1: Medicine’s Crisis

Film: *Lie to Me* (season 1, episode 1, Are We Ever Truly Virtuous in Our Behavior?)

**II. Virtue Theory in the Making?**

**Wednesday January 07, 2015:** Traditional and Contemporary Virtue Theories
Readings: Marcum chapter 2
Film: The Doctor with William Hurt (2004)

III. Virtue and Vices: A More Complete Story?

Thursday January 08, 2015: The Intellectual, Ethical, and Theological Basis of Virtues & Vices
Readings: Marcum chapter 3
Film: Except from House (season 6, episode 4, Death of a Dictator)

IV. Dead Germans and Other Philosophers, Ethics in Real Time

Friday January 09, 2015: How Does One “Do” Ethics as a Profession?
Readings: Koch chapter 1
Film: Patch Adams with Robin Williams (2002)

V. Is There a “Supply-Side” Ethics at Work?

Monday January 12, 2015: How Do We Approach Organ Donations and “Lifeboat” Ethics
Readings: Koch chapters 3 and 4
Guest: Dr. Jack Coulehan, MD, MPH, Professor, Department of Preventive Medicine, SBU SOM

1st utrum paper is due!

VI. The Politics of Bioethics: Are They Ethical?

Tuesday January 13, 2015: Do We Need “Bio”-Ethics, or Is There Simply a Need for Ethics and Virtue?
Reading: Koch chapter 5
Film: House (season 1, episode 9, The DNR)

VII. Bioethics: Is it a Hybrid or a Half Breed?

Wednesday January 14, 2015: Taking off the Gloves: Peter Singer versus Harriet McBryde Johnson
Readings:       Koch chapters 6 and 7
Film:           *Dirty Pretty Things* with Audrey Tautou (2011)

**VIII. The Trials & Tribulations of Genetics and Research**

**Thursday January 15, 2015:** Is There Virtue in “Being All that You Can Be” through Genetics?

Readings:       Koch chapter 8
Film:           *House* (season 3, episode 3, Informed Consent?)

**IX. Free Will and Medicine**

**Friday January 16, 2015:** Do Paternalism and Autonomy Square Off?

Readings:       Koch chapter 9
Guest:           Kevin L. Zacharoff, MD, FACIP, FACPE, FAAP
Film:           *Wit* with Emma Thompson (2001)

**X. Is Caring a Virtue?**

**Monday January 19, 2015:** Does Caring for Fellow Human Beings Count as a Virtue or Duty?

Readings:       Marcum chapter 4
Film:           *Les Invasions Barbares* with Rémy Girad (2011)

**XI. Prudent Love & Impudent Lovelessness**

**Tuesday January 20, 2015:** Oaths versus Covenants versus Contracts, Where Is the Love?

Readings:       Marcum chapter 5
Film:           *House* (season 1, episode 18, Babies & Bathwater)

*2nd utrum paper is due!*
XII. Is the Solution a Virtuous Physician?

Wednesday January 21, 2015: Medicine is in Crisis, but Is Virtue Ethics a Solution?

Readings: Marcum chapters 6 and 7

Film: *Doctors of the Dark Side*, a documentary of Martha Davis (2011)

XIII. Virtuous Medicine: A New Paradigm or Pipe Dream?

Thursday January 23, 2015: What Virtue Ethics Informs Us about Medicine as a Profession?

Readings: Koch chapter 10


XV. Dinner Discussion & VE Practicum Outcomes?

Friday January 24, 2015: Assessing Our Own Ability to Live Lives of Virtue over Sushi!

@ 6:00 PM, SUSHI DOMO RESTAURANT (PROFESSOR’S TREAT)

Address: 180 New York 25A, Setauket- East Setauket, NY 11733
Phone: (631) 751-2299
Hours: Open today · 11:30 am – 10:00 pm

3rd *utrum* paper is due at the conclusion of the last class (dinner class)!