

FSHD/PHIL 347: NEUROETHICS

Summer 2021 (asynchronous online) | 7 Week 1: May 17-Jul 2

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Course Description

Suppose we could develop a pill that made people less aggressive, more empathic and otherwise more likely to do the morally right thing. Should we? If so, should people be required to take it? Is the answer different for criminal offenders? What about a drug that allowed you to selectively “delete” troubling memories? Should such a drug be widely available? Would you take it?

Questions like these have an air of science fiction. But due to recent advances in neuroscience, they are increasingly pressing. Soon, we may be able to morally and cognitively enhance human beings in some of the ways just mentioned. Indeed, we are already able to alter the psychology of individuals and the population at large through the use of psychoactive medications, prenatal screening and genetic engineering.

Neuroethics is the area of moral philosophy that examines the ethical questions that arise in light of our ever-advancing neuroscientific know-how. In this course, we will combine age-old philosophical tools of moral argument with connect cutting-edge research to try to understand what might be possible for us and, importantly, what we should do about it.

Learning objectives

During the course, students will grapple with ethical questions surrounding neuroscientific advances and cultivate their own beliefs about policy-level and individual decisions. You will read philosophical and scientific texts, contrasting various influential positions on these topics.

Learning outcomes

Upon completion of the course, students will be able to compare various approaches to neuroethical policy, define related terms and apply these ideas to real world problems. You will demonstrate expertise on neuroethical tools and topics by writing a comprehensive final paper.

Course Format and Materials

This course will be delivered completely online through the University of Arizona’s D2L platform. It is an asynchronous course, meaning there are no scheduled meetings of any kind.

Discussions will take place on D2L discussion boards. Lectures will be delivered in the form of lecture videos. There will be at least one lecture video (usually more) for each week of the course. You will be accountable for all the material covered in lecture videos, which will sometimes go beyond what is found in the assigned texts.

You do not need to purchase a text for this course. All readings will be posted on D2L. Sometimes, I’ll assign materials in other formats (e.g., podcasts, YouTube videos, etc.). These will also be linked on D2L. If any of these formats pose accessibility issues, please contact me as soon as possible to find a solution.

Coursework

You will be graded on four types of assignments in this course.

Weekly Reading Quizzes | 15 points

You will have a reading comprehension quiz due every Tuesday at 11:59 pm. You will have 30 minutes to answer six multiple choice questions worth .5 points each. If you've read the material and watched the lecture videos carefully, these quizzes should not be a problem. Your lowest quiz grade will be dropped.

Discussion Posts | 24 points

You will have two discussion assignments due every Wednesday at 11:59 pm. Depending on how you choose to meet the discussion requirements for a particular week, you may also have a post (or two) due Friday at 11:59 pm. More information on the format and expectations for discussion posts will be provided in another document.

Exams | 36 points

You will have an exam due every two weeks, on Sunday at 11:59 pm. Each exam covers one unit's worth of material. They are not cumulative. You will have 90 minutes to answer eight multiple choice questions (worth .5 points each) and two written response questions (worth 4 points each).

Paper | 25 points

You will write a final paper of at least 1,000 words in which you articulate and defend an answer to one of the philosophical questions discussed in the course. The paper is due June 30 at 11:59pm. I encourage you to submit an early draft of your paper so that I can provide feedback. Should you wish to do so, your draft is due two weeks before the paper deadline (June 16 at 11:59pm).

Grading

There are ~25 points available in each Unit and 100 points available in the course. This means it's easy to check how you're doing in the course as we go by adding up the points you've earned.

The grading scheme is as follows:

And here is how the grading breaks down:

≥90 = A	Quizzes (6 x 3 points each, lowest dropped)	15
89-80 = B	Discussions (12 x 2 points each)	24
79-70 = C	Exams (3 x 12 points each)	36
69-60 = D	Paper	25
59-0 = E	Total	100

Schedule

Each week, you are responsible for reviewing the material listed below. You are also responsible for watching the lecture video(s) associated with each week. As indicated above, you will also have two discussion assignments due every week and a quiz due every Tuesday.

Unit 1: Neuroethics & Enhancement

Week 1: Intro to Neuroethics (May 17-23)

1. Syllabus
2. Discussion Post Guidelines
3. Farah, "Neuroethics: An Overview"

Week 2: Enhancement (May 24-30)

1. Buchanan, "Breathless Optimism, Hysterical Loathing"
 2. Sandel, "The Case Against Perfection"
 3. Kamm, "Is there a problem with enhancement?"
- Unit 1 Exam Due May 30 at 11:59 pm.*

Unit 2: Justice and Society

Week 3: Moral Enhancement (May 31-June 6)

1. Savulescu, "Pills That Improve Morality" (TED Talk)
2. Savulescu & Persson, "Moral Enhancement"
3. Harris, "Moral Enhancement and Moral Freedom"
4. Savulescu & Persson, "Moral Enhancement, Freedom and the God Machine" (§11-15)

Week 4: Criminal Justice (June 7-13)

1. Choy, et al., "Benign Biological Interventions to Reduce Offending"
 2. "Closer look at transcranial direct stimulation" (TV news report)
 3. Douglas, "Criminal Rehabilitation Through Medical Intervention" (§§1-3)
- Unit 2 Exam Due June 13 at 11:59pm.*

Unit 3: Living Well

Week 5: Antidepressants (June 14-20)

1. Kramer, *Listening to Prozac* excerpt
2. Kramer, "The Valorization of Sadness"
3. Hoffman, "Treating Yourself as an Object"
4. Kraemer "Authenticity Anyone?"

Optional Paper Draft Due: June 16 at 11:59pm

Week 6: Neurodiversity & Cognitive Disability (June 21-27)

1. Brownlow, "Re-presenting Autism"
 2. "Love on the Spectrum" (show trailer)
 3. Malek, "Deciding against Disability"
 4. "Don't Screen Us Out" (advocacy video)
 5. Zhang "The Last Children of Down Syndrome"
- Unit 3 Exam Due June 27 at 11:59pm.*

Paper due: June 30 at 11:59pm

Course Policies

Late Work

Late submissions of discussion posts will be accepted with a penalty of .5 points per day. Late papers will not be accepted, because they are due so near to the end of the semester. You must complete exams and quizzes within the stated completion period.

If you are worried you will not be able to complete an assignment on time due to serious personal or health issues, please let me know *in advance of the assignment's due date* and we can try to work out a fair accommodation. You do not need to give me any details. You just need to say that you need a little extra time.

Grade Contestation

Should you wish to appeal a grade on an assignment, you must send me an email in which you explain in writing why you believe I've made a mistake and you deserve a different grade. (Note that grades may go up or down as result of the appeals process.) Your final grade is a function of the points you earn throughout the semester by completing assignments. Any and all contestations must take the form of assignment contestation.

Email

Don't hesitate to shoot me an email if you want to set up a meeting or have comments and questions about what's going on in the course. But please keep the following in mind:

- ◆ Please give me at least 24 hours to reply during the week and 48 hours over the weekend. After that, feel free to bug me; I won't be offended.
- ◆ Before sending me an email, please check the syllabus and related course documents to see if it contains the information you're after.
- ◆ I won't usually provide in-depth answers to substantive philosophical questions via email. It just takes too long and usually we'd both be better off if we talked it through face-to-face. If you have such a question, just let me know so we can find a good time to chat on Zoom.

Plagiarism

Plagiarism is clearly and strictly prohibited in our [University's Code of Academic Integrity](#) and will not be tolerated in this course. To plagiarize is to take another person's original work and pass it off as your own. It is, in essence, a form of intellectual theft. If you'd like to read more about counts as plagiarism, you can review [this helpful UA Library resource](#).

Should it be determined that any of your work in this course is plagiarized, you will most likely receive a zero on the assignment in question. More serious or repeated offenses may result in more serious disciplinary measures, such as failure or a recommendation of expulsion.

Finally, note that if you decide to take this course, you are agreeing to submit your work online, when so instructed, to a plagiarism-prevention program called TurnItIn, which checks your submissions for similarity to sources available online and a large database of student work.

Writing Intensive Course

This course is a writing intensive Tier Two General Education course. That means you will write a minimum of 2500 words. This writing requirement comprises discussion assignments and the paper. It also means you have the opportunity to revise and resubmit the paper.

Other Resources

The following links may be of use to students experiencing a variety of personal difficulties:

<p>Campus Health Campus Health provides quality medical and mental health care services through virtual and in-person care.</p>	<p>Counseling and Psych Services (CAPS) CAPS provides mental health care, including short-term counseling services.</p>
<p>The Dean of Students Office's Student Assistance Program Student Assistance helps students manage crises, life traumas, and other barriers that impede success.</p>	<p>Survivor Advocacy Program The Survivor Advocacy Program provides confidential support and advocacy services to student survivors of sexual and gender-based violence. The Program can also advise students about relevant non-UA resources available within the local community for support.</p>

For help with technical difficulties, contact UA's [D2L Consulting](#) desk or [IT Support Center](#).

University Course Policies

Here are the University's standard course policies, also available [here](#):

Absence and class participation The UA's policy concerning Class Attendance, Participation, and Administrative Drops is available [here](#).

[The UA policy regarding absences for any sincerely held religious belief, observance or practice](#) will be accommodated where reasonable.

Absences for groups of more than three students that are pre-approved by the UA Dean of Students (or Dean Designee) will be honored. See [here](#).

Threatening Behavior Policy

The UA Threatening Behavior by Students Policy prohibits threats of physical harm to any member of the University community, including to oneself. See [here](#).

Accessibility & Accommodations

At the University of Arizona we strive to make learning experiences as accessible as possible. If you anticipate or experience physical or academic barriers based on disability or pregnancy, you are welcome to let me know so that we can discuss options. You are also encouraged to contact Disability Resources (520) 621-3268 to explore reasonable accommodation.

If our class meets at a campus location, please be aware that the accessible table and chairs in this room should remain available for students who find that standard classroom seating is not usable. See [here](#).

Code of Academic Integrity

Students are encouraged to share intellectual views and discuss freely the principles and applications of course materials. However, graded work/exercises must be the product of independent effort unless otherwise instructed. Students are expected to adhere to the [UA Code of Academic Integrity](#) as described in the UA General Catalog. See more resources [here](#).

Nondiscrimination and Anti-Harassment Policy

The University of Arizona is committed to creating and maintaining an environment free of discrimination. In support of this commitment, the University prohibits discrimination, including harassment and retaliation, based on a protected classification, including race, color, religion, sex, national origin, age, disability, veteran status, sexual orientation, gender identity, or genetic information. For more information, including how to report a concern, please see [here](#).

Subject to Change Statement

Information contained in the course syllabus, other than the grade and absence policy, may be subject to change with advance notice, as deemed appropriate by the instructor; see [here](#).