Introduction for the Piedmont Project. Thanks to the Piedmont Project, an undergraduate course in religious bioethics has been modified to address sustainability issues, primarily the ethics of environmental health. The course would give students an opportunity to apply ethical reasoning and comparative analysis to a series of timely topics in medical ethics and environmental health. Accordingly, the religious bioethics syllabus was expanded to cover several aspects of sustainability. Students in the course would learn about the meaning of sustainability, the connections between medical ethics and sustainability, and the reasons and mechanisms for making health care institutions more sustainable. In addition, through the Piedmont workshop and subsequent research, I have been able to appreciate and utilize religious writings on specific sustainability topics. I had originally planned for the syllabus to consider several environmental health (e.g., endocrine-disrupting chemicals) and comparative methodology (e.g., informed consent and environmental right-to-know) topics that are relevant to both medical ethics and sustainability. However, since several topics lack high-quality religious writings to support stand-alone curricular modules, such topics will be covered by lectures and class exercises. Nonetheless, the syllabus has been expanded significantly to cover sustainability at several levels. To exemplify the relationship between medical ethics and sustainability, the course shows how religious thought struggles with both individual health risks and institutional management of environmental health risks. To demonstrate the diversity of religious thinking on sustainability at the global level, the course will also focus on religious thought and programming on climate change. The course will conclude with topics in biomedical technologies (i.e., reproductive technologies and organ transplantation) that have unexplored implications for sustainability. Finally, students will be encouraged to integrate medical ethics and sustainability in their seminar papers.

Bioethics, Sustainability, and Religious Thought

Fall 2010
Prof. Hillel Gray

Course Description

Students in this course will analyze and critique religious approaches to contemporary problems in bioethics and sustainable environmental health. The course tackles problems in medical ethics that focus on individuals, such as reproductive technologies, controversial surgeries, and end-of-life care. The course also examines broader issues of bioethics and sustainability, including distributive justice, prevention-oriented policies, global climate change, and environmental health.

This course will concentrate on methodologies and texts in the application of Jewish law to medical and environmental ethics. Jewish bioethics will be compared with Catholic moral theology and mainstream U.S. bioethics. We will consider the theories of these ethical discourses, their presuppositions, sociopolitical context, and reasoning.

Objectives

Through this course, students will:

- Understand Jewish and Catholic approaches to a range of key problems in bioethics
- Develop academic writing and argumentation skills, with an emphasis on ethics
- Improve analytical and critical skills for reading texts in religious bioethics
**Required Readings**

Please obtain the following books. Other required and optional readings will be available as handouts or through the course’s Blackboard site. Please bring the pertinent readings to class sessions.

Kelly, David F. *Medical Care at the End of Life: A Catholic Perspective*. 2006
Mackler, Aaron. *Introduction to Jewish and Catholic Bioethics*. 2003
Zohar, Noam. *Alternatives to Jewish Bioethics*. 1997

**Requirements and Assessment**

**Active engagement with course readings:** To succeed as an ethics seminar, students will need to contribute thoughtfully to our deliberations over the readings. Accordingly, each student is asked to carefully read and analyze the texts for each class and come prepared to discuss the readings. For instance, for each session, bring at least one pointed question or insight. Since we will focus on academic writing, students will write throughout the semester and give each other feedback on assignments. In brief exercises, students may be asked to interpret primary and secondary sources, take into account socio-cultural and historical developments, formulate intellectual arguments on practical ethics, or otherwise respond to the course texts and topics. Overall, class participation will account for 20% of the grade.

**Short papers.** This writing intensive seminar will enable students to fulfill the post-freshman writing requirement, which includes a minimum of 20 pages of polished writing. Two short papers will be graded, the first after a thorough revision. Each short paper should consist of three (3) pages of critical analysis and argumentation for an academic readership/audience. The analysis would interpret and reflect upon the course readings and an important bioethics question; the argument would marshal evidence and reasoning so as to persuade academic readers about a narrow and contestable claim (thesis). The short papers will comprise 30% of the grade.

*Although course topics have received much scientific analysis, the papers and class discussions should NOT rely heavily on scientific findings nor argue toward a scientific claim.*

**Final paper.** The pivotal assignment for the course will be a seminar paper, which would typically advance a comparative, historical or analytical critique of Jewish and/or Catholic thought on bioethics. In developing the paper topic, students are encouraged to analyze religious and ethical concerns that impinge on patients, health care institutions, and local and global sustainability. Students are expected to develop their paper topic and bibliography during the early stages of the course, ideally after consultation with the instructor. Students will present their work-in-progress around the time that a draft is due. The paper *must* be submitted as a draft and then revised thoroughly for at least style and well-reasoned argumentation. The final version should be 15-18 pages, per format instructions. Student work on the final paper will amount to 50% of the grade.

**Academic honesty.** Each of us has an inexhaustible capacity for critical thinking and originality. This course is designed to enable you to express and expand your own thinking. Unfortunately, some students submit other people’s work and leave the false impression that it is their own original writing. Please familiarize yourself with Emory’s policies and consequences for plagiarism. No violation of the [Honor Code](Honor%20Code) for academic integrity will be tolerated. Suspected violations will be reported.
You can avoid plagiarism by properly taking notes and citing your sources when you write assignments. Proper citations will enable you to get your best possible grade and avoid the suspicion of plagiarism. *Do not hesitate to contact me if you have any questions.*

**Course schedule.** A schedule of class sessions is attached. The topics, readings, and assignments are *subject to change.* Updates will be discussed in class and/or posted on Blackboard, which should be consulted regularly. If absent from class, each student is expected to rely on other students for discussion notes, information on writing exercises, and so on.

**Schedule of Course Sessions** *(Subject to Change)*

| Week 1     | Introduction  
|            | Religion, bioethics, sustainability  
|            | Reproductive cloning and genetic modification  
| Week 2     | Aesthetic surgery  
| Week 3     | Gender (re)assignment  
| Week 4     | Abortion  
| Week 5     | End-of-life choices: A Catholic view  
| Week 6     | End-of-life choices: Comparative analysis  
| Week 7     | Family, Consent and Competency (Freedman)  
| Week 8     | Medical and Environmental Health Risk  
| Week 9     | Environmental health: Personal ethics of sustainability  
| Week 10    | Environmental health: Institutional sustainability  

*Spring break*
### List of Topics and Readings

**A) Introduction to bioethics, sustainability, and religion**

Mackler, 1-63  
Freedman, 16-28  

**B) Cloning**


**C) Aesthetic surgery**

Breich, Mordechai Jacob. *Helkat Ya’akov* HM 31 (Translation for course use only, not for distribution.)


Waldenberg, Eliezer. Tzitz Eliezer XI 41.8-9 (Translation for course use only, not for distribution.)

D) Gender (re)assignment surgery


Waldenberg, Eliezer. Tzitz Eliezer XI:78. (Translation for course use only, not for distribution.)

E) Abortion


Mackler, ch. 5, 120-155

Jotkowitz, Alan and Aviad Raz, Shimon Glick, and Ari Z. Zivotofsky. "Abortions for fetuses with mild abnormalities" in IMAJ 12, Jan. 2010


F) End-of-life choices: A Catholic view

Declaration on Euthanasia. Congregation for the doctrine of the faith.1980

Kelly, ch.1-5, 1-86. (His view of the consensus on forgoing treatment.)

Kelly, ch.6-8, 87-154. (On feeding tubes, euthanasia, and medical futility.)

G) End-of-life choices: Comparative analysis

Mackler: ch.3, “Euthanasia and assisted suicide” (64-84)

Mackler, ch.4. “Treatment decisions near the end of life” (85-119)


**H) Freedman’s approach: Family, Consent and Competency**
Freedman, sections 1-3, pp. 69-241.

**I) Risk decisions in medical and environmental health**

**J) Environmental health: Personal ethics of sustainability**

**K) Environmental health: Institutional sustainability**
Jameton, Andrew and Jessica Pierce. “Environmental aspects of health care” and “The green health center” in *The ethics of environmentally responsible health care*, Oxford University Press, 2004

**L) Environmental health: Global ethics and climate change**
Jameton, Andrew and Jessica Pierce. “Global bioethics and justice” in *The ethics of environmentally responsible health care*, Oxford University Press, 2004
M) Assisted reproductive technologies

Mackler, ch.6, “In vitro fertilization,” 156-169
O’Rourke and Boyle, chs. 8-9, “Artificial insemination” and “Artificial reproduction” 62-69
Zohar, ch.3, “Parenthood: Natural fact and human society,” 69-84

N) Distributive justice in health care

Kelly, chs.25-26, “Allocating health care resources” and “The use and misuse of the allocation argument” in Contemporary Catholic Health Care Ethics, 270-296
Mackler, ch. 7, “Access to health care and rationing,” 190-211
Zohar, ch.6, “Allocating medical resources: Global planning and immediate obligations,” 143-152


O) Organ Transplantation with Live Donors

Hamdy, Sherine. “Rethinking Islamic Legal Ethics in Egypt’s Organ Transplant Debate” 78-93, in Muslim Medical Ethics: From Theory to Practice, 2008

Readings may be changed and/or supplemented with short primary texts.