

PHIL 2210: Morals and Medicine

Syllabus

Northland Community & Technical College, Fall 2024

Section 01/11/91: MW 9:30–10:50 am, EGF 149/TRF 601/Zoom

Instructor: Brent Braga

1 How to contact me

My email address, Zoom room ID, office number, and office phone are below.

Email brent.braga@northlandcollege.edu
Zoom <https://minnstate.zoom.us/my/brentbraga> | Room 218 793 2581
Office EGF 155L | TRF 245I
Phone 218.793.2581

The best ways to reach me are during my scheduled contact hours or via email. My email address is listed above. I try to respond to emails within a day of receiving them, though that response time may be a bit longer during weekends, holidays, college breaks, and busier times of the semester. I will post an announcement on D2L if I expect to be away from email for an extended time.

My contact hours will take place at the times and in the locations listed below:

Mondays	8:00–9:30 am	EGF office + Zoom
Wednesdays	11:00 am–12:30 pm	TRF office + Zoom

You are welcome to log in to my Zoom room or stop by my office if you have any course-related concerns. No appointment is necessary unless you would like to meet with me outside of those scheduled hours. Please email if you would like to speak but cannot during the times listed above.

2 What you'll learn

2.1 Topics

From the NCTC Common Course Outline: This course is a general introduction to ethical issues that arise in the contemporary practice of healthcare, and which are central to understanding healthcare in contemporary society. In addition to developing a basic understanding of standard moral theories, issues that arise within American culture for patients, providers, and planners of health care are examined. Examples of such issues include, but are not limited to, abortion, euthanasia, patient rights, informed consent, health care distribution and reform, genetic testing and research, and cloning.

The course is broken up into six units. We will spend two weeks on each course unit. The first unit will introduce you to bioethics as a field of study and some tools we will use throughout the course. Each subsequent unit will center on a broad ethical issue in medicine. In Unit 2, we will explore some aspects of the ethical duty medical professionals have to provide quality care. Units 3 and 4 look at the important moral

concepts of consent and privacy as they relate to medicine. The focus of Unit 5 is on the role that fairness plays in medical decisionmaking, particularly with regard to the distribution of scarce resources. Finally, Unit 6 looks at aspects of the problem that accommodating differences in belief can pose for patients and caregivers.

2.2 Calendar

The course schedule below lists the dates for the Mondays of the sixteen class weeks along with the topics we will address during those weeks. The schedule is subject to change. Any changes will be announced in class and on D2L.

<u>Week of</u>	<u>Work</u>
August 26	Unit 1: Introduction to medical ethics
September 2	No class meeting September 2
September 9	Unit 2: What constitutes quality care?
September 16	
September 23	Unit 3: Is consent essential to medical practice?
September 30	
October 7	Unit 4: Does privacy still have a place in medicine? No class meeting October 9
October 14	
October 21	Project work week; no class meetings
October 28	Unit 5: How can we best prioritize care?
November 4	
November 11	Project work week; no class meetings
November 18	Unit 6: How do we accommodate differences in belief?
November 25	
December 2	Project work week; no class meetings
December 9	Project work week; no class meetings

2.3 Learning goals

The NCTC Common Course Outline lists the following learning outcomes for this course:

1. Identify value assumptions and social/historical factors underlying moral issues within healthcare contexts.
2. Articulate moral principles relevant to assessing moral issues within healthcare contexts.
3. Analyze specific philosophical positions held in relation to healthcare issues, including legal, social, and factual (empirical and/or scientific) aspects of those issues.
4. Express reasons for endorsing specific positions on moral issues within healthcare contexts.
5. Integrate moral principles and value assumptions to develop informed positions on moral issues covered in the course.
6. Recognize value assumptions that underlie student's own positions, interpretations, and evaluations of moral topics covered in the course.

3 How the class and grades work

3.1 Class format

This course will be conducted in a hybrid-flexible ('hyflex') format. That means that you may choose on a day-to-day basis which of four ways you will take part in class. You may elect to attend class meetings in person in TRF room 601, EGF room 149, or online in Zoom room 218 793 2581. You may also choose to participate asynchronously (i.e., not in person during class meetings) on D2L Brightspace. All of our in-person class sessions will be recorded. Recordings will typically be posted to D2L within a few hours of the class meeting's conclusion. If you choose to access a day's course material asynchronously, I expect you to view the day's recording in addition to completing other work.

I will alternate teaching between the two campus rooms, so that I will be in Thief River Falls one day a week and in East Grand Forks the other. I will post an announcement on D2L if I am unable to travel to TRF due to weather or other circumstances.

3.2 Text and materials

You do not need to purchase a textbook or any other materials for this course. The course text, *Morality in Medicine*, is one I authored. That text is available for download in the Content section of D2L Brightspace, which is located under the Materials tab. Some course units will require reading in addition to the course text. All additional readings will be available on D2L or through links included in unit guides.

I will post a guide for each course unit a few days before we begin each unit. The unit guides include a description of the material we will cover, a list of the due dates for unit assignments, the list of assigned reading, and instructions for the unit assignments. You can access unit guides through the folder for each unit in D2L's Content section or through announcements I will post when I have uploaded the material.

The guides for the research project are available in the folder labeled 'Research project' in D2L's Content section. There are seven guides in that folder. The first guide gives a general description of the project. I suggest you read through that guide at some point during the first few weeks of the semester. The other guides provide directions for the six parts of the project assignment. I will make video descriptions that accompany each guide available as the semester progresses.

3.3 Assignments

There are two types of graded assignment you will complete. The first will be shorter assignments to complete as part of each course unit. You will typically be asked to respond to reflection questions, evaluate arguments on moral issues, or participate in class discussion to receive points for unit assignments. There are three or four assignments per two-week course unit.

The other type of assignment is the research project. Guides for the project are available in D2L's Content section. Each guide includes directions along with other information relevant to the tasks you will complete. Due dates for each part of the project appear in the guides. There are several work weeks built into the course schedule for you to complete parts of the project. Dates for the work weeks appear in Section 2.2 above.

3.4 Grading, make-up work, and extra credit

This course uses a form of grading called 'specifications grading'. With specifications grading, every graded assignment will include specific tasks. You will receive checkmarks (✓) for satisfactorily completing the tasks. Criteria for what constitutes satisfactory work will be spelled out in assignment guides.

Unit assignments will ask you to complete a single task, while each part of the research project will include several. There will be a total of twenty checkmarks you can earn on unit assignments and another thirty for the research project. Your final course grade will depend on the number of checkmarks you earn by the end of the term. The grading scale is below:

A	46–50 ✓s
B	41–45 ✓s
C	36–40 ✓s
D	31–35 ✓s
F	0–30 ✓s

One of the advantages of specifications grading is that you are effectively able to choose the grade you receive in the course. Suppose, for example, that you would like to earn a B in the course. In that case, you could elect to complete most of the unit assignments and about two-thirds of the research project to earn the minimum 41 checkmarks required for a B grade. Or, alternatively, you could earn a B in the course by completing all of the research project along with just over half of the unit assignments.

You can make up up to three checkmarks you have lost because of a missed due date or unsatisfactory work. Make-up work on unit assignments must be submitted within one week of the assignment's original due date unless you have made other arrangements with me. You may earn make-up checkmarks on the research project within two weeks of the due date for the part of the project for which you are making up credit. Some unit assignments and Part 6 of the project are ineligible to earn make-up checkmarks. I will make note in unit guides when assignments are not eligible for make-up credit.

There is no extra credit available for this course.

3.5 Class meeting cancelations or modifications

I may need to cancel class meetings during the semester. I will announce those class cancelations on D2L and, when possible, in class meetings. You will receive a notification on your smartphone or tablet computer when announcements are posted on D2L if you have the Brightspace Pulse app installed. If I am

away on short notice, say due to illness, I will also post an announcement to the college's class cancellation webpage at https://www2.northlandcollege.edu/cancelled_classes/.

It is possible that the college itself will close and classes will be canceled with minimal notice, most likely due to weather. If you have not already done so during this academic year, please register for Northland's Star Alert messages. The Star Alert system will notify you via phone call, email, or text message in the case of weather-related closure or other emergency situations. You can register for Star Alert and check for prior registration at <https://www.northlandcollege.edu/about/offices/campus-safety/star-alert/>.

4 Being successful in the class

4.1 Communicating with me

Please don't hesitate to speak with me if you have questions as the course moves along. I check my email regularly and am happy to meet with you if you'd like to speak in person, even outside of my scheduled contact hours (which are listed in Section 1 above). Talk to me after class or send an email my way if you'd like to meet.

4.2 Tutoring and academic accommodations

Northland's Academic Success Center (ASC) offers tutoring to all Northland students free of charge. Tutors are available on the EGF campus in rooms 578, 579, and 580, in office suite 205 on the TRF campus, and via Zoom. You can register for tutoring sessions at <https://northlandcollege.mywconline.com/>.

The Success Center also arranges accommodations for students with unique short- or long-term learning needs. Staff at the ASC work confidentially with students to provide equitable access to learning opportunities. Please contact the ASC as soon as possible if you would like more information about receiving accommodations. More information about the services the Success Center offers is available at <https://www.northlandcollege.edu/academics/academic-success-center/>.

4.3 Counseling, mental health care, and basic needs

Northland offers personal counseling services for students who are in need. Information about available services can be found at <https://www.northlandcollege.edu/about/offices/counseling-services/>. Contact Rebecca Johnson, NCTC Counselor, directly if you would like to make an appointment for personal counseling. She can be reached by email at rebecca.johnson@northlandcollege.edu or by phone at 218.683.8543.

Mental health care and learning to cope with stress are important factors in being successful in college courses. If you have health concerns—whether they're about your physical or your mental health—that might impact your work in this course, and you feel comfortable doing so, please let me know. If necessary, I can make some accommodations regarding coursework that may be helpful.

Northland also has services available to help students meet basic needs. You can find information about those services at <https://www.northlandcollege.edu/students/student-basic-needs/>. The Pioneer Pantry on the TRF and EGF campuses offer no-cost food items to students.

4.4 Using time wisely

You can expect 15–20 pages of reading and two or three assignments in each two-week course unit. Students tend to be more successful in this course if they set aside regular blocks of time to complete that

coursework. I suggest reserving 2–3 hours each week to do so. You should have a good sense of the time you will need to spend on coursework after the first two weeks of the semester.

Even though the tasks you will complete for each part of the research project differ, each will require roughly the same amount of effort to complete. It would be a good idea to set aside some time during the first few weeks of the semester to read the first two project guides, which provide an overview of the project and the directions for the first part of it. You should have a good idea of how much time to set aside for subsequent parts after completing the first. Having that in mind will help you reserve enough time to complete later parts of the project before their due dates.

Budget your time wisely. I make an effort to create a course workload that is manageable for busy students. That workload can become unmanageable if you fall behind on readings and assignments. Students who do poorly in this course or fail to complete it often do so because they miss significant amounts of graded work early on. If you find yourself falling behind, please contact me as soon as possible.

5 Policies and other information

5.1 Course expectations and policies

I expect students enrolled in this course to attend every class meeting and complete all assignments by their due dates. Since much of this course centers on class discussion, I expect everyone to participate as much as is feasible.

Please contact me if you expect to be away from the course for an extended time, especially if you think you might miss due dates for graded work. I will remove students from the course if I determine they are no longer taking part in the class or completing graded work.

I expect everyone involved in this course to act respectfully toward others in the class. We will cover a number of controversial topics, so it is likely that you will disagree with others about some of the matters we will discuss. In addition, we will have a diverse group of people in the class in terms of age, religious belief, sexual orientation, cultural practice, life experience, gender identity, and other important factors. Those sorts of diversity sometimes correspond with differences in belief about moral matters. There is nothing wrong with differing viewpoints; in fact, disagreement is often beneficial since it presents us with a chance to see potential weaknesses with views we find plausible and an opportunity to critically engage with positions we do not accept. I ask that when you disagree with an idea we are discussing, or when you disagree with someone else in the class, you do so in a way that is charitable to the position under consideration and that provides due respect to everyone. Students who are unwilling to do so will be removed from the course.

All students enrolled in this course must abide by the policies described in Northland Community & Technical College's Student Handbook, available at <http://www.northlandcollege.edu/academics/student-handbook/>. The Student Code of Conduct, located at <https://www.northlandcollege.edu/files/2110-student-code-of-conduct.pdf> outlines college policies most relevant to graded coursework.

5.2 Technology requirements

You will use some technologies to access course material, submit graded work, and connect with me. Most any internet-connected device should be capable of accessing course material and submitting work. You will need a high-speed internet connection to view videos I post or to connect to Zoom.

You will also need access to a web browser, word processing software, and software capable of reading Portable Document Format (PDF) files. If you do not have word processing software on your device, you have access to Microsoft Word and other Microsoft Office 365 programs on college-owned computers. You also

may install Office software on personal devices as well at no cost. You can find information on how to do that in the IT Department's Student Technology Reference, available at https://www.northlandcollege.edu/about-northland/offices/technology/_docs/northland_student_technology_reference_guide.pdf. The IT Department can also assist in installing Office software on your personal devices.

I recommend installing the Brightspace Pulse app if you use a smartphone or tablet computer. That app will notify you of announcements, upcoming due dates, posted grades, feedback from me, and other important course matters. You are also able to access course material and submit some work through that app. The Pulse app is compatible with iOS and Android devices and is available through Apple's App Store and Google's Play store at no cost.

5.3 Proctoring

You do not need to arrange time with a proctor to complete any graded work for this course. You are free to complete all graded work at any time prior to relevant due dates in whatever setting you prefer with any materials you require to complete the work.

5.4 Prerequisites and Minnesota Transfer Curriculum

There are no prerequisite or corequisite courses required to enroll in this class. Apart from college-level reading, comprehension, and communications skills, this course requires no special prior training and presupposes only a very general understanding of moral philosophy or scientific medicine.

This course fulfills Minnesota Transfer Curriculum Goal Areas 2 (Critical Thinking), 6 (The Humanities and Fine Arts), and 9 (Ethical and Civic Responsibility).