

# **UAMS College of Medicine**

**M2 Medical Ethics  
2011-12**

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## Faculty

Course Faculty	Office	Telephone & email
<b>D. Micah Hester, PhD</b> Course Director	Freeway Medical Bldg. Suite 500	501-296-1745, x1333 <a href="mailto:hesterdm@uams.edu">hesterdm@uams.edu</a>
Small Group Faculty		SG Classrooms
<b><u>Humanities/Social Science</u></b>	<b><u>Medicine</u></b>	
<a href="#">Gill Rogers</a> , J.D. (law)	<a href="#">Stephen Kemp</a> , M.D. (pediatrics/endocrinology)	EdII G102
<a href="#">Chris Hackler</a> , Ph.D. (philosophy)	<a href="#">Laura Hutchins</a> , M.D. (hematology/oncology)	EdII, G104A
<a href="#">Chris Lloyd</a> , Ph.D. (social work)	<a href="#">Erick Messias</a> , M.D., M.P.H. (psychiatry)	EdII, G104B
<a href="#">Charles Hicks</a> , J.D. (law)	<a href="#">Carrie Brown</a> , M.D. (peds palliative medicine)	COPH, G218
<a href="#">Allen Sherman</a> , Ph.D. psychology)	<a href="#">Bonnie Taylor</a> , M.D. (neonatology)	COPH, G220
<a href="#">Wendy Ward</a> , Ph.D. (psychology)	<a href="#">Rebecca Latch</a> , M.D. (pediatrics)	IDW, 104
<a href="#">George Hull</a> , Dip.Th., Th.M. (religion)	<a href="#">Theresa Travis</a> , M.D. (family/palliative medicine)	IDW, 106
<a href="#">Larry Burton</a> , Th.D. (religion)	<a href="#">Martha Lauster</a> , M.D. (family/palliative care)	IDW, 113
<a href="#">Del Farris</a> , M.Div. (religion)	<a href="#">Billy Thomas</a> , M.D. (pediatrics/neonatology)	IDW, 204
<a href="#">Ray Higgins</a> , Ph.D. (religion)	<a href="#">R. Lee Archer</a> , M.D. (neurology)	IDW, 206
<a href="#">Suzanne Lumpkin</a> , J.D. (law)	<a href="#">Michael Stroud</a> , M.D. (peds critical care)	IDW, 213
<a href="#">James Rush</a> , Ph.D. (philosophy/religion)	<a href="#">JoAnn Wood</a> , M.D. (internal medicine)	IDW, 214A
<a href="#">Jennifer Kleiner Fausett</a> , Ph.D. (psychology)	<a href="#">Sarah Beth Harrington</a> , M.D. (internal/palliative care)	IDW, 214B

## Course Overview

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### Course Goals

This course in medical ethics is designed to raise your awareness of ethical concerns in medical practice, and to train you in methods of ethical analysis.

Good ethical reasoning is always based upon an understanding of the facts of the individual case and a respect for the values, duties, and commitments of others who are involved. Beyond this there are at least four other virtues of moral deliberation.

1. **Clarity.** We should be clear about what our judgments are and the reasons we have for them.
2. **Consistency.** The reasons we give for one decision should not conflict with each other or with those we give for other decisions.
3. **Critical distance.** We should think critically about the values, principles, rules, and codes we use in moral deliberation and make them ours, rather than simply adopting the views of others.
4. **Humility.** We should avoid the feeling that we have reached certain truth and that our thinking cannot be revised or improved.

### Competencies

UAMS College of Medicine – Competencies – Course Name		
Competency Trait	Competency Covered in the Course	Methods of Assessment
Medical Knowledge	n/a	
Patient Care	Yes	Discussion, writings
Professionalism	Yes	Discussion, writings
Interpersonal and Communication Skills	Yes	Discussion, writings
Medical Informatics	indirectly	
Population Health and Preventive Medicine	n/a	
Practice-Based and Systems-Based Medical Care	indirectly	
NOTE:		

## Course Learning Objectives

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### Patient Care

At the completion of this course the student should be able to:

- Identify moral dilemmas that arise in clinical situations

### Professionalism

At the completion of this course the student should be able to:

- Articulate ethical dilemmas in terms of conflicting ethical concerns and norms, including ethical values (respect, trust, honesty, etc.) and principles (e.g., autonomy, justice)
- Explore and evaluate alternative solutions to given moral problems
- Defend the solution you decide is best

### Interpersonal and communication skills

At the completion of this course the student should be able to:

- Clearly communicate ethical concerns and specific positions
- Identify personal and professional values that affect health behaviors and decision making

### Medical Informatics

At the completion of this course the student should be able to:

- Research ethical arguments and empirical findings that relate to ethical concerns in patient care

### Practice-Based and Systems-Based Medical Care

At the completion of this course the student should be able to:

- Recognize the ethical implications on patient care of system-based initiatives and policy

## Course Format

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### Lectures

On the rare occasions that lectures are given in this course, the lectures are designed to impart some knowledge, give context and background to a given ethical topic, and to generate large-group discussion.

### Small Group Discussions

About half the ethics course sessions will lead to discussions within small groups of 12-13 students (same groups and faculty leaders—2 leaders per group—will meet throughout the year). Many of these discussions will be based on a case presented in to the entire class; other discussions may be based on some other form of presentation—video, role play, etc.

All small group sessions are held on Thursday afternoon, and will last at least 1.5 hours. *All sessions begin in the large lecture hall* before breaking out into small groups.

### **Self-Disciplined Learning (SDL)**

There are approximately 4-6 stand-alone (not related to a in-class session) SDLs spread out over the year. The course director may not always send out a reminder. *You are responsible for checking Blackboard often in order to keep from missing an SDL.*

### **Other**

This course uses an array of presentational formats, including videos, panel sessions, debates, and more.

*All sessions begin in the large lecture hall*

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## **Required/Recommended Materials**

### **Books**

This course does not use a required textbook. All course material is made available through Blackboard. Many good books are available, and if you would like to buy one, just check first with the course director for recommendations.

### **Other Items for the Course**

#### **Online Modules**

For almost every class session there will be a module developed in Blackboard. Often these modules will consist of several webpages of written content carefully distilled from the ethics literature. You are expected to have read these pages **before** the relevant session. These are fairly short and take the place of any assigned reading. Typically, each module ends with a Blackboard **quiz** over the content you have just read—again *this is required to be completed before the class for which the module is relevant*. Also, the faculty of the course will expect that you have knowledge of the Blackboard content and may expect you to use your knowledge in case discussion and write-ups.

***Any information about and/or changes to the readings, assignments, or schedule, will be posted in Blackboard.***

## Readings

On several occasions, either in place of or in conjunction with the Blackboard course content, there will be short readings (scanned articles or links to outside webpages) that will be required and can be found within the Blackboard modules. Again, the faculty of the course will expect that you have knowledge of the Blackboard content and may expect you to use your knowledge in case discussion and write-ups.

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## Examinations and Other Graded Activities

### Quizzes

*Almost* every Blackboard module has a quiz. The quiz questions will be based on information in the readings or are attempts to get you to put information and other considerations together. Some are simply factual, some conceptual, and *others are USMLE-style*—that is, they mimic ethics questions on the national board exams. There are fewer than 100 quizzes cumulatively over the year. *All quizzes must be completed before the class session* (or by the due date) of the module—no exceptions. They are all quite short, and they are all “open book.”

While you are welcome (even encouraged), after you submit a quiz, to ask questions about or comment on any quiz’s content, there are no “appeals.” That is, I will gladly discuss with you any aspect of a quiz, but unless there is a clear factual or typographical flaw, I won’t change your grade.

### Class Write-ups

There will be several class write-ups (see schedule below for partial listing—some still to be scheduled) due in e-mail to both of your small group leaders. Many (but not all) will be based on the ethical deliberative methodology given during the class and available in Blackboard.

*PARTIAL CASE WRITE-UP:* Early case write-ups only ask you to do a small portion of a complete analysis. Blackboard will have details on what is to be included and excluded from these partial write-ups.

*CASE WRITE-UP:* Later case write-ups will require a complete analysis of a case discussed in class (that is, they will require an essay that covers all five aspects of ethical reflection).

*REFLECTIVE WRITINGS:* Some writings will ask you simply to reflect on some aspects or issues of a topic or experience related to a particular class session or practice issue.

**A Special Note on Personal Narratives:** This first reflective writing is due for the *second week of class* and will require you to write something that you may be asked to read in your small groups! *See more about this assignment in Blackboard*)

***EACH write-up will be given a point-value (grade) from 0-10.  
These points go towards your ICM II grade.***

## FINAL Case Analysis

After having written all your “class case write-ups,” you will be given a case, *not discussed in class*, to analyze utilizing, the tools you have been developing in the class. This due date for the assignment will be stated in the assignment when the case is given, and it is to be turned in by e-mail to both of your small-group leaders.

## Grading

Grading for the Medical Ethics course is **Pass-Fail**. The following are necessary for a passing grade in this course:

1. Your small-group leaders must agree that you have earned a passing grade for the aggregate of your work on the class write-ups—*remember, these also will be given points that will go towards your ICMII grade.*
2. Your small-group leaders must agree that you have earned a passing grade for your work on the FINAL case analysis assignment.
3. You must get at least 65% of the ethics questions (cumulatively) correct on the Blackboard quizzes and the multi-disciplinary exams.
  - a. Since we believe that medical students should be treated as professionals, each of you begins the course with 10 points for professionalism (these count towards your cumulative quiz/exam grade). Unprofessional behavior (whether it be, for example, missing a small group discussion w/out prior approval of the faculty or rude comments in discussion towards faculty or fellow students (and other behaviors as well) will result in a reduction of professionalism points at the discretion of the course director. If any student should lose all 10 professionalism points during the year, a negative “non-cognitive” professionalism evaluation will be submitted to the dean’s office.

*Failure to pass **any one of the above*** will result in the need to remediate the course. The form and content for remediation will be determined by the course director (in conjunction with your small-group leaders and you) based on the problems exhibited in your work.

Students who do exceptional work may be rewarded by a letter to the Dean's Office to be placed in their "Dean's Letter" file.

## Course Policies

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The ethics course has 5 important policies that you may not have in other courses:

1. You must attend every class session
  - a. Reason: this is a class that thrives on discussion and input. The course relates to personal, professional, and cultural values. Not showing up to class, whatever the topic or presentational format, deprives you of substantive learning content that cannot be duplicated by videotaping or reading material.

- b. Exceptions – *you must e-mail the course director and your small group leaders if you are going to miss a session*
      - i. You are sick
      - ii. You talk to the course director ahead of time and are given a “pass” for that session
      - iii. You figure out that, except for small group sessions, we do not take attendance
- 2. You must complete each module and any modular quiz before its due date
  - a. Reason: material in the modules is intended to be used in subsequent class discussions
  - b. Exceptions: none!
- 3. You must complete all written assignments by their due dates.
  - a. Reason: that is one important manifestation of the responsibilities of a professional and a student
  - b. Exceptions – *you must e-mail the course director and your small group leaders if you are going to miss a session*
    - i. You are too sick over a period of time that would preclude you from having completed the assignment on time
    - ii. You talk to the course director *and* your small group leaders ahead of time and are given an extension based on some extenuating circumstances that cannot be foreseen at this time
- 4. You should keep open minds for the purpose of evaluating the ethical concerns, values, and positions of others.
  - a. Reason: that is what living in a world with other human beings and a pluralism of values demands
  - b. Exceptions: if you can say that you know with **certainty** (*and can convince others of this*) that you hold the whole of truth on a given topic
- 5. Never hesitate to contact the course director if you have a question, problem, insight, joke, concern, story, etc.
  - a. Reason: Communication is important and concerns should not be allowed to fester
  - b. Exceptions: none (well, just plain, ol’ nasty comments you may want to think about before hitting “send.”)

## College of Medicine Policies

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Policy statements are contained in the College of Medicine Student Handbook for the following topics (<http://www.uams.edu/com/students/STDMAN%20generic%20for%20web.pdf>):

### Medical Knowledge

- Patient Care
- Professionalism
- Interpersonal and Communication Skills
- Lifelong Learning (Medical Informatics)
- Population Health and Preventive Medicine
- Practice-Based and Systems-Based Medical Care

**Honor System**

Constitution of the Honor System  
Honor Pledge

**Code of Professional Conduct for Medical Students**

Medical Student Oath

**Academic Policies**

Guidelines for Examinations  
Policy for Missed Examinations for Freshmen and Sophomores  
Absence from Classes  
Policy on Recorded M1 and M2 Lectures or Labs  
Warning Students of Marginal Performance

**Administrative Policies**

Inclement Weather Policy  
Americans with Disabilities Act