Course numbers: MED:8413:0400 and MED:8413:0300

Duration: February 10 – March 6, 2020

Class meeting times: Mondays and Thursdays from 9:00 AM - 11:30 AM

Class location: MEB 1-103 (Conference Room, Program in Bioethics and Humanities)

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Director, Program in Bioethics and Humanities
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Program in Bioethics and Humanities
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Objectives

By taking this course, students will be able to:

1. Describe the meaning and significance of a medical oath for physicians, the medical profession, and society.

2. Compare the similarities and differences between medical oaths and other professional statements such as ethical principles, codes, and charters.

3. Assess the ethical contents of different medical oaths, from the Hippocratic Oath to the Physician’s Oath of the Carver College of Medicine.

4. Reflect on ethical values communicated in ethics-related seminars at UIHC.

5. Interview a non-medical person regarding his/her assessment of ethical values considered important for a medical oath.

6. Identify the essential content of a medical oath and incorporate that content into a personal statement of professional commitment.
**Purpose**

This Course is intended to help you appreciate the meaning and significance of a medical oath, both for yourself, and for your profession and society. The Course will examine oaths as promise statements that are highly personal, deeply ethical, and broadly professional, with attention to the principles, commitments, and virtues that are essential in medical practice. Examination of this ethical content will be facilitated by considering traditional medical oaths (e.g., versions of the Hippocratic Oath and the Declaration of Geneva), codes of ethics (e.g., the AMA Code of Ethics), contemporary statements such as the Physician Charter, and virtues that are central to the moral foundations of medicine. This examination will also be enhanced by observing and reflecting on ethics-related seminars at UIHC, as well as interviewing a non-medical person regarding the ethical values that ought to be in a medical oath.

From such resources it will be possible to identify principles, virtues, and commitments that form recurring themes (and emerging issues) in medical ethics and professionalism. These resources will provide a lens through which to examine the Physician’s Oath of the Carver College of Medicine and by which to draft your own medical oath as a reflective exercise in professional development. The Course will also help you think about the benefits of trying to increase the degree of consistency of content between oaths used in different medical schools so that society can more easily see that physicians are members of a profession that is committed to a shared set of essential ethical values. Lastly, this Course intends to help prepare you to understand and ‘own’ the medical oath you will profess when you graduate from the Carver College of Medicine.

**Structure**

- Class meetings (student-led discussions): 9:00 AM - 11:30 AM on Mondays & Thursdays
- Readings
- Interview of a non-medical person regarding medical oaths
- Writing (two essays, one interview report, and one oath)
- Attendance at (and written reflection on) one ethics-related seminar each week:
  - Opportunities include UIHC Ethics Rounds, Schwartz Center Rounds, Palliative Care Conference, Ethics M&M Conference in the Department of Surgery, On-line lectures from Children’s Mercy (Kansas City), and other opportunities as available

**Grading & Feedback**

The Course is graded as pass/fail. Requirements for passing will be (1) attendance at class discussions, (2) weekly attendance at an ethics-related seminar at UIHC (plus written reflection), (3) familiarity with assigned readings as demonstrated through participation in discussions, (4) successful leading of class discussions, and (5) satisfactory completion of weekly writing assignments. If any requirements are not met, appropriate make-up work or remediation will be assigned by the course director. The Course Director will provide (1) written feedback on writing assignments, (2) mid-course feedback for any student not meeting course expectations, and (3) end-of-course narrative feedback on each student’s overall performance.
### Course Schedule, Readings, Discussion Leaders, and Assignments

#### Week 1: History and Purpose of Medical Oaths

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mon Feb 10</th>
<th>Introduction, Overview, and Discussion</th>
<th>Class: 9:00 AM – 11:30 AM</th>
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<tr>
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<td>Group discussion:</td>
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<td>- Develop initial ideas for a set of core ethical values believed to be important in a medical oath; we will revisit these ideas at the end of the course to see whether perspectives have changed and, if so, how.</td>
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<tr>
<th>Thu Feb 13</th>
<th>Readings:</th>
<th>Class: 9:00 AM – 11:30 AM</th>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Readings:</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Hippocratic Oath (original, Edelstein translation)</td>
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<td>- Hippocratic Oath – Modern Version (L. Lasagna)</td>
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<td>- Declaration of Geneva, World Medical Association</td>
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<td>- Physician’s Oath, Carver College of Medicine</td>
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<td>- Oath of Maimonides</td>
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<td>- AMA Principles of Medical Ethics</td>
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**Essay Assignment (the Hippocratic Oath):**

- Is the original Hippocratic Oath relevant to you today?
  - 2 pages, single-spaced
  - Due Wed Feb 12 by noon (upload to ICON)

**Written Reflection:**

- Reflection on ethical values communicated in an ethics-related seminar at UIHC or on-line
  - 1 page, single-spaced
  - Due Fri Feb 14 by 9:00 AM (upload to ICON)

Student discussion leaders for Readings:

1. ________________
2. ________________
3. ________________
4. ________________
5. ________________
6. ________________
7. ________________
8. ________________
9. ________________
10. ________________
11. ________________

Discussion of Essay Assignment (all)
## Week 2: Relationship between Medical Oaths, Ethical Values, and Professional Codes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tues</th>
<th>Feb 18</th>
<th>Readings:</th>
<th>Class: 9:00 AM – 11:30 AM</th>
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<tr>
<th>Thu</th>
<th>Feb 20</th>
<th>Readings:</th>
<th>Class: 9:00 AM – 11:30 AM</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1. AMA Code of Ethics, Chap. 1 (Patient-Physician Relationships)</td>
<td>Group discussion:</td>
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<td>2. __________________</td>
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**Essay Assignment (professing an oath):**

- **What are you doing when you profess a medical oath?**
  - o 2 pages, single-spaced
  - o Due Wed Feb 19 by noon (upload to ICON)

**Written Reflection:**

- **Reflection on ethical values communicated in an ethics-related seminar at UIHC or on-line**
  - o 1 page, single-spaced
  - o Due Fri Feb 21 by 9:00 AM (upload to ICON)
## Week 3: Contents of Medical Oaths

| Mon Feb 24 | **Readings:**  
5. Alkire S, Chen L. Global health and moral values. *Lancet* 2004;364:1069-74. | **Class:** 9:00 AM – 11:30 AM  
**Student discussion leaders for Readings:**  
1.  
2.  
3.  
4.  
5.  

| Thu Feb 27 | **Readings:**  

**Essay Assignment (interview report):**  
- **Interview a non-medical person regarding his/her assessment of ethical values considered important for a medical oath; then write an essay that reports and reflects on your findings.**  
  - 2 pages, single-spaced  
  - Due Wed Feb 26 by noon (upload to ICON)  

**Written Reflection:**  
- **Reflection on ethical values communicated in an ethics-related seminar at UIHC or on-line**  
  - 1 page, single-spaced  
  - Due Fri Feb 28 by 9:00 AM (upload to ICON) | **Class:** 9:00 AM – 11:30 AM  
**Group discussion:**  
**Student discussion leaders for Readings:**  
1.  
2.  
3.  
4.  
5.  

**Discussion of Essay Assignment (all)**
Week 4: Essential Content of a Medical Oath

Mon Mar 2

Readings:


Class: 9:00 AM – 11:30 AM

Group discussion:

Student discussion leaders for Readings:

1. ________________
2. ________________
3. ________________
4. ________________
5. ________________

Thu Mar 5

Essay Assignment (a medical oath):

➢ Write a medical oath that crystalizes your most important professional commitments.
   o 300 words or less
   o Due Wed Mar 4 by noon (upload to ICON)

Written Reflection:

➢ Reflection on ethical values communicated in an ethics-related seminar at UIHC or on-line
   o 1 page, single-spaced
   o Due Fri Mar 6 by 9:00 AM (upload to ICON)

Class: 9:00 AM – 11:30 AM

Workshop:

• Discussion of each student’s medical oath

Written reflections on ethical values communicated in ethics-related seminars

Your weekly reflections should offer commentary that responds to the following questions:

1. What ethical issues/values were relevant to the topic presented in the seminar?
2. What ethical issues/values were actually identified or discussed in the seminar?
3. Do medical oaths contain values that address the ethical issues relevant to the topic?
4. Do you think the speaker(s) could have made useful reference to any values in medical oaths during the seminar? If so, which ones?

Interview (and report) of a non-medical person’s thoughts about medical oath content

Identify a non-medical person (friend, family, acquaintance) who is willing to be interviewed by you about which ethical values he or she thinks should be in a medical oath. Start by using open-ended questions (e.g., “What should doctors promise to do?”, or “What character traits should doctors promise to live by?”), and then (as needed) use closed-ended questions to probe ethical
values that your interviewee did not initially mention but might still think are important. Then write a 2-page, single-spaced essay that reports and reflects on your findings from the interview.

**Leading Seminar Discussions**

Students will take turns leading class discussions. This involves:

1. Being familiar with all the readings and completing writing and activity assignments;
2. Developing questions based on important topics, themes, concerns, or controversies;
3. Prioritizing questions according to perceived relevance and interest;
4. Facilitating discussion by asking opening/clarifying questions and offering insights.

The purpose of discussion is not to cover everything in the readings or to address all issues raised through the assignments; rather, it is to engage questions that you think are of greatest relevance and/or highest interest. The course director will help facilitate discussion as needed.

**Academic Integrity and the Honor Code**

Absolute academic and professional integrity must be the hallmark of all health care professionals. The profession demands that medical personnel monitor themselves and each other in order to produce quality individuals whom the public can trust and who are competent in their chosen field.

The Honor Code of the Carver College of Medicine states: “The Honor Code demands that community members tell the truth, live honestly, advance on individual merit, and demonstrate respect for others in the academic, clinical and research communities.” Defined infractions of the Honor Code include cheating, plagiarism (conscious and unintentional), and fabrication.

The Student Policies section of the Carver College of Medicine Medical Student Handbook says this about plagiarism: “Students are expected to do their own work at all times. In no instance should the work or words of another individual be represented as one’s own. All quoted material, regardless of source, must be properly cited and full attribution given to the author. Information obtained from the Web must give the full URL of the actual page accessed and the date accessed.”

Plagiarism of ideas can occur when the work of others is paraphrased (as opposed to a direct quotation). Ideas are as important as the literal statements that express them. When you appropriate ideas or statements from other people, their authorship must be acknowledged.

In this course, these academic standards will be upheld. Any behavior suggesting deviation from the spirit or letter of these standards will be investigated and, if confirmed, treated appropriately. A student who is found guilty of cheating, plagiarism, or fabrication will fail the Course.

**Policies for Students with Disabilities**

Requests for special accommodations for examinations or other course requirements must be addressed through a specific protocol coordinated centrally by the Carver College of Medicine’s Medical Student Counseling Center. The College’s Policies for Students with Disabilities provides that students who seek the modification of seating, testing, or other course requirements must contact the Medical Student Counseling Center at the beginning of the academic year to implement the process for determining appropriate accommodations. Any student who believes
that he or she may qualify for special accommodations should contact the Counseling Center immediately.