**Evaluation Framework for an interdisciplinary course in Health Care Ethics**

Dr. D. Robert MacDougall

I have identified 5 interdisciplinary learning outcomes in the Application. Below I explain how these interdisciplinary learning outcomes are assessed.

1. Purposefully connect and integrate across-discipline knowledge and skills to solve problems

The course is designed to confront students with a variety of actual controversies within health care ethics. In many cases, the class receives different lectures from two or more disciplines on the same topic. Students are then required to write short reflection questions papers on the topic, incorporating what they have learned from both disciplines. These papers are graded according to the criteria laid out in the syllabus. Most of the questions include a question about the relevance of multiple disciplines to the question at hand, and students are graded on their answers to this and the other questions. The instructor also looks for evidence of individual critical thinking and reflection in these papers. The reflection questions then appear again on the mid-term and final. Second, students are required to participate in group presentations. Students are divided into groups, and then pick a role to play within the group that corresponds to a particular discipline (for example, “nurse,” or “philosopher”). Students are responsible for doing research associated with their particular discipline, and then developing an annotated bibliography and a written report on how their research pertains to the case at hand. Students are then required to work with other students playing different disciplinary roles to reach an interdisciplinary conclusion. Students receive individual grades for the annotated bibliography and written report, but share a grade for the final, interdisciplinary presentation. The grades may however be modified according to feedback received from the 360 degree evaluations.

1. Synthesize and transfer knowledge across disciplinary boundaries

Students are confronted with knowledge from various disciplines that they must then utilize to reach a philosophical position, and which they must present as part of their argument for the reflection question papers, test essays, and group presentation. For example, when we talk about futility cases, we will discuss two different perspectives about who should decide when to remove life-support. Some authors suggest that this is a purely clinical decision, made according to medical or scientific criteria. Others have suggested that this is a philosophical question, with decision-makers incorporating values into their decisions even if they don’t recognize this, and that the values should be explicitly delineated. Students must wrestle with these different perspectives and then figure out how to blend their understanding of the philosophical and scientific aspects to this kind of decision. Students’ grades on these assignments reflect whether the student successfully makes use of both the scientific and philosophical elements common to these cases.

1. Recognize varied perspectives

Recognizing varied perspectives is a skill that is important in lectures, class discussions, and readings. The lectures offer various perspectives on single issues from lecturers from a variety of backgrounds. Students are encouraged to think and talk explicitly about the differences and similarities between the relevant presentations, and to critically examine whether the lecturers disagree, whether the lectures are complementary, and if so, how both disciplines might work together to shed light on an issue. Students then reflect on this individually in their reflection question papers. Students also must learn to recognize different perspectives within the classroom. Often students will disagree with one another. They learn to approach disagreements, or divergent perspectives, with an open mind and an interest in coming to understand those with other perspectives better. Students have ample opportunities to engage with one another, express their perspectives, and learn from classmates. The large percentage of the final grade that depends on participation (15%) reflects the fact that this is an interactive class, and we need a variety of perspectives to understand the subject matter adequately. Participation grades begin with about half the credits for participation given. They can then either earn points by making thoughtful comments in class that engage with fellow students and reflect knowledge of the readings and previous class discussions, or by visiting the professor in his office to discuss assignments, topics of interest, or anything else. They lose points by missing class or by being noticeably distracted or sleepy during class.

1. Gain comfort with complexity and uncertainty

Because of the increasingly diverse and pluralist society that students live in, the possibility of reaching the “correct” answers to ethical dilemmas seems more and more distant. In class, we discuss the variety of theories and approaches to the ethical life, and the ways that these sometimes compete or contradict one another with respect to specific issues. Students have to grapple with these foundational issues at the beginning of the semester, but they also must continue to reflect on them throughout the remainder of the semester, as they approach a variety of issues in the context of class lectures, discussions with other students, reflection papers, and the group project. Moreover, guest lecturers will likely sometimes present perspectives on ethical issues that are in tension with the philosophical perspectives developed in the course. Students will have to wade through these items to reach their own conclusions, both about the issue itself, and the authority of different disciplines to address various questions. The ability to keep in mind diverse perspectives and to engage with those who reasonably disagree is a benchmark for applied ethics work. Students are expected to demonstrate thorough understanding of perspectives competing with their own in their reflection papers, on test essays, and in the group presentation. This is explicitly denoted in the criteria for these assignments.

1. Think critically, communicate effectively, and work collaboratively

Above all, students in this course learn to think critically about values in health care. Thinking critically is an important part of all philosophical inquiry and this course is no exception. Requiring students to reach a conclusion about different cases or issues discussed in class is one method of requiring students to think critically. Because students are exposed to multiple perspectives, forcing them to take a position requires that they disagree with some of the perspectives discussed in class. In order to do this well, they must give reasons and arguments for preferring one view over others. Students begin to think critically in class, when they are exposed to various issues and arguments. We learn as a class to interact critically with arguments given in readings. Students are encouraged to communicate their insights with regard to these arguments, and to engage with one another. This process is evaluated in their participation grade, as discussed above. Students are encouraged to work collaboratively during these discussions as well, for example, when we divide into groups to discuss an issue. However, the culminating project— the group presentation— requires students to work together in an overtly interdisciplinary context to reach mutually acceptable resolutions to cases. Student success in collaborating on this portion of the class is reflected in the instructor’s evaluation of the presentation, and further information for evaluation is provided during the 360 degree evaluation, wherein students evaluate the contributions of other group members to the final presentation.