

## COURSE SYLLABUS

### POLITICAL SCIENCE 497: BIOETHICS AND THE LAW (3 semester hours)

#### Online Course

**Instructor:** Professor April Pitts  
**Office Location:** SS – 163  
**Office Hours:** M – F in virtual office (I will not respond to emails over the weekend)  
**Cell Phone:** 903-217-2869 (in case immediate contact is needed; otherwise email me)  
**Email:** April.Pitts@tamuc.edu

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#### Required Texts

Reading assignments provided by Professor Pitts and posted in course for download.

#### Course Description

This course examines the ethical dilemmas regarding advances in biology and medicine. This course will focus on medical and biological research and development with regards to legal, political, theological and scientific debate. Topics include abortion, personal autonomy, embryo donation, cloning, parental consent to medical treatment, assisted suicide, euthanasia, organ donation, genetic screening, and human research. The course has a practical element requiring students to create a power point presentation.

#### Course Objectives

The goal of this course is to enable the student to:

- Think critically with regards to bioethical issues;
- Identify and consider different dimensions of the various topics presented in class;
- Understand the law as it relates to scientific and medical advancement; and
- Understand how scientific and medical advancement affects and changes society.

#### Grading Policy

***Informed Participation*** – You are expected to participate in the discussion each week you have assigned readings. You must prepare for the discussion by reading ALL of the materials assigned. Questions will be posted related to each topic for the week the readings are assigned. You must thoughtfully respond to five questions of your choice. In addition, you must respond to at least five posts by other students. Posts and responses will be substantive with support from the readings. Short, unsupported posts and responses will be given **ZERO** points.

You will also prepare notes related to **each** reading. These notes will contain your observations, questions and general ideas on each case/article assigned. **In order to receive full participation points you *must make a SEPARATE journal entry for EACH article/case* using the journal feature**

in the class. **Failure to do so will result in a loss of 5 points** for each week complete notes are not turned in.

All written work will be graded not only on content, but also on writing style, **including punctuation and grammar**. Notes and power point presentations **WILL NOT** be accepted late or by email.

***Final Examination*** – This will consist solely of a powerpoint presentation you have researched and developed. You will be given a list of topics from which you may choose as the subject of your presentation. You must post your topic choice in the virtual office no later than Wednesday of the second class week. Topics are on a first come first serve basis. I will not allow two students to do the same topic. Please look at the posts by other students to determine which topics have already been taken.

Presentations will be judged according to substance, style, and appearance. A rubric of what is expected will be provided to you in the course. Any collaboration with other students with regards to the substance of the power point will result in a failing grade for the course.

Your grade will be calculated according to the following formula:

Informed Participation	50 points
Power Point Presentation	50 points

Grade Distribution is as follows:

A = 90-99
B = 80-89
C = 70-79
D = 65-69
F = 64 and below
<i>(No extra credit work will be allowed)</i>

### **Classroom Etiquette**

All students enrolled at the University shall follow the tenets of common decency and acceptable behavior conducive to a positive learning environment. (See Student's Guide Handbook, Policies and Procedures, Conduct) You are expected to exhibit respect for the instructor and fellow students at all times. Failure to adhere to these policies may result in removal from class.

Please be respectful of others' opinions even if you do not agree with them. One of the goals of this class is to have a civil, thoughtful discussion of controversial topics. I look forward to reading a variety of thoughts and opinions and I want you to express yourselves, but please Be Respectful! Remember all caps means you are yelling.

## **Disability Statement**

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) is a federal anti-discrimination statute that provides comprehensive civil rights protection for persons with disabilities. Among other things, this legislation requires that all students with disabilities be guaranteed a learning environment that provides for reasonable accommodation of their disabilities. If you have a disability requiring accommodation, please contact:

**Office of Student Disability Resources and Services**  
**Texas A&M University – Commerce**  
**Gee Library**  
**Room 132**  
**Phone: (903)886-5150 or (903)886-5835**  
**Fax: (903)468-8148**  
**[StudentDisabilityServices@tamu-commerce.edu](mailto:StudentDisabilityServices@tamu-commerce.edu)**

## **“What is Plagiarism**

Many people think of plagiarism as copying another's work, or borrowing someone else's original ideas. But terms like "copying" and "borrowing" can disguise the seriousness of the offense:

### **According to the Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary, to "plagiarize" means**

1. to steal and pass off (the ideas or words of another) as one's own
2. to use (another's production) without crediting the source
3. to commit literary theft
4. to present as new and original an idea or product derived from an existing source.

In other words, plagiarism is an act of fraud. It involves both stealing someone else's work and lying about it afterward.

### **But can words and ideas really be stolen?**

According to U.S. law, the answer is yes. The expression of original ideas is considered intellectual property, and is protected by copyright laws, just like original inventions. Almost all forms of expression fall under copyright protection as long as they are recorded in some way (such as a book or a computer file).

### **All of the following are considered plagiarism:**

- turning in someone else's work as your own
- copying words or ideas from someone else without giving credit
- failing to put a quotation in quotation marks
- giving incorrect information about the source of a quotation
- changing words but copying the sentence structure of a source without giving credit

- copying so many words or ideas from a source that it makes up the majority of your work, whether you give credit or not (see our section on "fair use" rules)

Most cases of plagiarism can be avoided, however, by citing sources. Simply acknowledging that certain material has been borrowed, and providing your audience with the information necessary to find that source, is usually enough to prevent plagiarism. If you have retained the essential idea of an original source, and have not cited it, then no matter how drastically you may have altered its context or presentation, you have still plagiarized.” ([www.plagiarism.org](http://www.plagiarism.org))

**If you plagiarize, you will receive an F for the assignment in question and the matter will be referred to the Office of the Dean of the Humanities, Social Sciences, and Arts.**

*As Instructor, I reserve the right to amend, modify, or alter this syllabus as the situation may require.*

**Tentative Course Reading Topics (Downloads for each topic will be provided in the course.)**

Week 1	<u>Abortion/Personal Autonomy</u>
	<u>Forced C-Sections</u>
Week 2	<u>Egg and Sperm Donation</u>
	<u>Status of Embryos</u>
	<u>Cloning</u>
Week 3	<u>Stem Cell Research</u>
	<u>Designer Babies</u>
Week 4	<u>Assisted Suicide/Euthanasia</u>
	<u>Organ Transplantation</u>
Week 5	Powerpoint Presentations – <b>Due by 12:00 pm 07/07/2016</b>