

## COURSE SYLLABUS

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

**Instructor:** Professor April Pitts  
**Office Location:** SS – 163  
**Office Hours:** Professor Pitts is available by email or phone M – F, during normal business hours. If you would like a virtual meeting via Zoom, please email me to schedule the appointment. (If an email is sent after 5 pm on a Friday, I will respond the following Monday.)  
**Office Phone:** 903-886-5310 (Let it ring 4 times and it will be forwarded to my cell phone.) (Phone calls will be answered or returned during normal business hours.)  
**Email:** April.Pitts@tamuc.edu

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#### Required Texts

Reading assignments are provided by Professor Pitts and are posted in the 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: Discussion*** - 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 thoughtfully respond to at least five posts by other students. Posts and responses must be substantive with support from the readings. Short, unsupported posts and responses will be given **ZERO** points. The discussions will only be open for the week in which they are assigned.

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**Journal** - 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 write a separate journal entry for each article/case*. Your journal entries should be submitted before the discussion closes for the week. Failure to do so will result in a loss of up to 5 points off your final grade for each week complete notes are not turned in.

**Final Project:** 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. Written work will be graded not only on content, but also on writing style, **including punctuation and grammar**. Any collaboration with other students with regards to the substance of the power point will result in a failing grade for the course.

**Late Assignments:** Late work *will not* be allowed **unless** an acceptable reason for the request is submitted in writing to the professor, along with any applicable documentation. The professor will make the final determination with regards to whether the reason for late submission is acceptable.

**Extra Credit:** It is unfair to allow one student to submit an assignment for extra credit if the entire class does not also have the same opportunity. Therefore, individual student extra credit will not be allowed.

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

## Technology Requirements LMS

All course sections offered by Texas A&M University-Commerce have a corresponding course shell in the myLeo Online Learning Management System (LMS). Below are technical requirements

LMS Requirements:

<https://community.brightspace.com/s/article/Brightspace-Platform-Requirements>

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LMS Browser Support:

[https://documentation.brightspace.com/EN/brightspace/requirements/all/browser\\_support.htm](https://documentation.brightspace.com/EN/brightspace/requirements/all/browser_support.htm)

YouSeeU Virtual Classroom Requirements:

<https://support.youseeu.com/hc/en-us/articles/115007031107-Basic-System-Requirements>

## **Access and Navigation**

You will need your campus-wide ID (CWID) and password to log into the course. If you do not know your CWID or have forgotten your password, contact the Center for IT Excellence (CITE) at 903.468.6000 or [helpdesk@tamuc.edu](mailto:helpdesk@tamuc.edu).

**Note:** Personal computer and internet connection problems do not excuse the requirement to complete all course work in a timely and satisfactory manner. Each student needs to have a backup method to deal with these inevitable problems. These methods might include the availability of a backup PC at home or work, the temporary use of a computer at a friend's home, the local library, office service companies, Starbucks, a TAMUC campus open computer lab, etc.

## **Communication**

If you have any questions or are having difficulties with the course material, please contact your Instructor.

## **Technical Support**

If you are having technical difficulty with any part of Brightspace (D2L), please contact Brightspace Technical Support at 1-877-325-7778. Other support options can be found here:

<https://community.brightspace.com/support/s/contactsupport>

## **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.

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## **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@tamuc-commerce.edu](mailto:StudentDisabilityServices@tamuc-commerce.edu)**

## **Nondiscrimination Statement**

Texas A&M University - Commerce will comply in the classroom, and in online courses, with all federal and state laws prohibiting discrimination and related retaliation on the basis of race, color, religion, sex, national origin, disability, age, genetic information or veteran status. Further, an environment free from discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation, gender identity, or gender expression will be maintained.

## **Campus Carry Statement**

Texas Senate Bill - 11 (Government Code 411.2031, et al.) authorizes the carrying of a concealed handgun in Texas A&M University-Commerce buildings only by persons who have been issued and are in possession of a Texas License to Carry a Handgun. Qualified law enforcement officers or those who are otherwise authorized to carry a concealed handgun in the State of Texas are also permitted to do so. Pursuant to Penal Code (PC) 46.035 and A&M-Commerce Rule 34.06.02.R1, license holders may not carry a concealed handgun in restricted locations. For a list of locations, please refer to <http://www.tamuc.edu/aboutUs/policiesProceduresStandardsStatements/rulesProcedures/34SafetyOfEmployeesAndStudents/34.06.02.R1.pdf> (and/or consult your event organizer). Pursuant to PC 46.035, the open carrying of handguns is prohibited on all A&M-Commerce campuses. Report violations to the University Police Department at 903-886-5868 or call 9-1-1.

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## **“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 Provost’s Office.**

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

**Tentative Course Reading Topics (Downloads and links to reading material for each topic will be provided in the course.)**

Week 1	<u>Abortion</u>
Week 2	<u>Status of Embryos</u> <u>Designer Babies</u>
Week 3	<u>Transgender Issues</u> <u>Vaccinations</u>
Week 4	<u>Assisted Suicide/Euthanasia</u> <u>Organ Transplantation</u>
Week 5	Powerpoint Presentations Due