

*E452 Contemporary Medical Bioethics and Pastoral Response*

**Meadville Lombard Theological School**

**Fall 2007**

**Online Course October 1 – December 5, 2007**

**Goal:**

The goal of this course is to provide students with general knowledge about major contemporary bioethical issues that have significant religious importance and to introduce students to conceptual analysis in medical ethics. Personal attitudes will be examined and pastoral care opportunities explored.

**Learning Objectives:**

- 1) Explore medical, interpersonal, social, and theological/ministerial dimensions of contemporary issues in health care ethics.
- 2) Acquire factual knowledge about new biomedical technologies and the moral/theological challenges posed by use.
- 3) Develop awareness of the dimensions and complexities of providing advocacy and pastoral care to people from diverse cultural and religious backgrounds.
- 4) Recognize, analyze, and justify and respond when faced with an ethical problem in a pastoral setting.
- 5) Examine and clarify personal beliefs and challenges to providing care and leadership in a morally ambiguous world of health care.

**Required Text:**

*On Moral Medicine: Theological Perspectives in Medical Ethics* edited by Stephen E. Lammers and Allen Verhey, 2nd ed, \$49, ISBN 0-8028-4249-6, William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co, 1998. (Used copies on Amazon.com)

**Other Required Readings:**

*The Death of Ivan Ilych*, by Leo Tolstoy

Articles to be posted later.

**Week 1**

**Introduction**

Personal Attitudes About biomedical issues and medical technologies  
Advanced Medical Directives

**Week 2**

**On Being Human: Illness, Suffering & Dying**

Whole Person Care  
Cultural/Religious Diversity

**Week 3**

**Principles of Biomedical Ethics**

**Week 4 Moral Choices and Pastoral Response – Method for Decision Making and Ministry**

**Week 5 Comparative Approaches to Religious Ethics – (Jewish, Islam, Christian & Secular)**

**Weeks 6 & 7 Moral and Theological Ethics: Critical Viewpoints at End of Life**

life sustaining treatments  
refusing treatment  
do not resuscitate orders  
withdrawal/withholding  
forgoing nutrition and hydration  
medical futility  
euthanasia and physician assisted suicide  
terminal sedation

**Week 8 & 9 Moral and Theological Ethics: Critical Viewpoints at Beginning of Life**

pre-natal screening and interventions  
sex selection  
*in vitro* fertilization  
egg and sperm donation, and the use of donated genetic material  
surrogate births, embryo adoption

**Week 10 Religious/Ethical Issues in Genetics**

genetic testing  
genetic research and engineering  
medical interventions (gene therapy)

**Week 11 Reflection: Challenges for Ministry**

**Course Requirements:**

- 1) Active participation in group discussions and on-line postings
- 2) Completion of assigned reading prior to class
- 3) Case analyses and short written reflections (2-4 pp)
- 4) Final Paper (12-15 pages)  
Discussion of one topic presented in class. Paper should reflect a capacity for self-evaluation (reflection on the role of the clergy and personal ethical position), moral reflection (an informed theological and moral reflection that embraces contrary positions on a topic) and ethical reasoning (a basic understanding of ethical principles and an analysis of an ethical dilemma)
- 5) Course evaluation form