

Bioethics

Degree Offered

Master of Arts

Also offered - **Graduate Certificate in Clinical Bioethics**

Program Description

The Master of Arts in Bioethics Program provides advanced training in bioethics for professionals, academics, and other interested individuals in health care, law, the humanities, and public policy who wish to become prepared for teaching, research, policy development, and/or clinical work in the field of bioethics. The program curriculum consists of a robust combination of theoretical and clinical course offerings that provide a strong foundational knowledge base upon which students develop the skills and understanding necessary to analyze and address the difficult and evolving ethical issues encountered in health care today.

The program allows for full-time or part-time study and is offered through an online curriculum that makes advanced education in bioethics available to working professionals and other interested individuals from across the nation. The curriculum requires participation in one summer intensive session which includes spending one week on the campus of the Medical College of Wisconsin in Milwaukee. All remaining courses and credits may be completed online.

Program Admissions Requirements

*In addition to the general **Graduate School admission requirements**, this program has additional specific requirements.*

Interested individuals from all disciplines and backgrounds with a commitment to the field of bioethics are encouraged to apply.

Program Degree Requirements

The Master of Arts in Bioethics Program has three main components: (1) Required Courses, (2) Clinical Bioethics Experience, and (3) Master's Thesis or Final Paper.

The curriculum for the Master of Arts in Bioethics program requires completing a total of 30 credits. Students should aim to complete the required courses (10210, 10209, 10223) early in their program, as they provide the foundation for the electives and the comprehensive exam.

The remaining credits of the program are elective courses of the student's choosing and may include credits for the Master's Thesis, if a student chooses to write a thesis.

Students are also required to participate in one summer intensive session which includes one week spent on the MCW campus. This on-campus component provides students an opportunity to engage in an intensive seminar experience in which they develop facilitation and peer education skills. The on-campus portion of the summer intensive session meets for one week in June. Students meet for 6-8 hours per day, 5 days per week during the on-campus week.

Once the core curriculum (10209, 10210, 10223) and elective credits combined reach a total minimum of 24 credits, each student will complete a written comprehensive examination. This exam is designed to challenge the student's ability to critically analyze selected bioethical issues in depth.

Clinical Bioethics Experience

The clinical bioethics experience requirement reflects the significance of clinical experience in medicine and/or biomedical research to the degree. The program acknowledges that many students, as health care professionals or researchers, may already have experience in clinical ethics or research ethics. Students can satisfy the clinical bioethics experience requirement either through proven professional experience in clinical ethics or human subjects research ethics, or through taking a course on clinical ethics committees and ethics consultation.

Master's Thesis or Final Paper

Students choose to write either a traditional Master's Thesis or a Final Paper at the culmination of the program. Students choosing the Master's Thesis will earn six credits for their research and writing work. Students choosing the Final Paper must complete six additional course credits in lieu of the Master's Thesis credits in addition to writing a paper of publishable quality.

When all of the course credit requirements have been met, the Comprehensive Exam has been completed successfully, and the Master's thesis or final paper submitted, the Program will be completed by means of a successful oral defense of either the Master's thesis or the final paper.

Required Courses

10209 Clinical Topics in Bioethics. 3 credits.

This is a survey course covering various contemporary topics in bioethics, focusing on issues encountered in clinical practice. Areas to be studied include end-of-life decision making, the family in medical decision making, issues in clinical research, euthanasia, and pediatric issues.

10210 Philosophical Bioethics. 3 credits.

This course provides the critical basis for the ethical analysis of biomedical issues. It consists of lectures, seminar presentations, and class discussion of the foundations of moral philosophy, including the concept of morality, moral relativism, classical ethical theories, contemporary methods in bioethics, rights, justice, and the justifications of moral beliefs.

10223 Law and Bioethics. 3 credits.

This course provides an introduction to legal principles and legal precedent relevant to issues in bioethics, aimed at providing the foundation for understanding relevant law concerning these issues.

10231 Bioethics Consulting and Committees. 1 credit. (Required for students with no clinical ethics experience.)

Through attendance of ethics committee meetings and ethics consultations, this course will familiarize students with both the theoretical and practical aspects of institutional and consultative ethics. This course is required for students with no professional experience in clinical bioethics.

Elective Courses

10200 Clinical Bioethics I. 3 credits.

This course provides an introduction to medical ethics in the clinical setting. It consists of daily rounds with various medical or surgical teams in selected hospital treatment areas, plus a weekly session to discuss and analyze issues encountered. Enrollment limited.

10203 Justice and Healthcare. 3 credits.

This course addresses some of the critical issues of bioethics as the principle and concept of justice relate to them. Topics include the concept of justice as it relates to health and health care, rationing, the form and substance of national health policy, and managed care.

10205 Introduction to Hospital Medicine. 3 credits.

This course provides an introduction to human pathophysiology and the functioning of a contemporary medical center. It consists of discussions of human pathophysiology and discussions with hospital professionals about their role in patient care.

10206 Ethics and the Law. 3 credits.

This course explores the legal and ethical issues impacting physician

conduct, regulation, and professionalism. The course will provide a general overview of the various factors that influence physician conduct and regulation, such as codes of ethics, licensing requirements, the court system, and ethics mechanisms such as ethics committee and institutional review boards.

10207 Introduction to Research Ethics. *3 credits.*

This course provides students with a comprehensive introduction to the ethical issues involved in scientific, animal and human subjects research. After a brief look back at the history of research ethics, students will spend time considering issues that impact research in both the laboratory setting and in the clinical setting. This course provides the necessary research ethics instruction required to satisfy the United States Public Health Service Policy on Instruction in the Responsible Conduct of Research for institutions receiving research funds from the Department of Health and Human Services. (Issued December 1, 2000.)

10211 Ethics Beyond the Acute Care Hospital. *3 credits.*

This course examines ethical issues in rehabilitation care, psychiatric care, hospice, long-term care, dental care and other settings. The focus is on developing a framework and language in which to discuss and analyze moral problems in these settings. Care settings to be covered may vary.

10216 Race and Trust in Biomedical Research. *3 credits.*

Using the ethical principle of social justice, this course will provide an overview of society's role in promoting or ensuring individual and collective health through biomedical research. The course will examine how attitudes toward race and difference have impacted protections of basic human rights in biomedical research, document past and present abuses in biomedical research, and examine how lack of trust stemming from past abuses impacts the ability to attain, maintain, and promote well-being through biomedical research.

10220 Critical Approaches to Bioethics. *3 credits.*

Various alternative approaches in ethics and biomedical ethics will be explored in order to provide a broad understanding of the range of critical social and philosophical thought on biomedical issues.

10222 Ethics and Integrity in Science. *1 credit.*

This course provides the basis for understanding the ethical issues related to basic scientific and medical research, including animal and human subject research, fraud and misconduct, and governmental, institutional, and researcher responsibilities.

10225 Religion and Bioethics. *3 credits.*

This course will examine the diverse range of religious resources that are pertinent to the field of bioethics. Students will explore topics in bioethics, such as euthanasia, abortion and informed consent from the

perspectives of various religious traditions.

10226 Regulatory Issues in Human Subjects Research Protections. *3 credits.*

There is no question that the fruits of research have fueled medical progress. Yet, the history of research involving human subjects is not unblemished. Federal regulations, based on ethical principles set forth in the Belmont Report, now govern much of the research undertaken in the United States. In this course, we will explore the history and substance of research regulations in the United States, the application of the regulations to specific research issues, and situations where the regulations do not provide clear guidance.

10228 Current Topics in Research Ethics. *3 credits.*

Rapidly evolving scientific and technologic capabilities in medicine combined with an ever-increasing demand to translate these scientific developments to the bedside presents new challenges to regulating human subjects research. This course seeks to keep pace with many of these new and emerging challenges, providing students an opportunity to critically examine the ethical and legal implications of these topics. Specific topics for analysis will be drawn from the current medical literature, popular press, and evolving policy guidance.

10233 Issues in Pediatric Ethics. *3 credits.*

This course will discuss the question of children's rights, the social value of children and cross-cultural issues of childhood. The objective of the course is to examine our individual assumptions about childhood and parenting that form the basis of approaches to pediatric ethics.

10234 Ethics and Human Reproduction. *3 credits.*

This course will provide an opportunity for students to explore some of the ethical issues related to human reproduction, including assisted reproductive technologies, genetics, and cloning. Students will also examine the various religious and philosophical arguments, as well as international perspectives, surrounding issues of human reproduction.

10275 Special Topics in Bioethics. *3 credits.*

This course focuses on topics of special interest in bioethics. Examples of topics include neuroethics, ethics at the end of life, ethical issues in mental health, and political issues in bioethics and public health.

10295 Reading and Research. *1-3 credit(s).*

This independent study course is available to all Master's degree-seeking students, and awards credit for pursuing background reading and new research in areas of particular student interest.

10297 Master's Consultation. *1-2 credit(s).*

This course will familiarize and train students in the theoretical and practical aspects of ethics consultation through a seminar, supervised practical experience in doing ethics consultations, and writing summaries and reporting these consultations at monthly ethics

committee meetings.

10298 Bioethics Journal Club. *1 credit.*

This journal club is a student and faculty forum for the discussion of a variety of contemporary issues in bioethics. Its informal setting allows for open discussion on wide-ranging topics.

10299 Master's Thesis. *3-6 credits.*

Students may choose to undertake and complete research culminating in a master's thesis. Both scholarly and quantitative research are acceptable. This research is directed by a member of the Bioethics faculty.

10444 Research Ethics Discussion Series. *1 credit. Prerequisite: 10222 Ethics and Integrity in Science.*

The course covers major topics in research ethics as they apply to biological scientists. Sessions begin with a brief overview of the topic provided by a faculty member with expertise in that area. The initial presentation is followed by comments from a panel of three or four faculty members who will discuss the topic from their particular perspective and experience. Topics covered include plagiarism, experimental design and data collection, data manipulation, publication and authorship, sharing information and reagents, animal use, patient/human subject interactions, IRBs, whistle blowing and conflicts of interest.