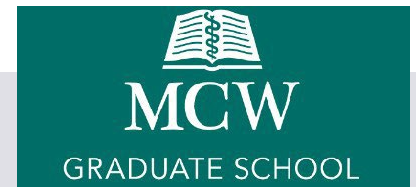


2025-26

BIOETHICS

Degree Offered: Master of Arts



Program Description

The Master of Arts in Bioethics Program provides advanced training in bioethics for professional, 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.

Admission Requirements

In addition to the general [Graduate School admission requirements](#), this program has no additional specific requirements; however, interested individuals from all disciplines and backgrounds with a commitment to the field of bioethics are encouraged to apply.

Credits Required to Graduate

30 credits

Program Credit 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.

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

BIOE 10209 Clinical Topics in Bioethics. 3 credits.

This course will provide an overview of the major areas of clinical bioethics. These are the topics that clinical ethicists commonly wrestle with in their role as consultation leaders, ethics committee members and teachers of contemporary bioethics. These have not yet been resolved to everyone's satisfaction. Students will examine informed consent, decision making, the role of advance directives, treatment limitations and appropriate end of life care. Further, students will look at the role of both physician and nurse in these dilemmas as well as the role of the ethics committee. Finally, students will tackle some more global issues that are still within the clinical arena--such as epidemiology and the concerns with emergency preparedness, institutional ethics and, and research ethics.

BIOE 10210 Philosophical Bioethics. 3 credits.

In this course, students will explore the foundations of philosophical ethics in the West, and how early themes shape current work in philosophical bioethics. To this end, students will read works by Aristotle, Kant, and Mill, focusing on their theoretical approaches to ethics. Detailed discussion will focus on the ethics theories known as virtue theory, casuistry, deontology, utilitarianism, communitarianism, and principlism, considering both their historical origins and modern interpretations. Students will apply these theories to topical themes of moral development, abortion, assisted death and others, noting their strengths and weaknesses.

BIOE 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.

Required Courses as Needed

BIOE 10002 Master's Thesis Continuation. 0 credits.

This is a form of registration available to students who have completed all of the required coursework, including thesis credits but have not yet completed the writing of the Thesis. Continuation status is limited to three consecutive terms following the completion of Thesis credits.

BIOE 10231 Bioethics Consulting and Committees. *1 credit.*

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

BIOE 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.

BIOE 10203 Justice and Healthcare. *3 credits.*

This course will provide an overview of Justice and Health Care. We will begin with a close look at a number of philosophical perspectives on distributive justice, including John Rawls' Theory of Justice, Utilitarianism, Equality of Opportunity, various theories of Equality, and the concept of Triage. Students will then apply these perspectives to issues in access to healthcare/health insurance coverage, genetic enhancement, and the distribution of risks and benefits of medical research. The second part of the course will focus on the effects of managed care on contemporary medical practice in the US. In particular, students will examine how managed care arrangements alter the physician-patient relationship, the factors which have led to the development of managed care reimbursement systems, state and federal health care plans, and in particular the Oregon Plan.

BIOE 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.

BIOE 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.

BIOE 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.)

BIOE 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.

BIOE 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.

BIOE 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.

BIOE 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. Bioethics 10222 is offered in the spring and summer terms only.

BIOE 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.

BIOE 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.

BIOE 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.

BIOE 10231 Bioethics Consulting and Committees. *1 credit.*

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.

BIOE 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.

BIOE 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.

BIOE 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.

BIOE 10295 Reading and Research. *1-3 credits.*

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.

BIOE 10297 Master's Consultation. *1-2 credits.*

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.

BIOE 10298 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.

BIOE 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.

BIOE 10444 Research Ethics Discussion Series.

1 credit.

Prerequisite: 10222 Ethics and Integrity in Science.

The course is directed by members of the Bioethics Faculty and provides facilitated discussions of a series of topics in research ethics. Discussions are led by members of the Basic Science faculty and are focused on ethical issues that commonly come up in biomedical research. The course is meant to not only reinforce the basic ethics

taught in the online course Ethics and Integrity in Science, which is a prerequisite, but also to explore the gray areas of the individual topics. The intent is to offer students illustrative examples of ethical issues that might arise in their careers, to emphasize the ethical principles that apply in such situations, and to provide practical guidance on how these types of situations should be correctly handled. This course is offered as a discussion series. Students are expected to attend and participate in the discussion. Bioethics 10444 is offered in the spring term only.

Contact information: gradschool@mcw.edu | (414) 955-8218