Bioethics in the 21st Century
Philosophy 80G / Biomolecular Engineering 80G
Fall 2010

Instructors:
Dr. Mark Akeson, Department of Biomolecular Engineering, UCSC
Email: makeson@soe.ucsc.edu
Office Hours: Tuesday and Wednesday, 2:00-3:00 PM
Physical Science Building (PSB), Room 408

Dr. Jacob Metcalf, Science & Justice Training Program/Sociology, UCSC
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Office Hours: Tuesday, 10:30-11:45 AM
College 8, Room 320

Teaching Assistants:
John Archie: 80G@jarchie.com
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Benjamin Rogers: bdrogers@ucsc.edu
Audrey Kittock: akittock@gmail.com

Class schedule: Tuesday/Thursday, 12:00-1:45 pm, Earth & Marine Science B206

Readings:
Weston, Anthony; A Rulebook for Arguments, 3rd Ed. (~$7 at Baytree Bookstore)
Skloot, Rebecca; The Immortal Life of Henrietta Lacks, Crown 2010.

Weston is available at the bookstore, but Skloot is not. We recommend you purchase it online for half
the cover price (Amazon now offers free 2 day shipping if you have a .edu address) and/or share it
with a classmate. Skloot is due toward the end of the course should be read in advance. Additional
readings and multimedia materials will be distributed via eCommons. You will be required to print
some readings in order to discuss them closely in section (<100 pages total). Otherwise, printing is
optional, but reading is not.

Course Goals & Structure:
Bioethics in the 21st Century aims to give students a rigorous foundation for understanding the
scientific and ethical issues raised by biotechnology. This course is designed to meet general
education requirements, and will serve both science majors and non-science majors at all levels of
experience. Interaction among students and faculty from the humanities and sciences is a strength of
the course.

A typical week will be as follows. On Tuesday a guest speaker will present a one-hour seminar in a
specific area of science, business, or ethics. The speaker will teach from his or her background,
particularly focusing on experiences related to the ethical questions addressed by the course. This
one-hour talk will be followed by a discussion with the guest speaker. Attendance during the
discussion is mandatory, and active student participation will be expected. On Thursday, the
instructor from the Philosophy Department will lecture on the ethical issues raised by that speaker’s
topic, and the instructor from the Biomolecular Engineering Department will lecture on the basic
science needed to understand the next week’s expert presentation.
eCommons: ecommons.ucsc.edu
The day-to-day functioning of this course will rely heavily on eCommons, including the schedule of speakers, downloading required and suggested readings or online videos, distribution of the weekly assignments, and lecture slides. eCommons can be accessed at the above address or via your my.ucsc.edu page. Students are expected to check eCommons for additional information on a regular basis, meaning at least several times a week. If students have confusion or trouble with eCommons, they are expected to ask for help from their instructor, TA, and/or campus technical support. Please note that in order for eCommons to function, your computer’s web browser must be supported and configured correctly, instructions for which are available at the above site. If you are already enrolled, eCommons will recognize you as such. If you are wait-listed or adding to the class, send an email to Dr. Metcalf to be added as an auditor until you become officially enrolled.

Note: Readings and assignments are due on the day listed in the calendar function.
Note 2: Bookmark the site ecommons.ucsc.edu, not the login page.

Discussion Sections:
In the discussion sections, students will more fully explore the issues covered in lecture and in the readings. This course relies heavily on discussion, and attendance at weekly TA-led discussion sections is mandatory. Students are expected to come to discussion section with all relevant readings and lecture notes and to be prepared to participate. The instructors and teaching assistants reserve the discretion to give failing grades to students who miss three or more discussion sections.

Student Evaluation:
Midterm (November 4, 2010, regular class time) 25%
Final Exam (December 7, 2010, 12:00-3:00 PM) 30%
Short Essays (Four essays, 7.5% each)* 30%
Discussion section attendance and participation** 15%

* Each student is responsible for four out of six short essays, due Thursday in class. The new assignments will be posted on eCommons by Friday. Essays will NOT be accepted late. A late essay will be counted as one of the two essays students may skip. ALL students are expected to read ALL assigned texts even if they do not write that week’s assignment.

** All students are expected to attend and participate in a weekly discussion section. Grades will be assigned based on attendance record and quality of participation. Attending and participating every week is a good way to boost one’s grade.

Absence from the midterm or final exam will be granted for medical or family emergency reasons only. An incomplete grade or an opportunity to make-up the points will be assigned to the student at the instructors’ discretion. Excused absences will not be granted for non-emergency reasons.

Disability Resource Center: If you qualify for classroom accommodations because of a disability, please submit your Accommodation Authorization from the Disability Resource Center (DRC) to one of the instructors in a timely manner, preferably within the first two weeks of the quarter. Contact the DRC at 459-2089 (voice), 459-4806 (TTY).

Academic Misconduct: By enrolling in the University, students are automatically agreeing to abide by University policies, including those on academic misconduct. Academic integrity and scholarship are core values that should guide our conduct and decisions as members of the UCSC community. Plagiarism and cheating contradict these values, and so are very serious academic offenses. Penalties can include a failing grade in an assignment or in the course, or suspension or expulsion from the university. Students are expected to familiarize themselves with and follow citation practices. The instructors in this course will pursue disciplinary action in all instances of academic misconduct.