PHIL2060
Bioethics, Genes and Biotechnology
Session 2, Special circumstances 2021
Department of Philosophy

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Disclaimer
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Notice
Some on-campus classes have moved online for the first two weeks of Session, before returning to campus in Week 3. If you are studying a unit outside of the primary Session 2 timetable, please contact your teaching staff team for further details.

Some classes/teaching activities cannot be moved online and must be taught on campus. To find out if you are enrolled in one of these classes/teaching activities, you can check to see if your unit is on the list of units with mandatory on-campus classes/teaching activities.

Your Unit Convenor will provide more information via an iLearn announcement when your iLearn unit becomes available.
# General Information

**Unit convenor and teaching staff**

Convenor, Lecturer, Tutor  
Mianna Lotz  
[mianna.lotz@mq.edu.au](mailto:mianna.lotz@mq.edu.au)  
Contact via Mianna.Lotz@mq.edu.au  
By appointment

Tutor, Lecturer  
Hojjat Soofi  
[hojjat.soofi@mq.edu.au](mailto:hojjat.soofi@mq.edu.au)  
Contact via hojjat.soofi@mq.edu.au  
By appointment

**Credit points**

10

**Prerequisites**

40cp at 1000 level or above

**Corequisites**

**Co_badged status**

**Unit description**

This unit introduces students to a selection of the most pressing ethical questions and concerns raised by current and recent developments in the so-called 'biotech revolution', especially in the sphere of genetic technology. The first section of the unit provides an introduction to ethical reasoning, to issues of social justice and to the relationship between social values, scientific enquiry and research ethics in the context of biotechnology. The second section focuses on the ethics of gene technology in the spheres of human medicine and reproduction, including: genetic screening/testing; gene editing and therapies; genetic enhancement; and human reproductive cloning. In the third section we explore the impact of biotechnologies on other aspects of human, non-human animal and environmental welfare including: genetic engineering of plants and animals (GMOs); biofortification of food; bio-prospecting; and commercial exploitation of human genetic material. The unit is an ethics unit, not a science unit, and prior scientific knowledge is not required.

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# Important Academic Dates

Information about important academic dates including deadlines for withdrawing from units are available at [https://students.mq.edu.au/important-dates](https://students.mq.edu.au/important-dates)
Learning Outcomes
On successful completion of this unit, you will be able to:

**ULO1:** demonstrate a sound understanding of the major ethical issues posed by specific biotechnological advances.

**ULO2:** analyse and critically evaluate relevant case studies and scientific contexts, as well as theories and arguments in the relevant literature.

**ULO3:** develop and apply skills and concepts involved in ethical reasoning and argumentation to past, current and future controversies in biotechnological and other sciences

**ULO4:** construct sound arguments in support of your own ethical positions, judgements and values.

**ULO5:** Express orally and in written communication with improved clarity of thought, expression, and argumentation.

General Assessment Information

**NB:** Covid-restrictions may restrict access to campus and require tutorials/STGAs and examinations to be held online. You will be advised of the available teaching and examination modes at the start of semester.

**Extensions:** Extensions must be sought via the MQ Special Consideration application procedure, in advance of the due date. Extensions will only be granted for medical or equivalent reasons, supported by documentation (medical certificate or equivalent). Please note that workload in other units, and employment outside of university, will not be accepted as grounds for an extension.

**LATE SUBMISSION POLICY:**

Unless a Special Consideration request has been submitted and approved,

(a) a penalty for lateness will apply – 10 marks out of 100 credit will be deducted per day for assignments submitted after the due date – and

(b) no assignment will be accepted more than seven days (incl. weekends after the original submission date.

Assessment Tasks

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Weighting</th>
<th>Hurdle</th>
<th>Due</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Online Intro and film</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>23:59pm Fri 6 August</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Online quizzes

**Assessment Type**: Quiz/Test  
**Indicative Time on Task**: 20 hours  
**Due**: 23:59pm Sunday, weekly  
**Weighting**: 20%

10 online quizzes

On successful completion you will be able to:

- demonstrate a sound understanding of the major ethical issues posed by specific biotechnological advances.
- develop and apply skills and concepts involved in ethical reasoning and argumentation to past, current and future controversies in biotechnological and other sciences.
- Express orally and in written communication with improved clarity of thought, expression, and argumentation.

### Essay

**Assessment Type**: Participatory task  
**Indicative Time on Task**: 2.0 hours  
**Due**: Either: 23:59pm Fri 17 Sept OR 23:59pm Fri 5 Nov  
**Weighting**: 30%

On successful completion you will be able to:

- demonstrate a sound understanding of the major ethical issues posed by specific biotechnological advances.
- develop and apply skills and concepts involved in ethical reasoning and argumentation to past, current and future controversies in biotechnological and other sciences.
- Express orally and in written communication with improved clarity of thought, expression, and argumentation.

### Online Examination

**Assessment Type**: Participatory task  
**Indicative Time on Task**:  
**Due**: During examination period  
**Weighting**: 25%

### Active participation and engagement

**Assessment Type**: Participatory task  
**Indicative Time on Task**:  
**Due**: Ongoing  
**Weighting**: 15%

### Online Intro and film reflection

**Assessment Type**: Participatory task  
**Indicative Time on Task**: 2.0 hours  
**Due**: 23:59pm Fri 6 August  
**Weighting**: 10%

Students introduce themselves online and post a brief reflection on the film in Lecture 1

On successful completion you will be able to:

- demonstrate a sound understanding of the major ethical issues posed by specific biotechnological advances.
- develop and apply skills and concepts involved in ethical reasoning and argumentation to past, current and future controversies in biotechnological and other sciences.
- Express orally and in written communication with improved clarity of thought, expression, and argumentation.
• demonstrate a sound understanding of the major ethical issues posed by specific biotechnological advances.
• analyse and critically evaluate relevant case studies and scientific contexts, as well as theories and arguments in the relevant literature.
• Express orally and in written communication with improved clarity of thought, expression, and argumentation.

Essay
Assessment Type ¹: Essay
Indicative Time on Task ²: 30 hours
Due: EITHER: 23:59pm Fri 17 Sept OR 23:59pm Fri 5 Nov
Weighting: 30%

Students complete a 1500 word argumentative essay.

On successful completion you will be able to:
• demonstrate a sound understanding of the major ethical issues posed by specific biotechnological advances.
• analyse and critically evaluate relevant case studies and scientific contexts, as well as theories and arguments in the relevant literature.
• develop and apply skills and concepts involved in ethical reasoning and argumentation to past, current and future controversies in biotechnological and other sciences
• construct sound arguments in support of your own ethical positions, judgements and values.
• Express orally and in written communication with improved clarity of thought, expression, and argumentation.

Online Examination
Assessment Type ¹: Examination
Indicative Time on Task ²: 25 hours
Due: During examination period
Weighting: 25%

Students complete a 1.5hr timed online examination during the Examinations period.
On successful completion you will be able to:

- demonstrate a sound understanding of the major ethical issues posed by specific biotechnological advances.
- analyse and critically evaluate relevant case studies and scientific contexts, as well as theories and arguments in the relevant literature.
- develop and apply skills and concepts involved in ethical reasoning and argumentation to past, current and future controversies in biotechnological and other sciences.
- construct sound arguments in support of your own ethical positions, judgements and values.
- Express orally and in written communication with improved clarity of thought, expression, and argumentation.

**Active participation and engagement**

Assessment Type 1: Participatory task
Indicative Time on Task 2: 15 hours
Due: Ongoing
Weighting: 15%

Students actively participate in 70% of zoom tutorials OR online discussion boards (as agreed with Convenor) demonstrating familiarity with readings and contributing actively to discussions.

On successful completion you will be able to:

- demonstrate a sound understanding of the major ethical issues posed by specific biotechnological advances.
- develop and apply skills and concepts involved in ethical reasoning and argumentation to past, current and future controversies in biotechnological and other sciences.
- construct sound arguments in support of your own ethical positions, judgements and values.
- Express orally and in written communication with improved clarity of thought, expression, and argumentation.

1 If you need help with your assignment, please contact:

- the academic teaching staff in your unit for guidance in understanding or completing this type of assessment
the Learning Skills Unit for academic skills support.

2 Indicative time-on-task is an estimate of the time required for completion of the assessment task and is subject to individual variation.

Delivery and Resources

NOTE: It is expected that students will listen to ALL LECTURES and will complete ALL ASSESSMENT COMPONENTS in this unit. You do not need to have passed each assessment to pass the unit, but it is expected that all assessments are attempted.

General Submission Procedure: Essays and presentations (if applicable) must be submitted via TurnItIn at the correct link provided on the Unit iLearn site. Please note that there will be separate links for MOLS8002 and PHIL2060 students. Please ensure that you use the correct link for your assessment!

DEVELOPMENT:

Lectures in this unit will be recorded and available online via Echo360 and the unit iLearn site.

Tutorials/STGAs will be either on campus or on zoom (or both) depending upon Covid restrictions.

READING: All required readings are available in Leganto on the unit iLearn site. Supplementary reading is required for Essays. Suggestions for Supplementary Reading will be provided in lectures and on iLearn.

Unit Schedule

SECTION I: (WEEKS 1–5) FRAMEWORKS FOR AN ETHICS OF BIOTECHNOLOGY

WEEK 1 (beginning July 26): What is ethics? What is ethical reasoning?

Required reading:

Cohen, S.: ‘What is Ethics?’

NOTE: NO TUTORIALS/STGAs in Week 1.

WEEK 2 (beginning Aug 2): How can ethical theories help us think about bioethics and biotechnology?

Part I: Consequentialist and Autonomy-based ethics.

Required reading:


NOTE: Online Discussion Exercise due: by 23:59pm Fri 6 August.

WEEK 3 (beginning Aug 9): How can ethical theories help us think about bioethics and biotechnology?

Part II: Rights-based, Virtue-based, and Care-based ethics.

Required reading:

Rachels, J. Chapter 11, ‘Feminism and the Ethics of Care’, pp. 133-142.


WEEK 4 (beginning Aug 16): How do we do ethical science and research?

Required reading:


Glass, B. ‘The Ethical Basis of Science.’

WEEK 5 (beginning Aug 23): Does biotech have lessons to learn from eugenic history?

Required reading:

Wikler, D. and Barondess, J. ‘Bioethics and Anti-Bioethics in Light of Nazi Medicine: What Must We Remember?’

Buchanan, A. et al: Excerpt from ‘Eugenics and Its Shadow’

Optional additional reading:

Buchanan, A. et al: Excerpt from ‘Genes, Justice and Human Nature.’

SECTION II (WEEKS 6–10): BIOTECHNOLOGY IN HUMAN HEALTH AND REPRODUCTION

WEEK 6 (beginning Aug 30): Genetic screening, testing and diagnosis – Is it always better to know?

Required reading:

Clarke, A. ‘Genetic Screening and Counselling.’

Steinbock, B. ‘Preimplantation Genetic Diagnosis and Embryo Selection.’
WEEK 7 (beginning Sept 6): Human embryo research – Do human embryonic stem cells have moral status? What about synthetic embryos [SHEEFs]?

Required reading:
Harris, J. ‘Stem Cells, Sex and Procreation’
Pera, M. et al. ‘What if stem cells turn into embryos in a dish?’

Optional additional reading:
Aach J. et al. ‘Addressing the ethical issues raised by synthetic human entities with embryo like features’. eLife 2017;6: e20674. DOI: 10.7554/eLife.20674

MONDAY 13 SEPT – FRIDAY 24 SEPT (inclusive): MID SEMESTER BREAK

* ESSAY OPTION 1 DEADLINE: 23:59pm Friday 17 September

WEEK 8 (beginning Sept 27): Would anything be wrong with human cloning for procreative purposes?

Required reading:
Brock, D. ‘Cloning Human Beings: An Assessment of the Ethical Issues Pro and Con.’

Optional additional reading:
Holm, S. ‘A Life in the Shadow: One Reason Why We Should Not Clone Human Beings.’

WEEK 9 (beginning Oct 4): Should we edit the human genome for future generations?

Required reading:
Chadwick, R. ‘Gene Therapy.’
Smolensky. S. ‘CRISPR/Cas9 and Germline Modification: New Difficulties in Obtaining Informed Consent’

Optional additional reading:

WEEK 10 (beginning Oct 11): If genetic therapy is ok, what about genetic enhancement?

Required reading:
Singer, P. ‘Parental Choice and Human Improvement’.
Optional additional reading:
Resnik, D and Vorhaus, D. ‘Genetic Modification and Genetic Determinism’.

SECTION III (WEEKS 11-12): BIOTECHNOLOGY IN WIDER CONTEXT – COMMERCE AND FOOD

WEEK 11 (beginning Oct 18): Should human genes be privately ownable and commercially exploitable?

Required reading:
Chadwick, R. and Hedgecoe, A. ‘Commercial Exploitation of the Human Genome’
Optional additional reading:
Munzer, S. ‘Property, Patents and Genetic Material’

WEEK 12 (Oct 25): Can food biotechnology be the ‘fix’ for environmental and food scarcity problems?

Required reading:
Scott, D. ‘The Technological Fix Criticisms and the Agricultural Biotechnology Debate’
Thompson, P. ‘Ethical Issues in Food Biotechnology’

* ESSAY OPTION 2 DEADLINE: 23:59pm Friday 5 November

SEMESTER ENDS – EXAMINATIONS BEGIN

Policies and Procedures

Macquarie University policies and procedures are accessible from Policy Central (https://staff.mq.edu.au/work/strategy-planning-and-governance/university-policies-and-procedures/policy-central). Students should be aware of the following policies in particular with regard to Learning and Teaching:

- Academic Appeals Policy
- Academic Integrity Policy
- Academic Progression Policy
- Assessment Policy
- Fitness to Practice Procedure
• Grade Appeal Policy
• Complaint Management Procedure for Students and Members of the Public
• Special Consideration Policy *(Note: The Special Consideration Policy is effective from 4 December 2017 and replaces the Disruption to Studies Policy.)*

Students seeking more policy resources can visit the Student Policy Gateway (https://students.mq.edu.au/support/study/student-policy-gateway). It is your one-stop-shop for the key policies you need to know about throughout your undergraduate student journey.

If you would like to see all the policies relevant to Learning and Teaching visit Policy Central (https://staff.mq.edu.au/work/strategy-planning-and-governance/university-policies-and-procedures/policy-central).

**Student Code of Conduct**

Macquarie University students have a responsibility to be familiar with the Student Code of Conduct: https://students.mq.edu.au/admin/other-resources/student-conduct

**Results**

Results published on platform other than eStudent, (eg. iLearn, Coursera etc.) or released directly by your Unit Convenor, are not confirmed as they are subject to final approval by the University. Once approved, final results will be sent to your student email address and will be made available in eStudent. For more information visit ask.mq.edu.au or if you are a Global MBA student contact globalmba.support@mq.edu.au

**Student Support**

Macquarie University provides a range of support services for students. For details, visit http://students.mq.edu.au/support/

**Learning Skills**

Learning Skills (mq.edu.au/learningskills) provides academic writing resources and study strategies to help you improve your marks and take control of your study.

• Getting help with your assignment
• Workshops
• StudyWise
• Academic Integrity Module

The Library provides online and face to face support to help you find and use relevant information resources.

• Subject and Research Guides
• Ask a Librarian

**Student Enquiry Service**

For all student enquiries, visit Student Connect at ask.mq.edu.au
If you are a Global MBA student contact globalmba.support@mq.edu.au.

**Equity Support**

Students with a disability are encouraged to contact the Disability Service who can provide appropriate help with any issues that arise during their studies.

**IT Help**

For help with University computer systems and technology, visit [http://www.mq.edu.au/about_us/offices_and_units/information_technology/help/](http://www.mq.edu.au/about_us/offices_and_units/information_technology/help/).

When using the University's IT, you must adhere to the [Acceptable Use of IT Resources Policy](http://www.mq.edu.au/about_us/offices_and_units/information_technology/help/). The policy applies to all who connect to the MQ network including students.

**Changes from Previous Offering**

Changes to topics and readings. Removal of timed online test, replaced by 10 online quizzes.