HEALTH CARE ETHICS

Program Director: Sarah Lux, PhD
Program Office: Department of Interdisciplinary Studies

Graduate Study in Health Care Ethics

The M.S. in Health Care Ethics degree program is designed for students who are seeking a deeper understanding of the impact of relevant cultural, philosophical, political, and legal issues in health care practices and policies, especially regarding their impact on vulnerable populations. Pursuant to promoting the Jesuit value of concern for people who are poor and marginalized, students will be encouraged to critically reflect on their own attitudes, actions, and personal development during the program. Faculty will draw strongly upon a variety of disciplines to form and educate agents of change through intellectual and humanistic engagement with the enterprises of health care.

Program Goals

Students who complete the M.S. in Health Care Ethics degree will be able to:

1. Discern the ethical problems, ambiguities, controversies, and assumptions in health care practices, systems, policies, and laws.
2. Discuss how the general concerns of ethics, particularly regarding vulnerability and marginalization, apply to health care practices, systems, policies, and laws.
3. Critically reflect on personal and professional attitudes, actions, and development in response to readings, discussions, clinical cases, or simulations.
4. Draw upon the humanities and liberal arts in the process of ethical reflection about the structures of health care.
5. Compare and contrast the following from an ethical perspective: health care practices, systems, and cultures at national and international levels.
6. When presented with an issue of ethical concern, apply ethical principles, norms, and theories; provide justification for a particular response or course of action in a persuasive manner; anticipate counter arguments; and offer suitable rebuttals.
7. Educate others about ethical issues in health care.
8. Evaluate ethical policy documents to improve the ethical quality of health care.
9. Facilitate open discussion among multiple stakeholders in ethically complex situations.
10. Synthesize and publicly communicate findings from research and critical reflection on a selected topic of ethical concern.

Admission Requirements

To be considered for admission to the Master of Science (M.S.) program in Health Care Ethics, applicants must have a baccalaureate or higher degree. Applicants who do not hold a post-baccalaureate degree must have an undergraduate GPA of at least 3.0 in the last 60 credits of undergraduate study. Those who do not meet the minimum undergraduate GPA requirement may request to take up to two courses in the Creighton University M.S. in Health Care Ethics program as a non-degree-seeking, “Special Student.” If they receive a “B” or higher in those two courses, prospective students may apply for full admission into the program, and the minimum undergraduate GPA requirement will be waived.

Applicants must submit the following documents:

Application: Applicants must submit a completed application form and non-refundable application fee.

- Curriculum vitae: Applicants should include relevant education and any employment history, certifications and licensures, teaching and research experience, publications, presentations, awards, honors, affiliations, professional associations, experience and background in health care ethics.
- Essay: Using 500 words or less per question, applicants should respond to the following:
  1. List three “big” questions in contemporary health care ethics and choose one of the questions to answer or write a commentary on why you believe this particular issue is so important. Present your own ideas, using as much as possible your own words. If you include content from others, you should properly identify each source with a complete reference.
  2. Explain how successful completion of this program will assist you in achieving your professional goals.
- Recommendation forms: Applicants are required to provide three recommendation forms. The recommendations should be completed and submitted by persons other than family members who are capable of assessing their performance in an academic or work setting.
- Transcripts: Applicants must submit official transcripts from all colleges and universities they previously attended. Issuing institutions must send the transcripts directly to Creighton University Graduate School.
- Graduate Record Examination (GRE): All applicants who do not hold a post-baccalaureate degree must submit an official score report on the Graduate Record Examination or show evidence of success in graduate-level course work through successful completion of at least two graduate-level courses. While the GRE is generally the preferred exam for admission to the program, scores from other post-baccalaureate entrance exams will be accepted, including the MCAT, GMAT, LSAT and MAT.
- Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL): All international applicants from countries in which English is not the primary language must demonstrate proficiency in the English language by submitting a minimum TOEFL score of 80 iBT (213 CBT/550 PBT). International applicants who received their baccalaureate or higher degree from an accredited institution in the U.S., United Kingdom, Ireland, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, or Africa (English-speaking only) are not required to submit a TOEFL score report.

Degrees in Health Care Ethics

- M.S. - Health Care Ethics (http://catalog.creighton.edu/graduate/graduate-programs-courses/healthcare-ethics/health-care-ethics-ms)
- M.D./M.S. in Health Care Ethics Dual Degree Program (http://catalog.creighton.edu/graduate/graduate-programs-courses/healthcare-ethics/md-ms-health-care-ethics-dual-degree)

Certificate in Health Care Ethics

- Health Care Ethics (http://catalog.creighton.edu/graduate/graduate-programs-courses/healthcare-ethics/graduate-certificate-health-care-ethics)
Courses

MHE 600. Scholarly Reading and Writing. 3 credits.
The course will build on and improve existing writing skills. Students and faculty are all members of a larger writing community in which one contributes to an ongoing dialogue. Thus, the course assumes that there is always something to learn to improve one’s writing. The specific aims of the course are two-fold: 1) to produce clear and precise written work and 2) to accurately credit and incorporate the scholarly work of others. The underlying structure of the course includes the recognition, attribution and summary of existing scholarship. Additionally, the course will focus on responding to existing work and distinguishing a response, anticipation of arguments and tying it all together. The concrete templates or rhetorical moves that will be used to improve academic writing will also impact reasoning and organizational abilities. The course assumes understanding of the rules of English grammar, spelling, syntax, and punctuation.

MHE 601. Health Policy. 3 credits.
MHE 601 explores health policy and its development, emphasizing social justice and human rights. Students consider institutional, local, regional, national, and international approaches to public health, health systems, and priorities for research and development. American health systems - operations, processes, successes, and failures - are extensively analyzed. Students consider processes for and challenges in making health policy at institutional, state, and federal levels. Past and current attempts at health systems reform are reviewed, stressing 2010 U.S. healthcare reform.

MHE 602. Research Ethics. 3 credits.
This course will enhance students’ understanding of core ethical issues in biomedical research and improve their ability to analyze, explain, and justify relevant cases, arguments, positions, and policies. The focus is biomedical research involving human participants. A stress is investigation involving populations and communities with vulnerability. Study of historically pivotal cases leads to review of ethical, policy, and programmatic responses. Students also study ethical factors in community-based research, informed consent, multinational research, genomics, and neuroscience. Discussions develop collective inquiry related to core topics. Individual papers also develop students’ knowledge and aim to enhance their analytical and compositional skills.

MHE 603. Law and Health Care Ethics. 3 credits.
This course explores the crucial connection between health law and health care ethics. The course focuses on major ethical themes that have emerged in the law and highlights specific interconnections of doctrines that have come out of landmark cases. The course will also examine the significant and fundamental differences between health care ethics and health law.

MHE 604. Social and Cultural Contexts of Health Care. 3 credits.
This class introduces the student to the various contexts of personal and social experience that construct and interpret bioethics. Participants consider identity and autonomy as embodied in social matrices ranging from the body itself to global configurations. Various power dynamics of class, legitimacy, and ideology are considered. Participants analyze the culture of the biomedical project and the challenge of finding one’s voice within it.

MHE 605. Philosophical Bioethics. 3 credits.
This course reviews the nature of ethical reasoning, including various epistemological challenges to moral judgment. Second, major theories of ethics will be introduced, including virtue ethics, deontology, utilitarianism, casuistry and principlism. Third, signature texts by protagonists of these historical theories will be compared and contrasted with contemporary critics, with specific reference to issues of vulnerability. P: MHE 601 or MHE 602.

MHE 606. Theories of Justice. 3 credits.
This course builds on Philosophical Bioethics (MHE 605) and Health Policy (MHE 601) by advancing students’ knowledge of ethical reasoning and by familiarizing students with theories of justice, in particular. This course will introduce students to theoretical and practical complexities, ambiguities, and persistent questions at the intersections of clinical ethics, social policy, and health justice. P: MHE 601 and MHE 605.

MHE 607. Practical Ethics in Health Care Settings. 3 credits.
The practical application of ethics to clinical situations is much more than following standards of practice. This course will provide the opportunity to apply foundational concepts of ethics to a variety of health care settings. Additionally, the use of deliberative methods to think through and discuss the unique features presented by different health care settings and professional conduct will be an integral component of the course. The typical charges of institutional ethics committees will be examined: consultation, education, and policy review/development. P: MHE 601, 602, 603 or 604.

MHE 608. Practicum. 3 credits.
This course requires synthesis of content from all previous foundational course work. Students will analyze vulnerability and corresponding ethical issues as they pertain to a particular group, population, policy, or structure. Students will develop a practical plan for responding to the ethical issue or problem that has been identified in a collaborative and constructive manner with key individuals at the practicum site. Students will integrate appropriate course content and other relevant support material into the plan. P: MHE 600, MHE 601, MHE 602, MHE 603, MHE 604, MHE 605, MHE 606, MHE 607, or permission of instructor.

MHE 609. Capstone. 3 credits.
In this final required course of the degree program, students are expected to integrate insights gained and competencies acquired. Applying scholarly methods of bioethical inquiry and composition, students will develop a scholarly product on a theme related to their Practicum course experience. P: MHE 600, MHE 601, MHE 602, MHE 603, MHE 604, MHE 605, MHE 606, MHE 607, and MHE 608.

MHE 614. Ethical Aspects of End-of-Life Care. 3 credits.
This course examines different end-of-life care practices including forgoing treatment, PAS/euthanasia, palliative care, sedation and decision-making for incompetent patients. Students reflect on their own views on disabilities, aging and dying; examine the merits of policies/legislation; and consider how society at large can come to appreciate those dying in our midst.

MHE 615. Patient-Centered Consultation. 3 credits.
This course is an interactive introduction to the key, basic-level skills in healthcare ethics consultation involving adult patients. The course will focus on the three categories of skills for healthcare ethics consultants - ethical assessment and analysis, process skills and interpersonal skills - that are the foundation of the Core Competencies for Healthcare Ethics Consultants, 2nd ed., a report of the American Society of Bioethics and Humanities (ASBH, 2011).

This elective course combines the perspectives of bioethics and anthropology. It focuses on the impact on society of a rescue-oriented health care system and the promotion of transplantation as a quintessential form of rescue. Through reading, discussion, and reflection students explore the concepts of rescue, scarcity, and the search for control in terms of acute care and mortality in the U.S. Students also choose one of several international perspectives on organ transplantation, compare it to a U.S. perspective, and present their findings to the class. The course begins by considering how CPR and the obligation to rescue reflects and shapes both U.S. health care and the social construction of dying and death in the American hospital. The course relates rescue to scarcity and power, including power over nature. The course considers micro and macro perspectives as it explores the organ transfer project, its promises, and its ability to deliver on those promises. Finally, students consider an alternative set of ideas to contrast to rescue’s positivist frame.

MHE 622. Public Health Ethics. 3 credits.

This course introduces students to ethical issues in population health and the discipline of public health. This course draws upon some of the major discourses and analyses in human rights, social justice and other ethical theory, and health policy to consider health and healthcare as aggregate public and social goods. The ethical dimensions of geopolitical, economic, cultural, environmental, educational, and social influences on health will be explored in global, national, and community contexts. The course will consider ethical questions about the discipline of public health and the roles of governments, academic medical centers, healthcare organizations, health professions, professionals, and members of the public as stewards of health.

MHE 623. Catholic Bioethics. 3 credits.

Intensive introduction to the Catholic tradition in bioethics—including theological and philosophical foundations, key teachings of the church’s Magisterium, and points of current controversy. Special focus on Catholic understandings of human dignity and justice, in general and as applied to selected health care issues.

MHE 624. Oral Health Care at the Intersection of Professional and Business Ethics. 3 credits.

This course reviews the ethical challenges faced by health care providers who are both private entrepreneurs and members of a profession. Business and professional aims are not identical and may even be mutually exclusive. The course focuses on ethical issues in the practice of dentistry and oral health care, but many other health providers face similar conflicts, such as pharmacists, optometrists, physical/occupational therapists, and plastic surgeons. Specific attention will be paid to the historical development of the dental profession, underserved populations, esthetic treatments, advertising, error management, and peer review.

MHE 695. Independent Study in Health Care Ethics. 3 credits.

This course offers students the opportunity to explore a topic in health care ethics in depth. Specifically, students will collaborate with the instructor to design a plan to achieve agreed upon learning goals, strategies to achieve goals, and evidence of learning.