

MEDICAL HUMANITIES AND ETHICS

GRADUATE STUDY IN MEDICAL HUMANITIES AND ETHICS

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Department Chair: Kevin T. FitzGerald, SJ, PhD

The Master of Arts in Medical Humanities and Ethics (MA-MHE) program aims to give students a broad, interdisciplinary, and critical understanding of health, illness, suffering, and care—and how ethical, cultural, spiritual, political, and economic practices shape these concepts. The program draws on the wisdom of the humanities and social sciences, including philosophy, bioethics, literature, history, anthropology, sociology, religious studies, and the arts, to: 1) help students uncover the enduring questions about the human experience of medicine and healthcare practice; and 2) equip them with the foundational knowledge and analytical tools necessary to begin conversations that address and discuss ethical issues in health care.

PROGRAM GOALS

Students who complete the Master of Arts in Medical Humanities and Ethics will be able to:

1. Synthesize knowledge from diverse fields of the humanities and social sciences to cultivate a deeper and broader understanding of health, illness, and suffering.
2. Analyze ethical concerns regarding the health care of populations made vulnerable or marginalized using ethical principles, norms, and theories.
3. Consider the social determinants of health and healthcare inequality and determine what responsibility healthcare professionals have for addressing these issues.
4. Apply advanced knowledge of the social influences that contribute to human health and illness effectively when communicating with patients and practitioners.
5. Critically reflect on personal and professional attitudes, actions, and experiences to improve communication and interaction with diverse populations.
6. Critically consider how cultural background, history, and experiences shape views on health, illness, and healthcare.

With an emphasis on critical reflection and the development of personal and professional discernment, the program prepares students to enter professional or academic careers that focus on the care of others and is designed for those who intend to pursue health-related careers or who are interested in examining larger questions about suffering, mortality, care, and justice from an interdisciplinary perspective.

GRADUATE CERTIFICATE ADMISSIONS REQUIREMENTS

- **Baccalaureate degree or higher:** Applicants who do not hold a post-baccalaureate degree must have an undergraduate GPA of at least 3.0 in the last 60 hours of undergraduate study.
- **Transcripts:** Applicants must submit official transcripts from the institution that awarded their baccalaureate degree. Issuing institutions must send the transcripts directly.
- **Curriculum vitae:** Applicants should include relevant education, employment history, certifications and licensures, teaching and

research experience, publications, presentations, awards, honors, affiliates, professional associations, experience, and background in health, public health, or bioethics.

- **Essay and Personal Statement:** Using 500 words or fewer per question, applicants should respond to the following:
 - List three significant ethical challenges in health care today. Then, choose one of them to respond to by providing commentary on how the humanities can contribute to a deeper understanding and, perhaps, a better resolution of the ethical issue. 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.
 - Explain how your professional goals relate to the medical humanities or healthcare ethics and how the successful completion of this program will assist them in achieving those goals.
- **Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL):** All international applicants must demonstrate proficiency in the English language by submitting a minimum TOEFL score of 100 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, or New Zealand are not required to submit a TOEFL score report.
- **Application and an application fee of \$50.**

MASTER OF ARTS IN MEDICAL HUMANITIES AND ETHICS ADMISSIONS REQUIREMENTS

In addition to the requirements for the graduate certificate, applicants seeking admission to the MA in Medical Humanities and Ethics degree program must also submit the following:

- transcripts from all graduate-level coursework and
- two letters of recommendation (to be filled out and submitted by individuals other than family members who can evaluate the applicant's performance in an academic or work setting).

M.A., Medical Humanities and Ethics (<http://catalog.creighton.edu/graduate/graduate-programs-courses/medical-humanities-ethics/ma-medical-humanities-ethics/>)

Graduate Certificate, Bioethics (<http://catalog.creighton.edu/graduate/graduate-programs-courses/medical-humanities-ethics/gc-bioethics/>)

Graduate Certificate, Clinical Ethics Consultation (<http://catalog.creighton.edu/graduate/graduate-programs-courses/medical-humanities-ethics/gc-clinical-ethics-consultation/>)

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 everyone contributes to an on-going dialogue. The course assumes one's writing can always improve. The specific aims of the course are: 1) to produce clear and precise writing and 2) to accurately credit and incorporate the others' scholarly work. The course includes recognizing, attributing and summarizing existing scholarship. The course also stresses responses to existing work, distinguishing response types, anticipating arguments or objections, and tying it all together. Concrete templates and rhetorical moves are employed to enhance reasoning and organizational abilities. Students incorporate detailed instructor feedback in multiple writing assignments. 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 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 embedded 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 600; MHE 610.

MHE 606. Theories of Justice. 3 credits.

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.

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.

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. DC.

MHE 610. Introduction to Bioethics. 3 credits.

Bioethics is a complex field with few easy answers. This course uses an interdisciplinary lens to introduce students to the ethical dilemmas inherent in health care and health policy with specific emphasis on populations with vulnerability, disadvantage, or marginalization. Students develop a broad understanding of the philosophical, historical, cultural, economic, technological, and political dimensions of ethical issues the discipline of bioethics encompasses.

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).

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.

MMH 601. Introduction to Medical Humanities. 3 credits.

Introduces students to the field of Medical Humanities, with a specific focus on philosophy and medicine, literature/narrative and medicine, medical pedagogy, social justice, death and dying, religion and medicine, and suffering and meaning-making. Students will reflect on how course content influences their current or future clinical and/or scholarly work.

MMH 602. Humanism and Healthcare Careers. 1 credit.

This course will meet weekly via Zoom to connect with students enrolled in the Masters in Medical Humanities so that students can reflect on how their various coursework influences their current or future careers. Most weeks, a guest speaker will join the session to discuss their role in healthcare or academia (e.g., clinician, pastoral care, social worker, patient advocate, clinical ethicist, medical educator, etc.) and the importance of humanism and the humanities in their everyday work. The goal of this course is for students to reflect on how their experience in the Masters in Medical Humanities program is shaping their current work or paving the way for a future career path.

MMH 603. End of Life in the Clinical Setting. 3 credits.

This course is an experiential practicum that explores the intersection of clinical palliative care with medical humanities. Student will apply concepts from their foundational humanities courses with volunteering experiences with patients near end of life. Students will arrange volunteering experience with a local palliative care or hospice team.

MMH 710. Community of Practice for Scholarly Writing in the Medical Humanities. 1 credit.

Designed to be a "community of practice" for Medical Humanities students who are preparing their thesis paper or final capstone project, this course provides weekly opportunities for collaborative discussions and feedback on the overall writing process. Through both synchronous and asynchronous course activities, students will build upon their prior coursework and related learning experiences to 1) draft, revise, and integrate feedback into their work; 2) engage in constructive dialogue with peers about each other's writing; and 3) reflect on the development of their writing and learning.

MMH 711. Capstone Research in Medical Humanities and Ethics. 6 credits.

In this 6-credit course, students will work with a student-selected capstone mentor to design, propose, and present a capstone project that explores a specific topic in the medical humanities or attempts to address a problem relevant to the field of healthcare or the medical humanities. The form of the capstone project can vary, whether rooted in theoretical work or an applied project, and is largely dependent upon the student's chosen topic or area. Students will present their completed capstone project to the course director, capstone mentor, and program director. Faculty and fellow students in the MA program will be invited to the public portion of the presentation.

MMH 712. Thesis Research in Medical Humanities and Ethics. 6 credits.

In this 6-credit course, students will work with a student-selected thesis advisor to design, propose, write, and present a Master's thesis project that explores a specific topic in the medical humanities or attempts to shed light on a problem relevant to the field of healthcare from a humanities perspective. Students will present their completed thesis project to a thesis committee, which will include the course director, the student's thesis advisor, and the Master of Arts in Medical Humanities program director. Faculty and fellow students in the MA program will be invited to the public portion of the presentation.

MMH 792. Special Topics in the Medical Humanities: Professional Identity Formation in Healthcare Education. 1 credit.

This course will meet weekly via Zoom to discuss assigned material for the week related to professional identity formation in healthcare education, focusing specifically on the socialization of healthcare students, the hidden curriculum, mistreatment in the clinical learning environment, mental health and wellness, and the role of mentorship.

MMH 794. Special Topics in Medical Humanities. 3 credits.

Special Topics in Medical Humanities are courses offered for credit in which the subject matter or content may vary within specific sections across terms as indicated by that course's title and description. Most special topics courses can be repeated by students for additional credit, provided that the course sections are different. Special topics courses address specific issues within Medical Humanities that are not represented within required courses or offer an opportunity for a deeper or different look at a topic covered in a required course.