

BIOETHICS & HUMANITIES IN HEALTH (BEHH)

BEHH 5010 - Foundations of Bioethics & Humanities in Health (3 Credits)

This course combines two essential areas of study: The first eight weeks focus on the foundations of bioethics, examining moral frameworks used in medical and health settings and their application to clinical, organizational, and population-based cases. The second eight weeks explore the foundations of narrative practice in medicine through engagement with various texts and other materials. Each section maintains its distinct focus while providing students with complementary perspectives on health and health care.

Grading Basis: Letter Grade

Typically Offered: Fall.

BEHH 5015 - The Top Ten Legal Cases in the History of Bioethics (1 Credit)

This course is intended to introduce learners to landmark cases in bioethics. We will use these cases to help learners understand how the cases arose out of medical, historical, and sociological/cultural themes, explore legal concepts important to medical practice and bioethics, and identify why these cases remain significant today. We will then apply what we have learned to novel or emerging ethical issues in the present. Many of the cases raise issues relevant to both clinical medicine and public/population health and addressing intersections and differences between medical and public health ethics and law is a second theme of the class.

Grading Basis: Letter Grade with IP

Typically Offered: Fall.

BEHH 5210 - The Art of Observation (1 Credit)

The Art of Observation is designed to sharpen the perceptual and analytical skills, which are essential for excellence in clinical practice in dentistry, medicine, and other professional fields. Participants will engage with a selection of visual art pieces and photographic works. Through guided interaction with these materials, students will hone their observational acuity, practice articulating their perceptions and insights, and engage in collaborative analysis reminiscent of differential diagnosis processes. This course teaches Visual Thinking Strategies (VTS), a protocol for facilitating group discussions around visual materials. Students will master the methodology of VTS, including careful material selection, silent observation periods, strategic questioning, neutral facilitation, and effective paraphrasing. The skills cultivated in this course directly translate to clinical scenarios, where the ability to pinpoint key clinical indicators, recognize symptomatic patterns, and interpret patient data flexibly and accurately is paramount for effective patient care. The goals are to increase compassion and empathy, encourage tolerance for ambiguity and diversity, recognize biases in interpretation and foster reflection and honest communication using the arts to gain these skillsets.

Grading Basis: Letter Grade

Typically Offered: Fall.

BEHH 5211 - The Art of Listening: Music and Medicine (1 Credit)

The Art of Listening is an innovative course that explores the profound intersection of musical and clinical listening skills to enhance practice in medicine, dentistry, and other healthcare fields. Drawing upon the unique resources of the Anschutz Campus, including a live performance by the Campus Chorus and/or Orchestra, this course develops healthcare professionals' abilities to listen deeply, empathetically, and analytically. Through immersive musical experiences and clinical scenarios, participants will develop a heightened awareness of auditory nuances, rhythms, and harmonies that parallel the complexities of human health and disease. The course emphasizes how musical immersion - can inform and enhance clinical listening skills. Students will learn to apply these techniques to medical contexts, developing their ability to hear both what is said and unsaid, recognize patterns, and maintain focused attention during patient encounters. Participants will explore how musical narratives unfold, mirroring the way patient histories are constructed and understood in clinical settings. Special attention is paid to the emotional and cultural aspects of music, encouraging students to reflect on how these elements influence perception and interpretation in healthcare. This approach fosters empathy and cultural competence, crucial attributes in today's diverse healthcare landscape. By combining experiential learning with practical clinical applications, the course aims to cultivate not just better listeners, but more attentive, empathetic, and perceptive healthcare professionals. Students will develop advanced listening skills essential for excellence in patient-centered care, while gaining a deeper appreciation for the role of music in healing and human connection.

Grading Basis: Letter Grade

Typically Offered: Fall, Spring.

BEHH 5212 - Pain and Dentistry in the History of Western Art (1 Credit)

If you run a basic search for historical images of pain in Western art since 1500, a curiosity emerges: A significant proportion of the results relate to dentistry and dental pain. In other words, the history of dentistry and the history of pain form overlapping iconography in the history of Western art. Given the near universality of dental pain in human experience, the frequency of its representation is no mystery. However, one of the many paradoxes of pain is that although pain is universal, it is also quintessentially subjective: my pain is different from your pain, even if the cause of the pain is identical. Literature scholar Elaine Scarry notes another paradox: pain is simultaneously one of the most privately certain and publicly doubted experiences. In addition, some who experience pain do not seem to suffer, while others who suffer do not seem to experience pain. This interdisciplinary short course uses the dual iconography of pain and dentistry as a vehicle to explore the history of pain and its relationship to dentistry in the early modern and modern eras. Learners will acquire historical fluency in key themes and issues related to dental practice and patient experience that they can apply to contemporary dental medicine.

Grading Basis: Letter Grade

Typically Offered: Fall, Spring.

BEHH 5213 - Reflections on Incarceration and Well-Being (1 Credit)

This discussion-based course focuses on understanding incarceration as a structural determinant of health. Through engaging with written work from incarcerated writers, as well as critical theories and empirical texts, students will explore issues related to how the system of incarceration affects individual, community, and societal health and well-being. Weekly discussions will include topics such as health and mortality data collection and communication, healthcare access and delivery, and conditions of confinement. They also include topics along axes of identity including birthing and parenting, aging inside, and incarceration of transgender individuals. Students will apply their learnings in-class to a final paper.

Grading Basis: Letter Grade

Typically Offered: Fall, Spring.

BEHH 5214 - From Burned Out & Extracted to Regenerative Healing: William Carlos Williams' The Doctor Stories (1 Credit)

"Burnout is a Surrender," said Dr. Martin Luther King. Reflecting on this Robert Coles writes that those who are burned out can "use such low points to become more realistic and reflective and, in the long run, sturdier." In this spirit, spend a semester surrendering to the joys, hazards, and complexities of a life attending to patients by sitting with *The Doctor Stories* by William Carlos Williams. The goal of this course will be to provide opportunities for close presence to these stories. In doing so you may acquire a knack for what John Launer calls "a radical facilitative presence" - both for your own healing soul and for your patients. Each week you will read one story and follow a standard template to reflect on how the story provoked movement inside of you. Then throughout the week you will be asked to take 5 minutes each day to write down how a specific clinical encounter connects to the week's story. We will meet in person to casually commune over our shared experience with these stories.

Grading Basis: Letter Grade

Typically Offered: Fall, Spring.

BEHH 5215 - Global Health Humanities (1 Credit)

"Global Health Humanities" offers a unique interdisciplinary exploration of health, illness, and healing across cultures through the lens of the humanities. Participants will investigate how universal human experiences of health and illness are interpreted and expressed differently across diverse cultural contexts. Through analysis of narratives, historical accounts, and artistic representations, we will explore questions such as: How do cultural beliefs and practices influence perceptions of what is considered healthy or pathological in oral health? In what ways do storytelling and artistic expression reveal the lived experiences of mental illness in different societies? How have colonial legacies and global power dynamics shaped health inequities? A key focus will be on amplifying marginalized voices in global health. Students will engage with works by authors, artists, and thinkers from the Global South, as well as from historically underrepresented communities within the Global North. This approach will highlight how diverse cultural perspectives can enrich our understanding of health and contribute to more equitable and effective global health strategies.

Grading Basis: Letter Grade

Typically Offered: Fall, Spring.

BEHH 5216 - Art, Advocacy and Healthcare (1 Credit)

The course will explore the intersection of arts, advocacy and research to create a health care experience that is equitable, safe, and compassionate for all.

Grading Basis: Letter Grade

Typically Offered: Spring.

BEHH 5217 - Medical Improv (1 Credit)

This course will introduce students to medical improv - a training technique that uses improvisational theater exercises to help healthcare professionals develop better communication skills, empathy, and adaptability when interacting with patients and colleagues.

Grading Basis: Letter Grade

Typically Offered: Spring.

BEHH 5218 - Grief, Loss, and Healing (1 Credit)

Explore the human experience of grief and loss through clinical, embodied, and creative lenses. Learn to recognize unprocessed grief in patients, colleagues, and yourself, and develop skills to support healing and resilience. Grounded in research and reflective practice, this course integrates neuroscience, body-based exercises, and expressive mediums—including literature, visual art, music, and film—to deepen understanding and cultivate compassion in professional and personal contexts.

Grading Basis: Letter Grade with IP

Typically Offered: Fall, Spring.

BEHH 5219 - Films and Bioethics (1 Credit)

Short films featuring issues in bioethics will be shown followed by interesting discussion.

Grading Basis: Letter Grade with IP

Typically Offered: Fall, Spring.

BEHH 5250 - Topics in Media, Medicine and Society (3 Credits)

This interdisciplinary course will explore the interconnections and intersections between medicine and media, investigating a significant collaborative enterprise that characterizes American culture.

Grading Basis: Letter Grade

Typically Offered: Fall, Spring.

BEHH 5310 - Ethical Care in Patient's Living with Dementia (1 Credit)

The population in the United States aged 65 and older is expected to increase 47% by 2050. Advancements in technology and improvements in care have enabled our population to experience increased age-related disease because of an extended lifespan. Currently, nearly 55 million people worldwide are living with Dementia, with the number predicted to increase to 78 million in 2030. Individuals living with Dementia are often assumed to lack decision-making capacity. However, decision-making capacity is time and decision specific, so individuals with Dementia often have a wide range of decision-making capabilities. Patients in our care with limited capacity are often still able to express preferences and desires. This condition is complicated by the large transition to a model of aging in place. Aging in place refers to the ability of older individuals to live independently in their homes as they age, rather than moving to an assisted living or nursing facility. This model emphasizes creating a safe and supportive environment that allows individuals to maintain their autonomy and quality of life through connection to community resources, home modifications, support services, and technology. This course provides and in-depth examination of the ethical considerations surrounding the care of patients living with dementia. Participants will explore key concepts such as autonomy, informed consent, and the challenges of decision-making in the context of cognitive decline.

Through case studies and interactive discussions, the course will address the balance between respecting patient rights and ensuring their safety and well-being. Participants will learn best practices for communicating with patients, involving families in care decisions, methods to improve the care setting and navigating complex ethical dilemmas. By the end of the course, participants will be equipped with knowledge and skills to deliver compassionate, ethical care that honors the dignity and individual

Grading Basis: Letter Grade

Typically Offered: Fall, Spring.

BEHH 5311 - Moral Distress in Healthcare (1 Credit)

As technology has continued to develop throughout the world and our ability to artificially sustain life has improved, the instances of ethical dilemmas and moral distress have only increased. When an ethics issue arises in healthcare, the ethics issue is typically known but the correct direction of action is unclear or not delineated. This frequently arises in the way of conflicting obligations. For example, a pregnant woman with decision making capacity is in our care and is denying medical interventions to save the fetus. Do we respect patient autonomy and the patient's right to decide for themselves, or do we prioritize the good of the fetus? Moral distress is experienced by workers that encounter an ethics issue where the correct direction for action is clear, but the individual is unable to act. This can be due to institutional constraints, role constraints or even legal constraints based on the location of practice. Moral distress leads to emotional discomfort experienced by healthcare professionals when they are unable to act in accordance with their ethical beliefs and becomes especially apparent when conflict is faced between personal values, institutional policies, patient wishes, or resource constraints. When individuals come together and recognize issues of moral distress, we can work more effectively as a team to support one another. Since ethical dilemmas have the potential to lead to moral distress, it's important that medical professionals have some degree of ethical competence to recognize when issues may arise. This course explores the complex issue of moral distress in the healthcare setting, where professionals confront ethical dilemmas that challenge their values and principles. Participants will examine the causes of moral distress, including systemic issues, institutional policies, and personal beliefs, and recognize the influence of moral distress.

Grading Basis: Letter Grade

Typically Offered: Fall, Spring.

BEHH 5312 - Clinical Ethics Case Consultation (1 Credit)

This course will introduce students to the work of case consultation via practicing working through clinical cases. It will require reading, writing and group discussion.

Grading Basis: Letter Grade

Typically Offered: Spring.

BEHH 5313 - Contemporary Topics in Reproductive Ethics (1 Credit)

This course examines major quandaries in contemporary reproductive ethics including abortion, the maternal-fetal dyad, new reproductive technologies, and ethical training of medical providers. Each week features an anonymous survey to gauge participants' views, with results shared with the group. Weekly case-based lectures include optional additional reading. Participants conclude each week by reflecting on new insights, potential changes to their initial viewpoints, and questions for further exploration.

Grading Basis: Letter Grade

Typically Offered: Summer.

BEHH 5314 - A Tale of Two Deaths: Debates in Uniform Determination of Death (1 Credit)

This course examines the ethical, legal, and social controversies that persist despite decades of attempts to standardize how we determine death in the United States. It explores why the Uniform Determination of Death Act (UDDA), despite its aim at clarity, has not resolved disputes about what constitutes death, and how these tensions surface in clinical encounters. Beginning with the Harvard criteria and the evolution toward neurological standards for determining death, we explore a trajectory that reveals how unresolved epistemic questions continue to unsettle both conceptual frameworks and bedside practice. Using contemporary cases and emerging scholarship, we will consider why disagreement endures and what revisions might mean for us all.

Grading Basis: Letter Grade with IP

Typically Offered: Fall.

BEHH 5316 - Ethical Issues at the End of Life (1 Credit)

This course will engage with common ethical issues faced by clinicians, patients, and families when patients are at the end of life. Participants will study how social structures around dying create ethical challenges, how patients' values and preferences can be identified and documented to support care planning, how to respect patient preferences in the face of changing medical circumstances, how to navigate inadequate knowledge about the patient, and how to respond when surrogate decision-makers fail to fulfill their responsibilities. Topics of readings and discussion will include capacity assessment, surrogate decision-making, unrepresented patients, and withdrawal of life-sustaining treatment. The aims of the course are to help participants navigate ethical challenges at the end of life both in the course of their professional work and also with their families and friends. Participants will write responses to case write-ups and draft discussion plans for family meetings.

Grading Basis: Letter Grade with IP

Typically Offered: Spring.

BEHH 5317 - Beyond Best Interest: Capacity, Authority, and the Ethics of Adolescent Decision-Making (1 Credit)

This course examines why the standard tools relied on in pediatric ethics, including Best Interest, the Harm Principle, and the Zone of Parental Discretion, become increasingly strained in cases involving adolescents. While these frameworks offer helpful guidance in early childhood, they often fail to account for the moral relevance of adolescents' emerging autonomy or the practical realities of entrenched parental authority in clinical encounters. Through case-based discussion, this course explores where these models break down and examines what emerging literature suggests about alternative approaches to addressing capacity and more meaningfully honoring an adolescent's voice.

Grading Basis: Letter Grade with IP

Typically Offered: Spring.

BEHH 5350 - Narrative Principles and Practices in Healthcare (1 Credit)

This course introduces students to the intellectual and clinical discipline of narrative work in healthcare. Students will explore the theoretical foundations of narrative in healthcare and participate in structured workshops to improve close reading of texts and writing skills. Prerequisite: 008754

Grading Basis: Letter Grade

Typically Offered: Fall, Spring.

BEHH 5351 - Reflective Writing and Practice (1 Credit)

Reflective writing is an essential component of narrative medicine, the practice of using storytelling, close reading and listening to understand a patient's experience and provide empathetic, whole-centered care. This 1 credit course allows healthcare professionals to study some of the tenets of narrative medicine and turn an idea into a story.

Grading Basis: Letter Grade

Typically Offered: Spring.

BEHH 5352 - Digital Storytelling for Professional Identity & Moral Resilience in Healthcare (2 Credits)

This course explores digital storytelling as a reflective and creative practice for healthcare professionals and trainees experiencing burnout, moral injury, or disconnection from their core professional values.

Through the lens of bioethics and the health humanities, students will craft and share digital stories that engage with their lived experiences. This work will reconnect them to meaning, foster narrative competence, and moral resilience.

Grading Basis: Letter Grade

Typically Offered: Summer.

BEHH 5353 - Transforming Hearts and Minds: Learning How to Develop and Facilitate Narrative Medicine Workshops (2 Credits)

This course presents the intellectual foundations and history of the field of narrative medicine and trains participants in the facilitation of narrative medicine workshops for healthcare learners, providers and other audiences. Through didactic sessions, interactive workshops, including those facilitated by students, participants will learn the narrative medicine skills of close reading, slow looking, narrative competence, and narrative humility. They will acquire the tools to design and facilitate their own workshops. Students will learn how to choose creative texts and how to facilitate discussions about these texts and participants' reflective writing. Students will discuss and devise solutions to issues that could arise during workshops. Being a participant will offer the opportunity to experience the transformative potential of these workshops. Narrative medicine workshops can enhance empathy and perspective-taking, encourage the tolerance of uncertainty, improve team functioning, and decrease bias.

Grading Basis: Letter Grade with IP

Typically Offered: Fall, Spring.

BEHH 5401 - Behind the Data: Methods for Ethical and Equitable Human Research (1 Credit)

This course will focus on selected topics in the practical and ethical dimensions of conducting meaningful and actionable empirical research in human health. Students will learn to develop more robust surveys, use mixed methods to incorporate storytelling, learn about the importance of community connection, be exposed to methods designed to address issues related to policy, and will develop a clear understanding of why it matters how we recruit and who makes it into our studies.

Grading Basis: Letter Grade

Typically Offered: Spring.

BEHH 5410 - Research Methods in Health Humanities (1 Credit)

The Health Humanities Research Methods course provides comprehensive training in qualitative and interpretive research approaches used to understand lived experiences of health, illness, and healthcare through humanities and social science perspectives. Students will gain theoretical foundations in phenomenology, narrative inquiry, ethnography, discourse analysis, and arts-based methods, with particular attention to ethical approaches for working with vulnerable populations in healthcare settings. The course emphasizes how different methodological traditions - from literary analysis to visual ethnography to oral history - can reveal unique insights into how people make meaning of health experiences and navigate healthcare systems. Through hands-on research exercises, students will practice multiple data collection methods including semi-structured interviews, participant observation, close reading, visual analysis, and participatory arts-based approaches. The course pays special attention to power dynamics in healthcare research, trauma-informed practices, and methods for amplifying traditionally marginalized voices. Students will develop practical skills in research design, data collection, interpretation, and presentation while considering how different methodological choices align with research questions about lived experiences of health and illness.

Grading Basis: Letter Grade

Typically Offered: Fall, Spring.

BEHH 5450 - Addressing Health Stigma in Social Contexts (3 Credits)

This interdisciplinary course will equip students with the tools needed to understand health stigma, to construct an explanation as to why it is so common and to explain what, if anything, should be done to address such stigma. Requisite: 008754

Grading Basis: Letter Grade

Typically Offered: Spring.

BEHH 5550 - Independent Study in Health Humanities & Health Ethics (1-3 Credits)

This independent study will permit students to pursue specialized topics and/or previously studied topics in health humanities and health ethics in greater depth and with more flexible scheduling. Requisite: 008754

Grading Basis: Letter Grade

Repeatable. Max Credits: 3.

Typically Offered: Fall, Spring, Summer.

BEHH 5655 - Introduction to Public Health Ethics (1 Credit)

This course provides learners with an introduction to public health ethics. The material explores differences between public health ethics & health care ethics, important frameworks used in public health ethical analysis, and significant practice in analyzing public health ethics cases.

Grading Basis: Letter Grade

Typically Offered: Fall.

BEHH 5750 - Pain, Its Paradoxes & the Human Condition (3 Credits)

This course explores the lived experiences of pain, its paradoxes, and the extent to which it is a key feature of the human condition. Analyses will be drawn from history, religious studies, philosophy, literature, poetry, public health, medicine, and law.

Grading Basis: Letter Grade

Typically Offered: Fall, Spring.

BEHH 5850 - Clinical Ethics (3 Credits)

The purpose of this course is to introduce students to the theory, methods, history, and application of clinical ethics. Course sessions will include instructor- and student-led didactics. Students will be expected to discuss issues and cases in clinical ethics and critically analyze ethical topics and cases in oral and written formats.

Grading Basis: Letter Grade

Typically Offered: Fall.

BEHH 5851 - Autonomy & Ethical Risk: Protecting Autonomy & Exploring Rights at End-of-Life (1 Credit)

Part 1: Ethics of Capacity, Consent, & Coercion. Analyze the clinical and ethical dimensions of assessing decision-making capacity in patients. Evaluate strategies for protecting and promoting autonomy among individuals with diminished or fluctuating capacity. Part 2: Ethics at the End of Life. Examine ethical tensions surrounding requests for, and objections to, Medical Assistance in Dying (MAID). Appraise the moral and emotional complexities associated with end-of-life care, including decisions about organ donation.

Grading Basis: Letter Grade with IP

Typically Offered: Fall.

BEHH 5852 - Culture & Ethics in Care: Ethical Responsibilities in Caring for Diverse and Vulnerable Populations (1 Credit)

Part 1: Caring Amid Moral Complexity: Culture, Conflict, and Compassion. Identify and analyze sources of moral distress within healthcare teams and their impact on professional integrity. Critically reflect on the ethical responsibilities inherent in shared decision-making and the provider-patient relationship across cultural and moral contexts. Part 2: Pediatrics. Explore ethical frameworks used in adult versus pediatric clinical contexts. Assess the ethical and emotional challenges that shape decision-making for pediatric patients and families.

Grading Basis: Letter Grade with IP

Typically Offered: Fall.

BEHH 5853 - Community Health Ethics: Equity, Stigma, and Systemic Barriers (1 Credit)

Public Health and Policy. Investigate how social stigma influences healthcare access and outcomes for vulnerable populations. Evaluate the ethical and political dimensions of policy decisions that shape public health and medical practice.

Grading Basis: Letter Grade with IP

Typically Offered: Fall.

BEHH 5910 - Race, History and Health in Brazil (3 Credits)

Brazil has a long and extensive history of African enslavement, and in the coastal city of Salvador, African influences are strong and palpable. A large diaspora from different regions of Africa was formed during the colonial period, and this has led to the constant expression—and celebration—of an African heritage in Salvador. Today, Afro-Brazilian cultural elements in music, religion, and capoeira, an Afro-Brazilian art form, are now realities around the world. Brazil's legacies of slavery, colonialism, and segregation, along with its stark socio-economic inequalities, have disproportionately affected the health and well-being of its Afro-Brazilian communities. At the same time, the country is known for its leadership in universalizing access to healthcare, including life-saving HIV treatments. Grassroots activists and organizations operate both alongside of and in opposition to state responses to ongoing epidemics, including COVID-19. Brazil's therapeutic landscape is further complicated by a sophisticated system of traditional medicine that serves as alternative and complementary treatments to widespread biomedical options. The country—and especially the city of Salvador—is thus a critical location for the study of race, history, and health. This course is a 10-day study abroad program in which students will be immersed in the history, culture, and everyday lives of Afro-Brazilians in Salvador, Brazil. The program combines homestays with Brazilian families with classroom and field experiences. Guest lectures from Brazilian experts will discuss topics such as the nation's history, health, politics, music, religion, education, and Carnival. Activities will focus on the interplay of race and health to better understand the lived experiences and rich past of Afro-Brazilians.

Grading Basis: Letter Grade

Typically Offered: Spring.

BEHH 5911 - Medicine, Nazism, & the Holocaust Study Abroad Course (3 Credits)

This immersive course explores the complex and challenging history of medicine, Nazism and the Holocaust – including site visits to Krakow, the Plaszow concentration camp, and the Auschwitz-Birkenau concentration and extermination camps – and the legacy of this history for health care and society today. Its central goal is to foster a deeper comprehension of this history and how it continues to affect contemporary medical and public health research, practice and policy. Through this lens, and in ways only accessible through the power of being present in the place where historical events unfolded, learners will gain invaluable insights into the potential impacts of racism, antisemitism, and authoritarian ideologies on health care and society. The transformative experience of visiting Krakow and Auschwitz with historians, health professionals and colleagues will equip learners with essential skills for personal and professional identity formation, including critical thinking, cross-cultural communication, and ethical reasoning in healthcare. Brief Course Description: This course includes pre-work and 2 pre-trip synchronous sessions, and then it centers around a 4-day immersive study abroad visit to Krakow, Poland. The onsite experiences include (1) a full-day walking tour with an historian of Krakow and the Plaszow concentration camp, (2) a full day at the Auschwitz-Birkenau camps, conducted in collaboration with the Auschwitz-Birkenau Memorial and Museum, (3) a day-long international conference featuring experts on the history of medical involvement in Nazism and the Holocaust, and (4) a day of workshops. Each day ends with an opportunity for group debriefing and unpacking the often-intense experiences of that day. Learners will engage in classroom and field activities led by international experts to unpack the complex interplay of medicine, public health, science and ethics during the Nazi regime and the Holocaust.

Grading Basis: Letter Grade

Typically Offered: Fall.