

# Philosophy 173: Making Better People?

Spring 2017 (revised 4/6/17)

Professor Don Rutherford (drutherford@ucsd.edu)

Sequoyah 148

TuTh 2-3:20

Office hours: TuTh 12:30-1:45 pm, or by app't (HSS 8046)

Class website: ted.ucsd.edu

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The once mythic prospect of the enhancement of human physical and mental powers is quickly becoming a reality. We now have the ability to change our brain chemistry and the expression of our genes in ways that promise to make us smarter, stronger, and even more ethical. The availability of enhancement technologies raises a host of philosophical questions that we will examine in this course. Does biomedical enhancement represent a fundamental departure from other ways (e.g. improved living standards, education) of making people better off? Ought there to be restrictions on which kinds of biomedical enhancements people are allowed to pursue? Is the option of biomedical enhancement for those who can afford it likely to reinforce the inequality among human beings, making it objectionable on grounds of justice? Is biomedical enhancement leading us beyond what is recognizable as a human life (toward the “transhuman”), and if so, is that something about which we should be concerned?

The goal of the course is to approach these questions from the perspective of philosophical theories of human well-being. If biomedical enhancement is likely to become part of many people’s lives, it is essential to understand how it can, and possibly cannot, make us better off than we would otherwise be.

## I. Texts:

All assigned readings will be made available on the class TritonEd site.

## II. Assignments and Grading (100% total)

1. In-class midterm, on Tu 4/25 (Week 4) (25%).
2. First paper, 4-6 pp., due on Tu 5/16 (Week 7) (30%).
3. Final paper, 6-8 pp, due in final exam period (35%).
4. Unannounced reading quizzes (10%)

### III. Other Important Information

- Regular attendance and completion of the required reading ahead of class are critical. Engagement with the course presupposes that you have done the assigned reading and are prepared to discuss it in class.
- Use of computers and other electronic devices is allowed in class for legitimate pedagogical purposes, **not for web surfing, social media updates or personal communications**. In general, you should remain as focused on the content of the class as possible.
- If accommodations are needed for a disability or for religious reasons, please discuss the matter with me as soon as possible.
- Extensions will only be given to those who present evidence of a valid excuse in a timely manner. Note that computer or printer failure does **not** usually constitute a valid excuse, so be sure to take all necessary precautions to safeguard your work (backup, backup, backup!). If at any time you believe you have a legitimate claim to an extension, bring it to my attention as soon as possible (e.g., if you are going to be out of town for a legitimate purpose, such as a university-sponsored concert performance, athletic event, conference, or the equivalent). Unexcused late papers will be penalized the equivalent of one +/- letter grade per day.
- Students should familiarize themselves with the UCSD Policy on Integrity of Scholarship: <http://students.ucsd.edu/academics/academic-integrity/policy.html>. There is a zero-tolerance policy on plagiarism in this class. **If you are pressed for time or blocked, it is always better to talk with me and to take the late penalty if necessary, than to submit work that is not your own.** All written work will be submitted to turnitin.com, so there is a high probability that plagiarism will be detected. Anyone who is found to plagiarize work will receive an automatic F. Additional disciplinary penalties may be assigned by the UCSD administration. Receipt of this syllabus constitutes an acknowledgement that you are responsible for understanding and acting in accordance with UCSD guidelines on academic integrity.

#### IV. Schedule of Classes

Week 1

Tu 4/4

##### **Introduction**

Th 4/6

##### **What is “Ethics”?**

1. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, “Well-Being Concepts”
2. Roger Crisp, “Well-Being,” *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (2013)

Week 2

Tu 4/11

##### **Therapy versus Enhancement**

1. David Resnick, “The Moral Significance of the Therapy-Enhancement Distinction in Human Genetics,” *Cambridge Quarterly of Healthcare Ethics* (2000), 9: 365-377
2. Norman Daniels, “Normal Functioning and the Treatment-Enhancement Distinction,” *Cambridge Quarterly of Healthcare Ethics* (2000), 9: 309-322.
3. M. Kiuru and R. G. Crystal, “Progress and Prospects: Gene Therapy for Performance and Appearance Enhancement,” *Gene Therapy* (2008) 15: 329-337

Th 4/13

##### **The CRISPR Revolution**

1. Siddhartha Mukherjee, “Now That We Can Alter Our Genetic Code, Should We?” (*Tonic*, 24 February 2017)
2. David Cyranoski and Sara Reardon, “Chinese Scientists Genetically Modify Human Embryos,” *Nature* 22 April 2015
3. Edward Lanphier, et al., “Don’t Edit the Human Germ Line,” *Nature* (2015) 519: 410-411
4. Deborah Matthews, et al., “A Path Through the Thicket,” *Nature* (2015) 519: 159-161

Week 3

Tu 4/18

##### **Enhancement: Against and For**

1. Michael Sandel, “The Case Against Perfection” (*The Atlantic*, 2004)
2. The President’s Council on Bioethics, *Beyond Therapy* (2003, pp. 309-350)

Th 4/20

1. Allen Buchanan, *Better than Human* (2011), chaps. 1-3 (pp. 3-83)
2. John Harris, “Enhancements are a Moral Obligation” (in *Human Enhancement*, ed. Savulescu and Bostrom, 2009, pp. 131-154)

Week 4

Tu 4/25

##### **MIDTERM EXAM**

Th 4/27

##### **The Specter of Eugenics**

1. Adam S. Cohen, “Harvard’s Eugenics Era,” *Harvard Magazine* (March-April 2016, 48-52)
2. Alex Wellerstein, “States of Eugenics: Institutions and Practices of Compulsory Sterilization in California” (2011)
3. André Pichot, “German Eugenics Before and Under Nazism” (in *The Pure Society: From Darwin to Hitler*, 2009)

- Week 5  
Tu 5/2
- The New Eugenics**
1. Nicholas Agar, "Liberal Eugenics," *Public Affairs Quarterly* (1998)
  2. Dena S. Davis, "Genetic Dilemmas and the Child's Right to an Open Future," *The Hastings Center Report* (1997) 27: 7-15
- Th 5/4
1. Julian Savulescu and Guy Kahane, "The Moral Obligation to Create Children with the Best Chance of the Best Life," *Bioethics* (2009) 23: 274-290
- Week 6  
Tu 5/9
1. Rebecca Bennett, "The Fallacy of the Principle of Procreative Beneficence" (*Bioethics*, 2008)
  2. Robert Sparrow, "A Not-so-new Eugenics: Harris and Savulescu on Human Enhancement" (*Hastings Center Report*, 2011)
- Th 5/11
- Paper Workshop
- Week 7  
Tu 5/16
- Thinking About Disability**
1. David Wasserman, et al., "Disability: Definitions, Models, Experience," *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (2016)  
FIRST PAPER DUE
- Th 5/18
1. S. D. Edwards, "Disability, identity and the 'expressivist objection'," *Journal of Medical Ethics* (2004) 30: 418-20
  2. Julian Savelescu and Guy Kahane, "Disability: A Welfarist Approach," *Clinical Ethics* (2011) 6: 45-51
- Week 8  
Tu 5/23
- Enhancement of Love**
1. Julian Savulescu and Anders Sandberg, "Neuroenhancement of Love and Marriage: The Chemicals Between Us," *Neuroethics* (2008) 1: 31-44
  2. Brian Earp, et al., "The Medicalization of Love" (*Cambridge Quarterly of Healthcare Ethics*, 2015)
- Th 5/25
1. Matthew Liao, "Parental Love Pills: Some Ethical Considerations" (*Bioethics*, 2011)
- Week 9  
Tu 5/30
- Cognitive and Moral Enhancement**
1. Nick Bostrom and Anders Sandberg, "Cognitive Enhancement: Methods, Ethics, Regulatory Challenges," *Science and Engineering Ethics* (2009) 15: 311-341
  2. Ingmar Persson and Julian Savulescu, "The Perils of Cognitive Enhancement and the Urgent Imperative to Enhance the Moral Character of Humanity," *Journal of Applied Ethics* (2008) 25: 162-177
- Th 6/1
1. Thomas Douglas, "Moral Enhancement," *Journal of Applied Philosophy* (2008), 25: 228-245
  2. Birgit Beck, "Conceptual and Practical Problems of Moral Enhancement," *Bioethics* (2015) 29: 233-240

Week 10     **Transhumanism**

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| Tu | 6/6 | 1. | Nick Bostrom, "Transhumanist Values," <i>Review of Contemporary Philosophy</i> , 2005.  |
|    |     | 2. | Nicholas Agar, "Whereto Transhumanism" ( <i>Hastings Center Report</i> , 2007)  |
| Th | 6/8 | 1. | Nick Bostrom, "In Defense of Posthuman Dignity," <i>Bioethics</i> (2005) 19: 202-214  |
|    |     | 2. | Susan Schneider, "Future Minds: Transhumanism, Cognitive Enhancement and the Nature of Persons," (2008) (retrieved from <a href="http://repository.upenn.edu/neuroethics_pubs/37">http://repository.upenn.edu/neuroethics_pubs/37</a> ) |

Final Paper due during final exam week.