

PHIL 106: Philosophy of Medicine ▪ Sacramento State

**Spring 2025**

**Course and Instructor Information**

PHIL 106-01 Spring 2025

T/Th 12:00-1:15 DH 110

Professor: Chong Choe-Smith, PhD, JD

Office: MND 3012

Office Hours: T/Th 1:15-2:15, and by appointment

Contact: choe-smith@csus.edu and Canvas email

**Course Description**

The field of medicine raises many important philosophical issues in ethics, social and political philosophy, philosophy of science, metaphysics, and epistemology. This course may include some combination of the following subjects: concepts and theories of health, disease, disability, and death; causal inference, extrapolation, and statistical inference in medical research; ethical concepts and theories relevant to therapeutic treatment and research; animal experimentation; evidence-based medicine and randomized clinical trials; objectivity and bias; expertise and clinical judgment; public health policy and health inequalities; and other contemporary issues in the philosophy of medicine. As a philosophy course, this course also involves the use of philosophical concepts and theories, as well as critical thinking skills, to analyze the issues and evaluate arguments.

**Course Objectives**

* Identifying, describing, and comparing key concepts and theories. Students will learn to identify, describe, and compare key concepts and various theoretical approaches on the issues in the philosophy of medicine as presented by contemporary philosophers and scholars in related disciplines.
* Identifying and analyzing the issues. Students will learn and demonstrate an understanding of important theoretical and practical issues involved in therapeutic treatment, non-therapeutic research, and healthcare policy. Students will begin to develop the skills necessary to apply the concepts and theories mentioned above and think through the issues in a coherent and well-reasoned way.
* Evaluating and developing arguments on the issues. Students also will begin to develop critical thinking skills necessary to evaluate arguments and different philosophical approaches to the issues and to develop their own arguments on contemporary issues in the philosophy of medicine.

**Textbooks**

Jacob Stegenga, *Care & Cure: An Introduction to Philosophy of Medicine* (University of Chicago Press, 2018). All other required or recommended readings will be posted in Canvas or available online.

**Required Elements**

* **Reading Quizzes.** Students will complete short reading quizzes before class for each reading selection assigned for that day. The reading quizzes will consist of 4-5 multiple choice or true/false questions and will be available online in Canvas. You are allowed two attempts and will be graded on your best attempt. Because these quizzes must be taken before we discuss the reading in class, there will be no make-up reading quizzes.
* **Section Quizzes**. After each section, students will complete an in-class short-answer quiz. The quiz questions will require answers of varying lengths from a phrase to a paragraph, as will be specified. Students should demonstrate sufficient knowledge of the different concepts, theories, philosophers, and their views. The quiz dates are provided in the Schedule of Assignments below. Make-up quizzes are not allowed except for those who provide documentation of a serious family or personal emergency.
* **Paper Assignments**
* Paper 1 Precis

Students will write a short paper summarizing an article, paying particular attention to the author(s)’ key points and arguments (750 words maximum). The paper must be submitted through Turnitin in Canvas by Feb 17th.

* Paper 2 Critical Analysis Paper

Students will write a paper critically evaluating an author(s)’ arguments in one of the assigned articles (1500 words maximum). The paper should include a brief summary of the author(s)’ view and arguments and one or two reasons or arguments evaluating the author(s)’ view. The paper must be submitted through Turnitin in Canvas by March 17th.

* Paper 3 Contemporary Issues Paper

Students will select one of the issues in the philosophy of medicine (preferably an issue over which there is some controversy today) and write a longer paper (2000 words maximum) defending a position on the issue. The paper must consist of an introductory paragraph stating the position, one or two reasons or arguments in support of the position, one or two strong objections, and a response to the objections. The paper must be submitted through Turnitin in Canvas by May 1st.

Complete instructions and grading criteria for each paper assignment is available in Canvas under Course Documents. Any late papers will receive a half-grade deduction per calendar day that the paper is late.

* **Extra Credit**

Students may choose to complete up to three extra credit reflections during the course of the semester for a maximum of three percentage points, one for each reflection. For example, students may attend a talk at the Nammour Symposium and write a one-page reflection describing the talk and any comments or critiques for one percentage point. Students also may participate in a service opportunity, such as the opportunities offered by the Community Engagement Center (Library 4028), which has been approved by the instructor, and write a one-page reflection on their experience for one percentage point.

**Grading Policy**

**Grades** will be calculated, as follows:

12% Reading Quizzes (best 20 of 25)

8% Paper 1 Precis

15% Paper 2 Critical Analysis Paper

25% Paper 3 Contemporary Issues Paper

40% Section Quizzes

**Grading Scale**

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Proficient (A)** | **Competent (B)** | **Satisfactory (C)** | **Poor (D)** | **Unacceptable (F)** |
| A (95-100) | B+ (87-89) | C+ (77-79) | D+ (67-69) | F (59-0) |
| A- (90-94) | B (84-86) | C (74-76) | D (64-66) |  |
|  | B- (80-83) | C- (70-73) | D- (60-63) |  |

To the extent relevant, your work will be assessed according to the Grading Standards posted on the Philosophy Department website (<http://www.csus.edu/phil/guidance/grading-standards.html>). Standard rounding procedures will apply. Your written work, in particular, also should follow the Writing Guidelines for a philosophy paper, as stated on the Department website (<http://www.csus.edu/phil/guidance/writing%20guidelines.html>).

**Course and University Policies**

**Attendance**

Attendance is required. All absences for good cause such as medical or family emergencies may be excused on a case-by-case basis with advance written notice and appropriate documentation. Each student is allowed three free absences. Students will receive a half-grade deduction on their final grade for every unexcused absence thereafter.

**Class Participation**

**S**tudents are expected to complete all required reading and written assignments and actively participate in classroom exercises discussions. Students may be asked to work in groups, for example, at the beginning of the class on a question pertaining to the reading assigned for that day. Students also may be asked to work independently on a reflection question and then share their thoughts with the rest of the class. Although class participation does not count as a set percentage of the course grade, a student’s class participation may be considered to his or her advantage in cases where the student’s grade is on the border. Students also may receive a deduction for failing to participate actively in the classroom exercises.

**Intellectual Integrity and Code of Conduct**

Students should conduct themselves with respect for others (see Canvas under Syllabus and Policies) and perform their work with intellectual integrity and honesty, which includes giving proper attribution to sources. Each instance of academic dishonesty (e.g., plagiarism, cheating on an exam, etc.) will result a score of 0 (not just a failing grade) for that assignment/quiz and, if necessary, referral to the department and college for disciplinary procedures consistent with the Academic Honesty Policies articulated in the University Policy Manual. Procedures for reporting and imposing sanctions are described in detail at: <http://www.csus.edu/umanual/student/stu-0100.htm>.

**Electronic Devices**

No laptops or computers can be used during the class period unless as instructed by the professor. The use of all other electronic devices, including smart phones, tablets, games, etc., is not allowed. Students who violate this policy may be required to hand over their device for the duration of the class period, may be required to leave the classroom, may be marked as absent, and/or may receive a grade penalty (on the next graded element, as appropriate).

**Reasonable Accommodation**

Any student with a documented disability who requires assistance or academic accommodations should contact the Office of Services for Students With Disabilities (SSWD) (Lassen Hall 1008) immediately to discuss eligibility. An appointment can be made by calling 916-278-6955 (Phone) 916-278-7239 (TDD). You may also contact them by email: sswd@csus.edu. For a complete listing of their services visit the SSWD website at: <http://www.csus.edu/sswd/>. Please inform the professor of any necessary accommodations.

**Student Health & Counseling Services**

Student Health and Counseling Services staff are available for virtual and in-person services. During this public health crisis and extended period of limited physical or social interaction, if you need counseling or other physical or mental health services, you should not hesitate to reach out to the Student Health and Counseling center. For helpful information and access to their services visit their website at: <https://www.csus.edu/student-life/health-counseling/>.

**Basic Needs Support**

If you are experiencing challenges with food, housing, financial or other unique circumstances that are impacting your education, help is just a phone call or email away! The CARES office provides case management support for any enrolled student. Email the CARES office at [cares@csus.edu](mailto:cares@csus.edu) to speak with a case manager about the resources available to you. Check out the [CARES website](https://bit.ly/3fhQ1kY).

**Other University Support and Services**

Academic Advising: <https://www.csus.edu/student-life/academic-advising/>

Dreamer Resource Center: <https://www.csus.edu/student-affairs/centers-programs/dreamer-resource-center/>

Martin Luther King Center: <https://www.csus.edu/student-affairs/centers-programs/mlk-scholars/>

Multicultural Center: <https://www.csus.edu/student-affairs/centers-programs/diversity-inclusion/multicultural-center.html>

Peer and Academic Resource Center: <https://www.csus.edu/student-affairs/centers-programs/peer-academic-resource/>

Reading and Writing Center: <https://www.csus.edu/undergraduate-studies/writing-program/reading-writing-center.html>

Student Success Center: <https://www.csus.edu/college/health-human-services/student-success/>

**Schedule of Assignments**

This course is divided into four sections: concepts and theories, methods, values, and public policy. The selections below can be found in the Stegenga textbook, Canvas, or online, as specified. If you are short on time, here is a key for how closely you need to read the articles and understand the content:

**RC**: **r**ead **c**losely

**RQ** (i.e., skim): **r**ead well enough to answer the **q**uiz questions

**RO**: **r**ead closely **o**nly the specified pages

1. **Concepts and Theories of Health, Disease, Disability, and Death**

Jan 21 Introduction Stegenga 1-4

Health, Naturalism and Normativism Stegenga 7-20,

Jan 23 Health, Naturalism and Normativism cont.

Kingma, Naturalism about Health and Disease (RQ) Canvas

Jan 28 Disease, Naturalism and Normativism Stegenga 21-32

Cooper, Disease (RO 263-271) Canvas

Jan 30 Disability

Barnes, Constructing Disability (RO 9-13, 43-53, page Canvas

numbers on the left margin)

Feb 4 Mental Illness Stegenga 192-197

Horwitz and Wakefield, The Loss of Sadness (RO 3-14) Canvas

Feb 6 Death Stegenga 36-47

Bernat, The Whole-Brain Concept of Death Canvas

McMahan, An Alternative to Brain Death Canvas

Feb 11 Causation and Disease Classification Stegenga, 51-66

Jutel, Diagnostic Categories Canvas

Feb 13 **Section I Quiz**

1. **Methods, Evidence, and Bias in Medical Research**

Feb 18 Introduction to Medical Research Stegenga 103-109

Evidence-Based Medicine Stegenga 120-123

Clarke et al., Mechanisms and the Evidence Hierarchy Canvas

(RO 339-351)

**Paper 1 Due**

Feb 20 Objectivity and Bias Stegenga 125-128,

Jukola, Commercial interests, agenda setting, and the Canvas

epistemic trustworthiness of nutrition science

Feb 25 RCT and Measuring Harms Stegenga 115-118

Stegenga, Hollow Hunt for Harms Canvas

Feb 27 Animal Models Stagenga 109-115

Lafollette, Animal Experimentation on Biomedical Canvas

Research (RO 796-812)

Mar 4 Measuring Outcomes

McClimans, The Role of Measurement in Establishing Canvas

Evidence (RQ)

Mar 6 Expertise and Consensus

Solomon, Expert Consensus Canvas

Mar 11 **Section II Quiz**

1. **Values in Clinical Treatment and Research**

Mar 13 Value-Laden Science Stegenga 130-134

Consequentialism and Deontology

Beauchamp and Childress, Utilitarian Theory Canvas

Beauchamp and Childress, Kantian Theory (RO 361-367) Canvas

Mar 18 Principlism

Beauchamp, Methods and Principles in Biomedical Ethics Canvas

**Paper 2 Due**

Mar 20 Professional Duties of a Physician/Researcher

Chiarello, Law, Morality, and Health Care Professionals Canvas

Pellegrino, The Virtuous Physician and the Ethics of Canvas

Medicine (recommended only)

Mar 25 Informed Consent

Brody, Transparency: Informed Consent in Primary Care Canvas

Mar 27 Diagnosis and Screening Stegenga 175-178, 181-186

Plutynski, Ethical Issues in Cancer Screening and Canvas

Prevention

Apr 1-3 Spring Recess

Apr 8 Nudges

Gorin et al., Justifying Clinical Nudges Canvas

Apr 10 **Section III Quiz**

1. **Ethics of Public Health Policy**

Apr 15 Health Policy, Research Priorities, and IP Stegenga 207-216

Reiss, In favour of a Millian proposal to reform Canvas

biomedical research

Apr 17 Preventative Medicine and Over-Medicalization Stegenga 83-87, 226-230

Kaczmarek, How to Distinguish Medicalization from Canvas

Over-medicalization

Apr 22 Addiction Stagenga 94-98 Holton and Berridge, Addiction between Compulsion Canvas

and Choice

Apr 24 Social Epidemiology and Health Inequalities Stagenga 222-226, 230-233

Peter, Health Equity and Social Justice Canvas

Apr 29 Health Inequalities cont.

Valles, Race in Medicine Canvas

May 1 Vaccination

Sutton and Upshur, A Call for Clearer Vaccine Typology Canvas

**Paper 3 Due**

May 6 Costs of Healthcare

Atul Gawande, The Cost Conundrum Canvas

DeGrazia, Single Payer Meets Managed Competition: Canvas

The Case for Public Funding and Private Delivery

May 8 **Section IV Quiz**

The Instructor reserves the right to make changes to the syllabus with reasonable notice.