

Course Materials

Principles of Bioethics

Tom Beauchamp

Required Reading

Tom L. Beauchamp and James F. Childress, *Principles of Biomedical Ethics*, 7th edition (Oxford University Press, 2013), especially chaps. 1-2, 10.

John-Stewart Gordon, Oliver Rauprich, and Jochen Vollman, "Applying the Four-Principle Approach," *Bioethics* 25 (2011): 293–300, with a reply by Tom Beauchamp, "Making Principlism Practical: A Commentary on Gordon, Rauprich, and Vollmann," *Bioethics* 25 (2011): 301–03.

Søren Holm, "Not Just Autonomy—The Principles of American Biomedical Ethics," *Journal of Medical Ethics* 21 (1994): 332-38.

Suggested Further Reading

John Arras, "Theory and Bioethics," *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Winter 2016 edition; first published 2010), ed. Edward N. Zalta, available at <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/win2016/entries/theory-bioethics/> (retrieved April 27, 2018).

Tom L. Beauchamp, "Principlism and Its Alleged Competitors," *Kennedy Institute of Ethics Journal* 5 (1995): 181-198.

Tom L. Beauchamp, *Standing on Principles: Collected Essays* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), especially chaps. 1–2.

David DeGrazia, "Common Morality, Coherence, and the Principles of Biomedical Ethics," *Kennedy Institute of Ethics Journal* 13 (2003): 219–30.

David DeGrazia and Tom L. Beauchamp, "Philosophical Methods," in *Methods of Bioethics*, 2nd edition, ed. Daniel Sulmasy and Jeremy Sugarman (Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 2010), pp. 37-53.

Bernard Gert (and subsequently revised by Joshua Gert), "The Definition of Morality," *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Fall 2017 Edition), ed. Edward N. Zalta, available at <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/fall2017/entries/morality-definition/> (accessed April 20, 2018).

Bernard Gert, Charles M. Culver, and K. Danner Clouser, *Bioethics: A Return to Fundamentals*, 2nd ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006), chap. 4.

Peter Herissone-Kelly, "The Principlist Approach to Bioethics, and Its Stormy Journey Overseas," in *Scratching the Surface of Bioethics*, ed. Matti Häyry and Tuija Takala (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2003), pp. 65–77.

Rebecca Kukla, "Living with Pirates: Common Morality and Embodied Practice," *Cambridge Quarterly of Healthcare Ethics* 23 (2014): 75-85.

National Commission for the Protection of Human Subjects of Biomedical and Behavioral Research, *The Belmont Report: Ethical Principles and Guidelines for the Protection of Human Subjects of Research* (Washington, DC: DHEW Publication OS 78–0012, 1978).

Oliver Rauprich, "Common Morality: Comment on Beauchamp and Childress," *Theoretical Medicine and Bioethics* 29 (2008): 43-71.

Henry S. Richardson, "Specifying, Balancing, and Interpreting Bioethical Principles," *Journal of Medicine and Philosophy* 25 (2000): 285–307, also in *Belmont Revisited: Ethical Principles for Research with Human Subjects*, ed. James F. Childress, Eric M. Meslin, and Harold T. Shapiro (Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 2005), pp. 205–27.

Outline

UNIVERSAL PRINCIPLES AND COMMON MORALITY IN BIOMEDICAL ETHICS

Tom L. Beauchamp

1. Principlism as a Theory about Universal Moral Principles

- A. My collaborative work on moral principles with James Childress
- B. Principles are not absolute or categorical imperatives
- C. What is universal morality? The main areas in which it is found are:
 - i. Principles of obligation
 - ii. Human rights
 - iii. Virtues
- D. Universal standards are not mere cultural standards

2. Principlism's Framework of Universal Principles

Four clusters of basic moral principles serve as the moral framework:

- 1. Respect for autonomy (a principle requiring respect for the decisions and decision-making capacities of autonomous persons),
- 2. Nonmaleficence (a principle requiring the avoidance of causing harm to others),
- 3. Beneficence (a group of principles requiring both lessening of and prevention of harm as well as provision of benefits to others and balancing benefits, burdens, and risks), and
- 4. Justice (a group of principles requiring fair distribution of benefits and burdens across all affected parties).

3. Common Morality as the Source of Universal Principles

- A. The Larger Body of Universal Moral Requirements: Common Morality
- B. All impartial and morally committed persons accept these norms.
- C. Principlism Identifies only a slice of the universal common morality
- D. Principlism *draws its principles from* the common morality to construct a normative framework *for biomedical ethics*.
- E. By contrast, Bernard Gert and Rebecca Kukla, present truly bold universalist theories for bioethics.
- F. Childress and I defend the Thesis that universal common morality *includes* our principles, whatever else it may contain.

4. Does European Bioethics Need a Different Framework of Principles?

- A. The Question: Are frameworks of general principles relative to *cultures*?
- B. Some European critics see a quaintly American point of view at work.
 - i) Søren Holm's theory of cultural moralities in Europe
 - ii) Peter Kemp and Jacob Rendtorff's theory of basic European Principles [a competitor framework of principles for bioethics]:
 - 1. Respect for Autonomy
 - 2. Dignity
 - 3. Integrity
 - 4. Vulnerability
- C. Conclusion: These proposed European principles are not well-conceived for Europe or for any other cultural context—although Holm's view that the principles can be applied in different ways in different countries in Europe is correct.

1. Does "Eastern Ethics" Rest on Different Cultural Principles than "Western Ethics"?

- A. Does Asia have fundamentally different moral traditions of principles?
- B. Amartya Sen's views on "Human Rights and Asian Values."
- C. Do any "quintessential [moral] values" *differentiate* Asians as a group?
- D. Are community and family relationships valued more highly in Asia?

2. The Global Reach of Principles & Rules of Research Ethics

- A. 40 years ago no universally accepted principles of research ethics existed.
- B. Today we find a sea of similarity in countries on every continent.
- C. Today's rules are grounded in universal moral principles.
- D. Examples: Requirements to disclose all material information to subjects; requirements to obtain individual, voluntary, informed consent; requirements to protect subjects in research against excessive and unnecessary risk; and requirements that ethics review committees critically assess and approve research protocols.

3. Conclusion

More than any other part of moral discourse, universal principles and their correlative human rights cross international boundaries and form the basis of a global bioethics.