

MEREDITH SCHWARTZ – Bioethics: Philosophy Making Better Health Care

Bioethics uses ethical theory to examine issues that arise in the practice of medicine, nursing, medical research, public health, and health policy. Topics in bioethics can be a useful addition to teaching standard ethical theory because they allow students to see how moral theory has concrete applications in emerging areas of medical technology and access to health care. In this session I will do three things: First, I introduce some of the philosophical questions that arise in bioethics (e.g. “How do advances in genetics and epigenetics affect how we think of persons and personal identity?” “Do abilities imparted by genetic engineering have the same value as abilities developed through hard work and practice?” “Is Facebook’s new benefit of egg-freezing good for its female employees?”). Second, I provide some exercises that could be used to teach bioethics in the classroom and I discuss some web resources (with a Canadian focus where possible) to keep abreast of developments in bioethics. I will provide handouts with some of this information. Finally, I discuss some of the employment possibilities for philosophy graduates with an interest in bioethics. Although I resist the idea that education should be aimed at career preparation, students are often unsure where a philosophy degree might lead them. Medical technologies are constantly advancing and bioethics provides a relevant way to connect philosophical question to current social issues.

Dr. Meredith Schwartz is an assistant professor in the Department of Philosophy at Ryerson University. She has won a teaching award from Ryerson University, and several awards for her research from the Canadian Bioethics Society, the Canadian Institutes for Health Research, and the Trudeau Foundation. Dr. Schwartz’s research focuses on the moral concepts of respect, responsibility, trust, and risk as they are deployed in clinical ethics and health policy. She is co-author of the book, *Gestational Trophoblastic Neoplasia: A Guide for Women Dealing with Tumors of the Placenta*, such as Choriocarcinoma, Molar Pregnancy and other forms of GTN. In addition to her academic work, Dr. Schwartz has worked in the bioethics departments of various hospitals in Toronto and Halifax.
