

# BIOETHICS (BIE)

## Master of Arts

### Overview

Bioethics provides an educational opportunity at the graduate level for current and future professionals and others throughout the country interested in bioethics, including health care providers, researchers in biomedicine and the life sciences, lawyers, and professionals in religion, health and research administration, and the biotechnology industry. The goal of the MA in Bioethics is to equip graduates to practice and teach about bioethics as integral to the work of medicine and biotechnology, health care, and the basic sciences, and to undertake exemplary bioethics-related research and scholarship. The program encompasses clinical ethics, research ethics, and health policy and administration.

The program has two characteristic emphases: **bioethics in social context**, and **bioethics and biotechnology**. First, a general emphasis on the social, cultural, and policy contexts that shape all bioethics questions and issues is visible throughout the curriculum. Although the importance of incorporating the humanities, the social sciences, and even the arts may seem obvious, this is not a component of most bioethics education elsewhere. Second, a focus on bioethics and biotechnology takes advantage of Wake Forest University's strong and growing presence in this area. Research and clinical practice in nanomedicine, genomics, pharmacogenetics, molecular and cell therapies, and the like is ongoing not only here at Wake Forest University but elsewhere in North Carolina.

The program has particular emphases without declaring particular specializations. This is in part because bioethics education is by its nature fundamentally generalist. Students receive broad exposure to ideas, discussion, scholarly literature, and experience, as well as a set of intellectual skills to be developed and practiced widely before being turned to special areas of interest.

Students are required to follow the student handbook of the school(s) through which they are enrolled. To continue in a dual or five year program, a student must remain in good academic standing with the respective School (Wake Forest College, Divinity, Law or Medicine) and the Graduate School of Arts and Sciences.

## Programs

- Bioethics, MA (<https://bulletin.wfu.edu/graduate/programs/degree-programs/bioethics/bioethics-ma/>)
- Bioethics, BA/BS & MA Five Year Program (<https://bulletin.wfu.edu/graduate/programs/dual-degrees/bioethics-ba-bs-ma/>)
- Bioethics, JD/MA (<https://bulletin.wfu.edu/graduate/programs/dual-degrees/bioethics-jd-ma/>)
- Bioethics, MD/MA (<https://bulletin.wfu.edu/graduate/programs/dual-degrees/bioethics-md-ma/>)
- Bioethics, MDiv/MA (<https://bulletin.wfu.edu/graduate/programs/dual-degrees/bioethics-mdiv-ma/>)
- Bioethics, Certificate (<https://bulletin.wfu.edu/graduate/programs/certificates/bioethics-certificate/>)

## Courses

### BIE 619. Concepts of Health and Disease. (2-3 h)

Concepts of health, disease and disability shape discussions in bioethics and health policy. This course examines and critically evaluates competing conceptions of health and disease. The implications of adopting different understandings of health and disease for bioethics and health policy will be explored.

### BIE 690. Special Topics. (1-3 h)

Study of bioethics topics not covered in the regular curriculum. Topics may be drawn from any theory or content area in the field of bioethics. May be repeated for a maximum of 6 hours.

### BIE 701. Historical Foundations of Bioethics. (2, 3 h)

This elective explores the origins of bioethics thought, through examination of core concepts in philosophy, moral theory, social and cultural studies and law and policy. Topics may include, for instance the ancient Greeks, Confucius, and key religious teaching on health, the civil rights movement; the history of scientific medicine; and the legal conceptualization of medical practice. This course expands and extends students' knowledge of the contemporary history of bioethics as incorporated into various aspects of their required courses.

### BIE 702. Biomedical Research Ethics. (3 h)

A historical and conceptual survey of ethical, regulatory, and policy issues in biomedical research. Emphasis will be placed on research involving human subjects. Master of Arts students are required to take any 2 of the following 3 courses: Clinical Ethics, Biomedical Research Ethics, and Public Policy, Medicine, and Justice.

### BIE 703. Bioethics Theory. (3 h)

An investigation of the main theoretical approaches to contemporary bioethics and their philosophical foundations. Each approach will be examined critically and students will explore how each approach informs analysis of contemporary issues in bioethics.

### BIE 704. Public Policy, Medicine and Justice. (3 h)

An examination of the organization of medicine and biomedical science in the U.S. today. The relationships between scientific and medical institutions and the implementation of public policies are critically analyzed in light of the requirements of the principle of justice. Topics include conflicts of interest, broadly understood, within and between institutional and professional actors; the regulation of medical practice; access to health care; and the balance between the public good and market forces. Master of Arts students are required to successfully complete two of the following courses: BIE 702, 704, or 705.

### BIE 705. Clinical Ethics. (3 h)

This course will focus on "ethics at the bedside" and will make extensive use of case studies. The course will begin with sessions on the role of ethics in health care, the theoretical tools of bioethics, and the relationships among law, culture, and clinical ethics. The course will then review the moral foundations of therapeutic relationships, and it will conclude with examinations of moral issues encountered in health care at the beginning and at the end of life. Master of Arts students are required to take any 2 of the following 3 courses: Clinical Ethics, Biomedical Research Ethics, and Public Policy, Medicine and Justice.

**BIE 706. Bioethics Seminar. (1-3 h)**

A seminar on bioethics topics of interest featuring Wake Forest University and invited external faculty, with additional student presentations.

Participants engage with presenters and scholarly literature on a variety of aspects of bioethics, including, but not limited to, the scholarly and professional practice of bioethics, the role of empirical scholarship in bioethics and related disciplines, the relationship of bioethics to advocacy and policy, and bioethics communication and mediation. May be repeated for credit up to a maximum of 6 hours.

**BIE 707. Bioethics Seminar. (1-3 h)**

A seminar on bioethics topics of interest featuring Wake Forest University and invited external faculty, with additional student presentations.

Participants engage with presenters and scholarly literature on a variety of aspects of bioethics, including, but not limited to, the scholarly and professional practice of bioethics, the role of empirical scholarship in bioethics and related disciplines, the relationship of bioethics to advocacy and policy, and bioethics communication and mediation. May be repeated for credit up to a maximum of 6 hours.

**BIE 708. Research Methods. (2 h)**

An introduction to the methods, concepts and tools used in quantitative and qualitative empirical research in bioethics. Students will develop skills in the design, conduct, interpretation, and evaluation of bioethics research.

**BIE 709. Ethics of Health Communication. (3 h)**

This course explores: 1) how the phenomena of conscience, acknowledgement, and out metaphysical desire for perfection inform the status of communication ethics; 2) how communication ethics is a necessary concern for bioethics scholars, policymakers, researchers, and others interested in assessing the ongoing debate over the benefits and burdens of biotechnology; and 3) how biotechnology influences our collective understanding of human dignity.

**BIE 710. Global Bioethics. (2, 3 h)**

A comparison of American bioethics with the views of other societies and cultures, including western and non-western perspectives and developed and developing world perspectives. Topics may include: individualism vs. the community, reproductive freedom, organ transplantation, definitions and views of death, access to medical advances, and the use of human subjects in medical research. Other issues include health disparities, justice in research, and the role of humanitarian aid in promotion of global health.

**BIE 711. Current Topics in Clinical and Biomedical Research Ethics. (2, 3 h)**

An in-depth critical examination of selected topics of current interest in clinical and research ethics. Topics are identified by staff and students. Examples of pertinent topics include human pluripotent stem cell research; assisted-reproduction; research without consent; the sale of human organs; pandemic and biodefense preparedness; synthetic body parts and transhumanism; genetic enhancement; regenerative medicine and biogerontology. May be repeated for credit up to a maximum of 6 hours.

**BIE 713. Law, Medicine, and Ethics. (2, 3 h)**

An examination of the relationships between law and medicine, including the legal regulation of medical practice, concepts of medical malpractice, medical neglect, informed consent and legal competence, confidentiality and privacy, and definitions of death. The ethical implications of the intersection of law and medicine will be critically analyzed. This course is cross listed as LAW 524.

**BIE 715. Bioethics and Religion. (2, 3 h)**

This course explores fundamental themes, methods and issues in religious bioethics. It seeks to determine the ways that religious approaches offer distinctive, complementary or overlapping perspectives with secular approaches. Specific topics will include assisted reproductive technologies, family planning and abortion, genetic therapy and enhancement, withholding life-sustaining treatment, suicide and euthanasia and justice issues in the allocation of health care resources. The course will combine lectures and discussions with analysis of cases.

**BIE 717. Ethics, Economics, and Health Policy. (3 h)**

The course examines ethical and justice aspects of social decision-making and market allocation mechanisms in the context of health care, health policy, and population health.

**BIE 721. Research Independent Study. (1-3 h)**

Students may work with a faculty member on a project of mutual interest. May be repeated for credit up to a maximum of 6 hours.

**BIE 722. Research Independent Study. (1-3 h)**

Students may work with a faculty member on a project of mutual interest. May be repeated for credit up to a maximum of 6 hours.

**BIE 723. Bioethics at the Movies. (2 h)**

A critical examination of the bioethical issues raised in selected full length feature films. The goal of this course is to increase students' ability to think critically about complex issues, paying close attention to relevant details.

**BIE 725. Health Care Law & Policy. (2, 3 h)**

This course examines the public policy and legal dimensions of the financing and regulation of health care delivery. Its focus is on how medical institutions (hospitals, insurers, HMOs) are structured and regulated, and how these institutions relate to their physicians and patients. Ongoing debate over health care reform is a main focus. The dominant theme is how law shapes and responds to the rapid economic and structural changes that are taking place in the health care sector. This course is cross-listed as Law 525.

**BIE 727. Perform Case Studies Bioethics. (2-3 h)**

Students will develop a bioethics case study and present it as a dramatic reading with audience discussion at semester's end. From an initial prompt (e.g. subject matter, situation, incident) and associated readings, the work will be implemented in three phases of approximately equal length: 1) discussion and analysis of the prompt and readings; 2) student presentations of additional research, either individually or in teams, and concomitant discussion and analysis, from ethical, social, legal and policy perspectives; and 3) script (case) development during in-class writing sessions. The overarching goal is to exploit the unique ability of dramatic art to engage complex, multifaceted issues in ways that are neither nebulous nor propagandistic, and to highlight the relationship between process, close analysis, art and scholarship in bioethics.

**BIE 729. Bioethics as a Profession. (2 h)**

A critical examination of the scholarly literature both in and about bioethics. Topics may include the ethics of the profession of bioethics, controversies concerning the role of bioethics professionals, and the standards and evaluation of practitioners of bioethics.

**BIE 731. Bioethics at Work: The IRB. (1-3 h)**

Provides students with the opportunity to experience and understand human research oversight by attending Institutional Review Board (IRB) meetings, reviewing submitted protocols, and considering the ethical issues arising therein. Students assigned to a single IRB for a single semester will receive 1 credit. They will attend monthly meetings, meet periodically with course faculty and staff, and meet with IRB senior staff at the beginning and end of the semester. Students are also required to maintain and submit a journal of commentary on meetings and protocols and the ethical issues arising therein and an end of semester paper. Initial enrollment must be concurrent with enrollment in BIE 702: Biomedical Research Ethics or Law 677/BIE 777: Health Related Research. Additional credits may be earned by students who attend the meetings of more than one IRB or who continue attendance during the summer terms and/or in the fall semester. Course may be repeated up to a maximum of 3 hours. Co-requisite - BIE 702 or Law 677/BIE 777 or POI.

**BIE 733. Bioethics at Work: The Clinical Context. (1-3 h)**

This course is designed to introduce students to central clinical ethics activities in health care facilities, including ethics consultation, ethics policy development and review, and continuing education in bioethics. In addition to weekly seminar classes, students will attend meetings of the Wake Forest Baptist Medical Center Clinical Ethics Committee and its standing subcommittees and continuing education conferences in bioethics. Students will meet with a variety of health care professionals to learn about their contributions to clinical ethics, will observe the process of clinical ethics consultation at WFBMC, and will study and practice ethics consultation skills. P-BIE 705.

**BIE 737. Genetics and Bioethics. (3 h)**

An exploration of some of the ethical issues generated by the acquisition and application of knowledge about the human genome. Topics include eugenics, confidentiality, gene therapy, genetic testing of minors, genetic testing of adults, and ownership of genetic information.

**BIE 739. Neuroethics. (3 h)**

This course introduces students to basic philosophical and ethical issues in neuroethics. In this course we explore two branches of neuroethics: the ethics of neuroscience and the neuroscience of ethics. The ethics of neuroscience investigates the ethical implications of the application of neurotechnology for individuals and society, and the neuroscience of ethics attempts to answer traditional ethical questions through neuroscience. In the first half of the course, we study issues related to the ethics of neuroscience such as brain privacy (mind reading), brain manipulation, and cognitive enhancement, and in the second half we review contemporary neuroscientific results bearing on ethical issues like personal identity, free will, and the nature of normative judgments. This course is cross-listed as THS 790.

**BIE 741. Narrative and Bioethics. (3 h)**

This team-taught course provides bioethics students with an overview of the different ways in which narratives of diverse types are instrumental to bioethics thinking. Four to six faculty will teach individual course units of 2-3 sessions, addressing topics including but not limited to: illness narratives; bioethics in fiction and film; performable case studies addressing bioethics issues; the voice of the medical case presentation; narrative reading and narrative writing; bioethics in the news; and the ethics of "thick description." Involvement of multiple faculty enables critical reflection on narrative from a variety of disciplinary perspectives common to bioethics.

**BIE 757. Biotechnology Law & Policy. (2, 3 h)**

This course surveys a range of legal and public policy topics in biotechnology, such as: FDA regulation of drugs and devices, regulation of medical research, products liability, insurance coverage of pharmaceuticals, intellectual property, and genetics. This course is cross-listed with the School of Law (LAW 657).

**BIE 777. Health Related Research: Law, Regulation and Policy. (2 h)**

The course explores the regulatory framework and the policy issues that animate health-related research. Topics include public health and quality improvement research, genetic research, health-related behavioral and social science research, first-in-human trials, and international considerations. This course is cross-listed at LAW 677.

**BIE 790. Biotechnology and Ethics. (3 h)**

With the convergence of medicine, nanotechnology, computer science, molecular biology, genetic engineering, and business, biotechnologies are emerging not only as an important provider of life-saving and life-enhancing treatments but also a fast-growing and very profitable industry. This course explores some of the major ethical issues related to the current and proposed uses of biotechnologies with particular attention to the reasons and arguments that are often used to support various views on the use of biotechnology.

**BIE 791. Thesis Research. (1-6 h)**

Research directed toward fulfilling the thesis requirement. May be repeated for up to a total of 6 credits. P-POI.

**BIE 792. Thesis Research. (1-6 h)**

Research directed toward fulfilling the thesis requirement. May be repeated for up to a total of 6 credits. P-POI.

**BIE 794. Bioethics and Law. (2, 3 h)**

This course involves applying principles of bioethics in scientific and medical scenarios from the perspective of the legal system to see how the bioethics principles affect decision-making and strategy in the litigation and legislative processes. This course is interactive in nature, and involves the use of simulation and role-playing to help understand and address emerging bioethics issues in areas including informed consent, genetic testing, biomedical experimentation, and end of life decisions. This course is cross-listed as LAW 594.

## Faculty

Program Co-Directors Nancy King and Mark Hall