NCBC "Introduction to Catholic Health Care Ethics" Course
for High Schools and Homeschooling Networks

Overview

The National Catholic Bioethics Center's (NCBC) "Introduction to Catholic Health Care Ethics" course is a semester-long (16-week) undergraduate-level course delivered online in an asynchronous format. It is taught by NCBC staff in collaboration with local institutions and all content is faithful to the magisterium of the Catholic Church. The NCBC is partnering with Catholic International University (CIU)—a fully accredited institute of higher-education—and students who complete the course can earn three undergraduate credits.

Benefit for Catholic high schools and homeschooling networks

1. Many Catholic high schools and homeschooling networks do not have the resources to offer quality, comprehensive classes that address the many important bioethics and health care ethics challenges their students face today, and will face in the future. The NCBC's course is a trusted option to meet this need. By working with the NCBC, Catholic high schools and homeschooling networks can be assured that all aspects of the course are faithful to the Church's moral tradition. As such, the NCBC course complements the high school's or homeschool network's academic mission and Catholic identity.

2. Unlike public high schools or larger private schools, many Catholic high schools and homeschooling networks offer only limited (or no) dual-credit and/or advance placement (AP) opportunities. Again, the NCBC's "Introduction to Catholic Health Care Ethics" course is a trusted option to meet this need. Through its partnership with CIU, this course offers Catholic high school and homeschooling students the ability to earn three undergraduate credits that they can transfer to the college or university of their choice.

Why the NCBC?

1. The NCBC is recognized as a faithful and trusted source of bioethics and health care ethics education serving the Catholic Church in the United States and internationally. Bishops and priests regularly consult with the NCBC and, since the 1980s, the NCBC has hosted a biennial Bishops Workshop to educate Church leaders in emerging ethical issues in the field of biomedicine. The NCBC also offers a year-long National Catholic Certification Program in Health Care Ethics for which participants can earn graduate credit.

2. Through its six full-time and three part-time ethicists, as well as its wealth of resources, the NCBC maintains expertise on a wide range of bioethics and health care issues. Click on our Resources page to see the NCBC's many publications, statements, FAQs, podcasts, etc., that address these issues.

Curriculum

1. The "Introduction to Catholic Health Care Ethics" course is delivered in four parts. The first focuses on the foundations of Catholic moral theology, the moral principles undergirding the patient-professional relationship, and conscience formation from the Catholic

perspective. The second part addresses end-of-life ethical challenges including ordinary vs. extraordinary means, medically assisted nutrition and hydration (feeding tube), euthanasia/assisted suicide, and organ donation. Part three addresses beginning-of-life ethical challenges including determining when human life begins, abortion, medical interventions for pregnancy complications, contraception, fertility awareness, and assisted reproductive technologies. Part four focuses on gender ideology and addresses (a) the anthropological and public policy challenges the ideology poses, (b) concerns with medical interventions for "transitioning," particularly with adolescents, and (c) Catholic pastoral responses to those who experience gender incongruence.

2. The course's primary texts are (a) the *Ethical and Religious Directives for Catholic Health Care Services*, 6th edition (2018) , the US Conference of Catholic Bishops' foundational and guiding document for health care decision-making, and (b) *Biomedicine and Beatitude: An Introduction to Catholic Bioethics*, 2nd edition (2021) by Fr. Nicanor Austriaco, OP. In addition, the program draws from magisterial documents including *Donum vitae* (1987), *Evangelium vitae* (1995), *Dignitas personae* (2008), and *Samaritanus bonus* (2020). It also incorporates numerous NCBC book chapters, guides, and podcasts.

3. The course is taught by Joe Zalot, PhD, NCBC Director of Education. Joe has 30+ years teaching experience at the high school, college/university, and seminary levels, as well as with the NCBC. He created and taught an online theological health care ethics course while at Mount St. Joseph University in Cincinnati.

Delivery

1. The NCBC's "Introduction to Catholic Health Care Ethics" course is delivered through Canvas, the premier online learning management system (LMS). Currently, almost all colleges and universities employ online educational delivery systems such as Canvas, and many secondary education institutions have adopted Canvas or other LMS to enhance student learning.

2. A primary benefit of Canvas is that it allows Catholic high schools and homeschooling networks a consistent, high-quality course to offer to students. Each module becomes available to students at the date and time the teacher schedules, thus the teacher can structure the course to meet individual class or student needs. In addition, a user-friendly interface guides students through each module from the learning outcomes, to the video lectures, to the required readings, to the weekly test.

3. Another benefit of Canvas is automation. All tests are automatically graded and scores are recorded on the student's Grade Sheet immediately upon completion of a test. Cumulative course grades are also computed automatically and in real time.

Tuition

The tuition for the 2025-2026 academic year is $500 per student.

Contact information

For further information on the "Introduction to Catholic Health Care Ethics" course, please contact Joe Zalot, NCBC Director of Education, at 215-871-2014 or jzalot@ncbcenter.org.

THE NATIONAL CATHOLIC BIOETHICS CENTER