UNIVERSITÀ
DEGLI STUDI DI MILANO-BICOCCA

COURSE SYLLABUS

Professional Ethics

2627-3-I0101D018-I0101D056M

Aims

Knowledge and understanding
To know and understand the ethical and deontological principles that guide the nursing profession, as well as the fundamental concepts of ethics, values, value conflicts, ethical issues, and ethical dilemmas that characterize the healthcare context. It also includes understanding the role of ethics and professional deontology in the professional decision-making process and in safeguarding the person receiving care.
Ability to apply knowledge and understanding
To apply acquired ethical and deontological knowledge by using a structured method of analysis to identify and evaluate complex care situations involving ethical issues or dilemmas. The student is able to recognize the values involved, analyze possible decision-making alternatives, and assess their implications at professional, relational, and organizational levels.
Autonomy of judgment
To formulate independent and critically grounded judgments regarding ethical issues related to nursing practice, justifying decisions based on ethical principles, deontological references, and the specific characteristics of the care context.
Communication skills
To participate constructively and respectfully in interdisciplinary discussions and in the analysis of ethical issues, communicating clearly, consistently, and with appropriate arguments the analyses carried out and the reasons behind the choices made.
Learning skills
To develop a reflective and critical approach to professional practice, demonstrating the ability to independently update and deepen knowledge in the field of nursing ethics and deontology, in order to continuously improve the process of ethical analysis and decision-making.

Contents

The course provides in-depth knowledge of the ethical and deontological principles that guide nursing practice, with

particular reference to the Code of Ethics for Nursing Professions (2025 revision) and the International Council of Nurses (ICN) Code of Ethics (2021).
Methodological tools for the ethical and deontological analysis of complex clinical situations characterized by value conflicts, ethical issues, and moral dilemmas will also be presented.
The course will address topics related to equity in access to and provision of healthcare, the rationality and sustainability of healthcare services, ethical issues related to end-of-life care, as well as the ethical aspects of research and clinical and healthcare experimentation.
Particular attention will be devoted to the foundations of bioethics and to the critical analysis of the main emerging ethical issues in contemporary healthcare settings, with the aim of promoting the development of reflective and decision-making skills relevant to professional nursing practice.

Detailed program

Review of the main ethical theories.
Principles, concepts, and professional ethical values, with in-depth analysis and practical exercises based on healthcare cases.
Knowledge, reflection, and analysis of the Code of Ethics for Nursing Professions – 2025 revision and the ICN Code of Ethics, 2021.
Development of ethical decision-making skills through the understanding of a method for the ethical and deontological analysis of clinical situations involving ethical issues and value conflicts: the Fry and Johnstone decision-making model (2004) (ethical dilemmas, value conflicts, and care-related issues encountered in professional practice).
Topics related to bioethics: ethical issues concerning end-of-life care (death and dying, palliative care, pain management, and dignity in the care of older persons).
Ethical aspects related to research and clinical and healthcare experimentation, equity and access to healthcare, and the rationality and sustainability of healthcare services.
The role, composition, and usefulness of ethics committees in nursing practice and research.

Prerequisites

Defined by the educational regulations

Teaching form

All lessons are conducted in person. A total of four 2-hour sessions are planned, mainly delivered through a lecture-based teaching approach. Some lessons, at the discretion of the lecturer, may include guided discussions of clinical cases, educational videos, narratives, and group work activities.
The language of instruction for the course is Italian.

Textbook and teaching resource

Fry S.T., Johnston M.J. (2004) Etica per la pratica infermieristica, CEA, Milano.
Benci L. (2019) Aspetti giuridici della professione infermieristica, Mc Graw-Hill, Milano; cap. 18.

Filippini A., Baccin G. (2014). L’etica e la deontologia. In: IPASVI. Guida all’Esercizio della Professione di Infermiere. Torino: C. G. Edizioni Medico Scientifiche s.r.l. p. 191-205.
FNOPI: Revisione del Codice Deontologico delle Professioni Infermieristiche, 2025. Testo approvato dal Consiglio Nazionale 22/03/2025; reperibile da:
https://www.fnopi.it/wp-content/uploads/2025/03/2025.03.22-Presentazione-al-Congresso-Nazionale.pdf.
Consiglio Internazionale degli Infermieri: Codice deontologico degli infermieri, ICN (revisione 2021).
Legge 22 dicembre 2017, n. 219 Norme in materia di consenso informato e di disposizioni anticipate di trattamento.
FNOPI (2019) La disciplina infermieristica all’interno della legge 219/17 “Norme in materia di consenso informato e di disposizioni anticipate di trattamento”.
Legge 15 marzo 2010, n 38 “Disposizione per garantire l’accesso alle cure palliative e alla terapia del dolore”.
IN-DEPTH BIBLIOGRAPHY
Comitato Nazionale per la bioetica – Presidenza del Consiglio dei ministri, reperibile da: https://bioetica.governo.it/it/
SICP (2006) Il rapporto tra le cure palliative e la richiesta di suicidio medicalmente assistito: Position papaer della SICP, elaborato dal Comitato per le questioni etiche multidisciplinare e multiprofessionale, e approvato dal Consiglio Direttivo il 5 giugno 2026 Reperibile da : https://www.sicp.it/doc/position-paper-rapporto-CP-richiesta-SMA.pdf

Semester

2nd semester, 3rd year

Assessment method

There are no ongoing tests.
The final exam aims to assess both overall knowledge of the syllabus and the ability to develop independent reflections on the topics and critical issues covered during the course.
To pass the course, students must achieve a passing grade in all three modules. The final grade is determined by the average of the results achieved in the three modules.
The total duration of the final exam is 90 minutes.
The exam consists of 11 multiple-choice tests with only one correct answer, with a score of 0 to 2 points for each question (cut-off 14 out of 22 points) and 3 open-ended questions with short answers (short essay), scored from 0 to 3 points each (cut-off 4 out of 9 points). The passing threshold for the exam is 18 points out of a maximum of 31 points. The maximum score of 31 points corresponds to a grade of 30 cum laude.

Office hours

By appointment, by contacting the lecturers via email

Sustainable Development Goals

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