

Centre for Bioscience Professional Development Programme

Teaching Ethics to Bioscience Students: Challenges Old and New

Wednesday 7th December 2005

Belfast Castle, Northern Ireland

Delegates gathered in the lovely setting of Belfast Castle for the fifth event focusing on the teaching of ethics. The content of a full and wide-ranging day was as follows:

- [Teaching Ethics to Bioscience Students: why and how?](#) John Bryant
- [Strategies for developing ethical reasoning skills in bioscience students](#) David Hunter
- [As seen on TV: video clips as a tool for teaching about ethics](#) Chris Willmott
- [Introducing a final year Bioethics course at the University of Manchester](#) Caroline Bowsher
- [Workshop Session - Debates](#) Facilitated by Andy Bond
- [Swapshop Session](#)

Teaching Ethics to Bioscience Students: why and how?
Professor John Bryant, University of Exeter and Convenor of the Special Interest Group - Teaching Ethics to Bioscience Students

John started the day outlining the case for a need to teach ethics to bioscience students. Following a quick introduction to Ethical Theory, John presented the audience with 2 case studies. The responses from the audience illustrated how we each use components of ethical theory to come to our conclusions on the right course of action

[View John's " Teaching Ethics to Bioscience Students: why and how?" slides](#)

Strategies for developing ethical reasoning skills in bioscience students
David Hunter, University of Ulster

Building on from John's introduction, David proposed that a focus on skills is a useful strategy to promote ethical reasoning and introduced the Community of Inquiry as a useful teaching technique to further 'bioethical skills'. He also highlighted how such an approach can foster critical thinking in students and help to develop qualities such as respect, open-mindedness, ability to listen etc. What is meant by a Community of Inquiry and useful references are given in the summary

[View a summary of David's talk "Strategies for developing ethical reasoning skills in bioscience students"](#)

As seen on TV: video clips as a tool for teaching about ethics
Dr Chris Willmott, University of Leicester

Chris continued with the theme of useful tools for teaching ethics and demonstrated a potential use for video clips. TV footage is a familiar medium to students and can be used to convey information or as discussion starters. Chris illustrated this using a Five News clip on Therapeutic Cloning and gave some suggested directions that subsequent discussion may take. His last two slides give valuable information of where and how to get hold of clips.

[View Chris's "As seen on TV: video clips as a tool for teaching about ethics" slides](#)

[View the Therapeutic Cloning Worksheet \(as pdf\)](#)

Introducing a final year Bioethics course at the University of Manchester
Dr Caroline Bowsheer, University of Manchester

Introducing an ethics component to a degree programme or module is a non-trivial task with a number of potential difficulties and challenges. Caroline recounted her experience of introducing a bioethics course, some of the successes, some of the changes she will make and further developments building on the course's success.

[View Caroline's "Introducing a final year Bioethics course at the University of Manchester" slides](#)

Workshop Session - Debates
Facilitated by Dr Andy Bond, university of Westminster

Andy led a workshop on debates. After introducing the basics of the British Parliamentary Debate along with the 'pros' and 'cons' of debating as a teaching tool, he got the audience to consider the assessment of debates. Materials from the workshop, including a brief annotated Bibliography are available below

[View Andy's workshop slides; "The use of debating in teaching ethics"](#)

[View the annotated bibliography to accompany the workshop slides](#)

[View workshop pro-forma](#)

Swapshop Session

In this session participants briefly contributed experiences, ideas and resources for others to try

Linda la Velle (Bristol) introduced BEEP (BioEthics Education Project), this is an interactive website and virtual learning environment which highlights ethical, social, environmental and technological implications and applications of biology. Although designed for a school audience, challenging issues are addressed and some of the material is suited for undergraduate use.

John Barry (Queen's) talked about the need for a coming together of social sciences and ethics with science and technology, and the benefits of teaching to mixed (in a disciplinary sense) groups of students.

John Bryant (Exeter) discussed project work in bioethics. He showed how “dry”, questionnaire-based, bioethics projects could meet the same requirements as “wet” projects in biology.

Joyce Overfield (Manchester Met) described a self-managed bioethics module and featured some of the student support associated with the course.

Dónal O'Máthuna (Dublin) provided a change of format and gave a demonstration of how song lyrics can be used to encourage group discussion on ethical issues.

Linda La Velle	BEEP - Online Bioethics resources for teachers
John Barry	Ethics and Interdisciplinary teaching: lessons from sustainable development
John Bryant	Project work in bioethics
Joyce Overfield	Bioethics: a self-managed module with a taught biomedical specialism
Dónal O'Máthuna	Lyrical Bioethics

Related resources

Willmott, C.J.R., Bond, A.N., Bryant, J.A., Maw, S.J., Sears, H.J. & Wilson, J.M. (2004) [Teaching Ethics to Bioscience Students - A Survey of Undergraduate Provision](#). Bioscience Education E-journal, Volume 3.

Ethics audit tool, incorporating sustainability, download as [Word](#) or [pdf](#) file

[Ethics resource list \(as a pdf\)](#)

Reports from other ethics events

[Teaching Ethics to Bioscience Students: engaging with the issues](#)

[Ethics Teaching: one dilemma after another?](#)

[Teaching Ethics to Bioscience Students](#)

[The Rights and Wrongs of Teaching Ethics to Bioscience students](#)

Event outline: Our ethics events have proved consistently popular and here is another opportunity for you to discuss and share ideas on how to prepare students to deal with ethical issues. Having attended you will take away views on why it is important to teach ethics to Bioscience students and examples of appropriate approaches, techniques and methods for teaching ethics to bioscience students.

Registration: Registration and refreshments are free of charge. Simply complete the [on-line registration form](#) or contact the Centre by telephone: 0113 343 3001 or email: heabioscience@leeds.ac.uk

Draft Programme	
10.00	<i>Coffee and Registration</i>
10.20	Welcome and Introduction to the day Centre for Bioscience

10.30	Teaching Ethics to Bioscience Students: why and how? John Bryant, University of Exeter and Convenor of the Special Interest Group - Teaching Ethics to Bioscience Students
11.00	Strategies for developing ethical reasoning skills in bioscience students David Hunter, University of Ulster
11.30	As seen on TV: video clips as a tool for teaching about ethics Chris Willmott, University of Leicester
12.00	Introducing a final year Bioethics course at The University of Manchester Caroline Bowsher, University of Manchester
12.35	<i>Lunch</i>
13.15	Workshop session- Debates Facilitated by Andy Bond, University of Westminster
14.30	<i>Refreshments</i>
14.45	Swapshop - Examples of teaching bioethics Please contact us if you would be prepared to share informally an example of how you encourage your students to engage with bioethical issues.
15.45	Final discussion, reflection on the day and close