

UNST 133A  
Spring 2005  
Dr. Marc R. Feldesman

Assignment #4  
Research Project  
Due May 26, 2005

This assignment requires you to select a topic from the list on page 3. From this list, choose a general topical area and then find a specific issue within that topic and write an 8 – 10 page RESEARCH paper on it. (Presumably, the work you did for Assignment #1 will make it easier for you to get started as you will have already done some of the needed research and narrowed the field considerably with the journals you wrote.) The categories are deliberately broad and overlap to some degree. If you wish to choose a subtopic that doesn't fit comfortably under one of the major headings below, feel free to propose a topic and get clearance **from me in advance** before beginning your research.

**What is Required:**

Your research paper should include: **1)** a clear definition of and explanation of the importance of the topic you've chosen (exactly what is the question or issue – e.g. should we institute a screening program for cystic fibrosis - and why is the issue/question important?); **2)** a balanced review and summary of various perspectives on the topic – none of these topics or their subtopics are uncontroversial; there are a multitude of opinions favoring or opposing any particular action. Your research should lead you to a range of these opinions. You should select from among these critically using the principles outlined in your text "Asking the Right Questions". You need to choose **at least two articles** from one "side" and **at least two articles** from the opposing "side". You should then summarize these articles/positions in your paper. **(INTERPRETATION: this means that, at a minimum, you should identify 4 different, credible articles/authors to meet this requirement. You should then summarize their key arguments, in your own words, and provide the supporting data (e.g. graphs, tables, and statistics) where relevant. You also need to REFERENCE these articles in your bibliography and in your text. While you may put the ideas into your own words, the ideas are not yours).** **3)** a summary of the policy issues involved in each "side" of the question. Since almost anything here has a pro and a con side, consider the implications of each (e.g., who benefits and who loses? Who pays or doesn't pay? What legal considerations arise? What are the moral/ethical, religious, political, health, and economic issues for **each** side). To approach this properly, you will need to have **3 – 4 more references** covering a spectrum of these policy concerns. As before, these references should be from credible sources, not any random Internet site you happen to visit. Make an effort to find out who is writing about the subject and what authority he/she/they might have on the topic. **4)** your own conclusions about the subject. What "side" do you favor? Why? If you remain undecided, explain why, and describe the additional information you need to make an informed decision.

As a general guide, each of the numbered sections should be about 2 double-spaced pages. Sections 2 and 3 will probably require at least 3 pages each, while sections 1 and 4 could be done, if written succinctly, in slightly more than a page each. The 8 – 10 page limit is for the TEXT of the paper, not the bibliography and any tables, graphs, or figures you may choose to include.

This paper will require quite a bit of research and reading. You need to have at least 8 credible sources cited in the text and in the bibliography. If you are unable to find this minimal number of sources, then you are either not searching correctly, or have chosen too narrow a topic. In either case, contact Kelvin or me quickly. **You will NOT be able to throw this paper together over a weekend. It will take several weeks of careful research and writing to do a credible job. Procrastination is a losing strategy.**

**You will also give a 5-7 minute oral presentation on this topic. Be prepared to begin this on May 26<sup>th</sup> even though the presentations will span several class periods.**

**FOR PRACTICE:** Consider the following topic/question: Genetic technology has made it possible to screen for all sorts of inherited diseases. In this light, should the US make widely available a screening program to identify the potentially fatal genetic disorder known as Huntington's Disease? By reading your two books and perusing the first few dozen "hits" turned up by a simple Google search ("Huntington's disease"), you ought to be able to see how complex this topic really is. How accurate is the screening? Who benefits from the screening? Who is harmed by the screening? Who pays for it? If you have the screening and discover you have the gene for Huntington's disease, what should you do with the information? How will it change the decisions you make in life? Should an insurance company be able to deny you treatment for Huntington's Disease if it pays for the testing and discovers you have the gene for the disease but no disease at the time? Should the fact that you have the gene for Huntington's Disease give employers the right not to hire you, or insurance companies the right not to insure you? Does it then become a "pre-existing condition"? Is Huntington's Disease covered by the ADA (Americans with Disabilities Act)? What about decisions to have children? Get married? If a parent tests positive for Huntington's Disease, do children born subsequently have a legal claim against the parent for anxiety, pain, and suffering, neglect. As a policy question, should we be doing fetal testing for the disease? What should we do if we find that a fetus has the gene for HD? Would gene therapy be appropriate medical policy in this case? As you can see, a simple question at first blush, turns into a very complex issue when we start to delve into it deeply.

## **GENERAL TOPIC LIST**

Below is a list of general topic areas (the same as for Assignment #2) from which you can choose a subtopic for this paper. They are deliberately broad and permit you wide latitude in selecting a narrower topic for your research paper.

1. DNA and the legal system

2. Somatic cell therapy
3. Germline engineering
4. Human cloning
5. Role of technology in medicine
6. Medical and genetic privacy/discrimination
7. Stem cell research
8. DNA as property
9. The role of technology in genetic and health privacy
10. Assisted reproductive technologies (ART)
11. Genetically modified organisms (GMO, agricultural products)
12. Genetically engineered drugs
13. Gene therapy
14. Genetic screening