

# Continuing ED

**Class:** Ethics: Bio-issues

**Department:** Philosophy

**Instructor:** Thomas Cavanaugh

**Reading List:** *Nicomachean Ethics*; *Grounding for the Metaphysics of Morals*; *Utilitarianism*; *Bio-medical Ethics*

**Course Description:**

Focusing on ethics in the biomedical arena, this course familiarizes students with principal ethical theories and then applies them to specific ethical issues associated with the practice of medicine. Topics covered include the ethics of patient autonomy, confidentiality, abortion, euthanasia, conflicts of interest, and cloning.

The class tends to draw students interested in pursuing careers in health-related fields; many are nursing students, some plan to attend medical school, and others are studying such fields as clinical psychology.

In a recent class, Cavanaugh began with a line-by-line discussion of the Hippocratic Oath, including the lines that focus on the use of deadly drugs. "I will neither give a deadly drug to anybody if asked for it, nor will I make a suggestion to this effect," the oath states. Why, asked Cavanaugh, would the oath include such a statement?

From a historical perspective, he said, that part of the oath likely came from the fact that some physicians in the time of Hippocrates served as poisoners as well as doctors. Sometimes patients would ask for a deadly drug for themselves; other times, they would ask for it because they wanted to use it on someone else, he said. Hippocrates and the doctors who took his oath were distinguishing themselves from doctors who offered such drugs and establishing a boundary—they would not be involved in killings of any sort.

Today, that part of the oath has come to be viewed as an argument against physician-assisted suicide (PAS). Several students quickly jumped into the conversation, asking Cavanaugh how arguments against PAS square with the concept of patient autonomy, including autonomy over end-of-life decisions.

Cavanaugh assured his students that this question and others surrounding PAS would be taken up in greater detail later in the semester—he devotes two class sessions to the topic of PAS and euthanasia. He follows those with other topical, yet divisive, issues, including embryonic stem cells and assisted reproduction.



## Student Actors Play Patients for Nursing School

Nursing sophomore Rita Miles (left) tends to "Mrs. Green," a 38-year-old hospital patient played by Kelley Greer, a junior studying acting and dance. Mrs. Green was one of three "standardized patients" played by student actors as part of an innovative partnership between the School of Nursing and the performing arts and social justice department.

The simulations were designed to teach nursing students about the risk and prevention of patient falls. Each of the patients was in the hospital for different reasons, but all had the same goal—to get out of bed. While the nursing students knew they needed to prevent the patients from falling, they often were so focused on performing necessary assessments, they missed patients' efforts to get out of bed until it was too late.

Before the simulation, nursing students took a pre-test about their knowledge of falls prevention. Afterwards, they took the same test and scored dramatically higher.

## Nursing Alumna Wins Fulbright Grant



Stankov-Hodge

**University of San Francisco nursing graduate and professional funk-style street dancer Marina Stankov-Hodge '04** has received a Fulbright arts grant to teach dance choreography with an eye toward reproductive health education in Brazil's *favelas*, or shantytowns.

Known by friends and fans as Nurse Boogy, Stankov-Hodge helped found San Francisco-based Sisterz of the Underground, an all female hip-hop collective that uses dance as a tool for education and social change. She has worked as a nurse at various Bay Area hospitals, including San Francisco General Hospital.

The idea of working in Brazil came after she watched a documentary on Rio de Janeiro's *favelas*, and was inspired to travel there to live and work for two months in spring 2007. She found that her background as a professional break dancer, nurse, and health educator uniquely qualified her to understand the complex reproductive health issues young Brazilians face.

She plans to use the Fulbright, which will pay her living expenses, research costs, and travel costs, to coordinate a performance dance piece portraying reproductive health issues. The themes for the dance piece will come from a weekly discussion group on reproductive health that Stankov-Hodge intends to organize with youth from two Rio de Janeiro *favelas*, where one study found that 40 percent of adolescent girls drop out of school because of pregnancy.

Stankov-Hodge, who is currently conducting research for a master's thesis on health policy at the Geneva School of Diplomacy and International Relations in Geneva, Switzerland, is the third USF student to win a Fulbright. **USF**