SYLLABUS

Ethics and Science

University year 2025-2026

1. Information regarding the programme

1.1. Higher education institution	Babeș-Bolyai University
1.2. Faculty	Faculty of Psychology and Educational Sciences
1.3. Department	Department of Psychology
1.4. Field of study	Psychology - Cognitive Sciences
1.5. Study cycle	Bachelor level
1.6. Study programme/Qualification	Psychologist
1.7. Form of education	Full-time

2. Information regarding the discipline

2.1. Name of the discipline	Ethics and Science					Discipline code	
2.2. Course coordinator					Prof. Univ. Dr. Laurențiu Staicu		
2.3. Seminar coordinator					Prof. Univ. Dr. Laurențiu Staicu		
2.4. Year of study	3	2.5. Semester	2	2.6. Type of evaluation	E	2.7. Discipline regime	DS

3. Total estimated time (hours/semester of didactic activities)

3.1. Hours per week	4	of which: 3.2 course	2	3.3 seminar/laboratory	2
3.4. Total hours in the curriculum	56	of which: 3.5 course	28	3.6 seminar/laborator	28
Time allotment for individual study (ID) and self-study activities (SA)					**hours**
Learning using manual, course support, bibliography, course notes (SA)					26
Additional documentation (in libraries, on electronic platforms, field documentation)					12
Preparation for seminars/labs, homework, papers, portfolios and essays					26
Tutorship					2
Evaluations					2
Other activities:					1
3.7. Total individual study hours					69
3.8. Total hours per semester					125
3.9. Number of ECTS credits					5

4. Prerequisites (if necessary)

4.1. curriculum	-
4.2. competencies	-

5. Conditions (if necessary)

5.1. for the course	Classroom with at least 180 seats, computer and video projector / Online course conducted through the Zoom platform.
5.2. for the seminar /lab activities	Room with at least 50 seats, computer and video projector / Online seminar conducted through the Zoom platform.

6.1. Specific competencies acquired [1]

[1] One can choose either competences or learning outcomes, or both. If only one option is chosen, the row related to the other option will be deleted, and the kept one will be numbered 6.

Professional/essential competencies	**Knowledge and understanding** • Understanding the place and role of ethics within the scientific enterprise • Knowledge of fundamental aspects and the role of scientific approaches in ethics itself • Characterization of the main metaethical perspectives • Understanding the moral profile of various scientific decisions • Familiarization with the moral principles of fundamental research in science **Explanation and interpretation** • Arguing in favor of the importance of moral issues in scientific research • Interpretation, from the standpoint of moral dilemmas, of alternative experimental techniques • Carrying out comparative analyses based on the typical moral difficulties encountered in the run of scientific research • Explaining and arguing the moral significance of alternative hypotheses in the cognitive sciences **Instrumental - applicative** • Learning the main techniques for exploring the moral contours of different scientific inquiries • Developing the requisite skills and virtues characteristic of moral and humane theoretical and experimental research **Attitude** • Manifesting a positive and responsible attitude towards scientific pursuits • Cultivating a critical attitude towards any ready-made moral outlook submitted to public or scientific debate • Interest in personal development in the field
Transversal competencies	• Written and oral communication skills • Relationship and teamwork skills • Time management skills and the management of resources • Competences in using scientific terminology in the field of cognitive science • Competences for the interdisciplinary use of knowledge and terminology in the fields of psychology and cognitive sciences

6.2. Learning outcomes

Knowledge	- The student knows the main ethical theories and principles relevant to scientific inquiry and technological innovation, recognizing their implications for research integrity and social responsibility. - The student knows how to identify and evaluate ethical challenges arising from the practice and application of science, including issues related to objectivity, risk, sustainability, and the impact of scientific knowledge on society.
Skills	- The student is able to explain clearly and coherently the differences between various types of ethical understanding derived from case studies and empirical research in the ethics of science. - The student is able to conceptualize and explain moral behavior in scientific practice using the tools and frameworks of ethics management.

Responsibility and autonomy:	- The student has the ability to work independently to obtain an understanding of ethical solutions in different areas of scientific research and practice and to analyze them critically. - The student has the ability to work independently to obtain an evaluation of the role of institutional frameworks and organizational ethics programs in guiding behavior in scientific contexts.

7. Objectives of the discipline (outcome of the acquired competencies)

7.1 General objective of the discipline	• Familiarizing students with the ethics of scientific research and the potential that scientific advances have to shift our moral intuitions.
7.2 Specific objective of the discipline	• Presentation of the different ethical approaches and their impact on scientific research. • Analysis of the place and role of moral concerns in science. • Outlining the main features of scientific research as a social practice and discussing the links between science and society. • Exploration of some of the main advances in contemporary science that have ethical implications.

8. Content

8.1 Course	Teaching methods	Remarks
What is Ethics? A brief introduction to formal ethics, exploring the systematic study of moral principles and values that guide human behavior.	Lecture, demonstrative example, synthesis of knowledge, guided discovery, knowledge synthesis, conceptual clarification, practical activities.	
Ethical Theories: Deontology vs. Teleology A comparative analysis of deontology (duty-based ethics) and teleology (consequence-based ethics), highlighting their key principles and applications.	Lecture, demonstrative example, synthesis of knowledge, guided discovery, knowledge synthesis, conceptual clarification, practical activities.	
Ethical Relativism and Ethical Realism An examination of the debate between ethical relativism, which emphasizes cultural and situational morality, and ethical essentialism, which advocates for universal moral truths.	Lecture, demonstrative example, synthesis of knowledge, guided discovery, knowledge synthesis, conceptual clarification, practical activities.	
The Role of Ethics in Science Understanding how ethical considerations influence scientific research, ensuring integrity, fairness, and societal benefit.	Lecture, demonstrative example, synthesis of knowledge, guided discovery, knowledge synthesis, conceptual clarification, practical activities.	
Conflicts of Values and Conflicts of Interests in Science	Lecture, demonstrative example, synthesis of	

Distinguishing between value-based disagreements and conflicts of interest, with case studies illustrating moral and immoral practices in scientific activities.	knowledge, guided discovery, knowledge synthesis, conceptual clarification, practical activities.	
Methodological Norms and Moral Norms in Science An exploration of the interplay between scientific methodologies and ethical principles, and their impact on research outcomes.	Lecture, demonstrative example, synthesis of knowledge, guided discovery, knowledge synthesis, conceptual clarification, practical activities.	
The Scientist as a Moral Agent Discussing the responsibilities of scientists as ethical decision-makers in their professional activities.	Lecture, demonstrative example, synthesis of knowledge, guided discovery, knowledge synthesis, conceptual clarification, practical activities.	
Ethics and Technology: Ethical Consequences of Technological Progress Analyzing the moral implications of technological advancements, including their benefits and potential risks to society.	Lecture, demonstrative example, synthesis of knowledge, guided discovery, knowledge synthesis, conceptual clarification, practical activities.	
Case Study: The Ethical Debate Around Cloning A review of the ethical debates associated with cloning, including reproductive and therapeutic cloning.	Lecture, demonstrative example, synthesis of knowledge, guided discovery, knowledge synthesis, conceptual clarification, practical activities.	
Science and Moral Values Investigating how moral values shape and are shaped by scientific inquiry and innovation.	Lecture, demonstrative example, synthesis of knowledge, guided discovery, knowledge synthesis, conceptual clarification, practical activities.	Deadline for essay draft.
The Role of Ethical Debates in the Evolution of Science and Technological Progress Highlighting how ethical discussions contribute to the responsible development of science and technology.	Lecture, demonstrative example, synthesis of knowledge, guided discovery, knowledge synthesis, conceptual clarification, practical activities.	
Open questions and topics for further inquiry*	Lecture, demonstrative example, synthesis of knowledge, guided discovery, knowledge synthesis, conceptual clarification, practical activities.	Deadline for final essay
Bibliography/terxtbook: David B. Resnik. *The Ethics of Science.* Routledge/Taylor & Francis 2005.		
8.2 Seminar / laboratory	Teaching methods	Remarks
What is Ethics?	Disscusions and debates.	All students should participate.

Ethical Theories: Deontology vs. Teleology Ethical Relativism and Ethical Realism The Role of Ethics in Science Conflicts of Values and Conflicts of Interests in Science Methodological Norms and Moral Norms in Science The Scientist as a Moral Agent Ethics and Technology: Ethical Consequences of Technological Progress Case Study: The Ethical Debate Around Cloning Science and Moral Values The Role of Ethical Debates in the Evolution of Science and Technological Progress Open questions and topics for further inquiry*		

Bibliography:

On Being A Scientist, Steve Olson, Deborah D. Stine (eds.), National Academy of Sciences, 1995.

"Scientific Research is a Moral Duty", John Harris, *Journal of Medical Ethics*, 2005.

Research Ethics, Ana Smith Iltis (ed.), Routledge, 2006.

The Ethics of Science, David B. Resnik (ed.), Routledge, 1998.

"Scientific Truth and the Arbitrament of Praxis", Nicholas Rescher, *Nous*, Vol. 14, No. 1, 1980, pp. 59-74.

Cross-Cultural Issues in Bioethics. The Example of Human Cloning, Heiner Roetz (ed.), Rodopi, 2006.

On Cloning, John Harris, Routledge, 2004.

Illegal Beings, Kerry Lynn Macintosh, Cambridge University Press, 2005.

The Genetic Revolution and Human Rights, J. Burley (ed.), Oxford University Press, 1999.

All readings will be made available to students registered in the course via a common Classroom section, linked to a Drive folder shared in the first week of class. The seminar readings (1 per week) for the whole semester will be announced in the first week of classes. They are drawn from the sourcebooks above. For an overall understanding of the topic, I strongly recommend reading the sourcebooks as a whole.

9. Corroborating the content of the discipline with the expectations of the epistemic community, professional associations and representative employers within the field of the program

- The proposed lectures and seminars introduce the ethics of scientific research to prospective students. The approach is based on the most recent results found in the literature. The course also offers state-of-the-art research skills that are transferable to any scientific and applied field of knowledge.

10. Evaluation

Activity type	10.1 Evaluation criteria	10.2 Evaluation methods	10.3 Percentage of final grade
10.4 Course	Academic honesty Scientific validity of answers	Written exam	40%
		Default	10%
10.5 Seminar/laboratory	Academic honesty Scientific validity of answer	Cf. seminar grade components (see below)	50%
10.6 Minimum standard of performance: 20% lectures, 30% seminar			

Grading:

Grading is done on a 1-10 scale. If you fail the seminar, you are ineligible for the final exam. If you fail the seminar, you need to re-take the course in a different semester in which it is offered. If your seminar grade is between 5-7, the final exam is mandatory for you. If you seminar grade is 7 or above, then the final exam is optional for you. The seminar grade components are below. The course instructor may choose to add 1 to 2 points to your seminar grade given your activity in lectures (questions, comments, etc.)

The **seminar grade components** are the following:
10% for being registered in the course
30% presenting chapters in the textbook during seminars
10% participating in debates surrounding textbook chapters
20% essay draft (due **Week 10**)
30% final essay (due **Week 12**)

Requirements: In order to pass the course, students must have full attendance in at least 50% of the meetings. All written assignments should be typed and delivered by their due dates. For each day of delay after the due date, the assignment loses 10% of its full credit.

Topic-neutral guidelines for the draft and final essay:
I. Clearly and narrowly identify your chosen topic.
II. Formulate an unambiguous thesis about that topic.
III. Identify the public or academic debate within which your thesis is controversial and deserving of being supported.
IV. Analyze the strongest argument in favor of your chosen view.

V. Present the most important objection or counterargument to your chosen view and reply to it thoroughly.
VI. Explain what is at stake in the debate – why are the topic and your thesis important?
VII. Abide by the structure of an academic essay (introduction, contents structured in sections, conclusion)
VIII. Pick a citation style and write your reference section and the footnotes in that citation style. See, e.g., https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/research_and_citation/resources.html
IX. Illustrate the theoretical views discussed with examples in daily life, contemporary research, of public concern, or all three.

Note regarding academic ethics for this class:

The instructor and the faculty highly value academic integrity and excellence. As such, no violation of academic integrity (e.g., plagiarism, use of sources without citation, use of internet resources without documentation) will be tolerated. Students are responsible for consulting and understanding Babeş Bolyai University's policy on academic ethics. Any violation of academic integrity will result in failure of the course and further disciplinary inquiries.

11. Labels ODD (Sustainable Development Goals)[2]

	

Date:
October 28 2025

Signature of course coordinator

Signature of seminar coordinator

Date of approval:
...

Signature of the head of department

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[2] Keep only the labels that, according to the *Procedure for applying ODD labels in the academic process*, suit the discipline and delete the others, including the general one for *Sustainable Development* – if not applicable. If no label describes the discipline, delete them all and write „*Not applicable.*".