

BIOTECHNOLOGY: BOUNTIFUL HARVEST OR BITTER HARVEST?

Paper # 1

Jeremy Rifkin, in his article entitled "Will Genes Remake the World?", describes two different paths that mankind could follow, each making different uses of the seven elements that define the Biotech Century. Which path do you think mankind is most likely to follow in the next fifty years? Why do you believe this?

Your paper should be no more than 2 pages long and is due in class on Tuesday, Sept. 2.

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Paper # 2

Identify and describe in detail three major concerns that have been raised regarding the use of genetic engineering. These may include not only safety or environmental issues but also ethical or philosophical issues.

Your paper should be 3-4 pages long and is due in class on Tuesday, Sept. 23.

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Paper # 3

Scientists have developed genetic tests for a variety of disease conditions (such as CF, Huntington's chorea, cancer susceptibility) and the use of these tests offers individuals unparalleled knowledge about their medical futures. This knowledge may prove helpful to individuals but our ability to use it may hold dangers for society. Diane Paul's paper entitled "Is Human Genetics Disguised Eugenics?" raises the specter of genetic information, especially from prenatal diagnosis, being used for what she calls negative eugenics. Take a position for or against the use of genetic information for negative eugenics purposes and argue for your position. Your arguments should include reference to the ethical principles discussed in class.

Please note that I am NOT asking you to comment directly on what Diane Paul has to say about negative eugenics. Rather, you are to use her definition and description of negative eugenics as a reference point when answering the question:

Is the use of genetic information (such as that derived from prenatal diagnosis, for instance) to make reproductive decisions, such as to conceive or abort,

1) a legitimate use of such information in keeping with ideas of individual choice and personal autonomy

OR

2) is it a form of negative eugenics that perpetuates some of the worst prejudices of society and is inconsistent with principles of justice and fairness and the principle of "do not harm"?

Your paper should be 4-5 pages long and is due in class on Thursday, Oct 16.

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Paper # 4

The development of techniques for *in vitro* fertilization and human cloning have dramatically altered many aspects of human reproduction. Choose one of the following positions and argue for or against it, using the ethical principles discussed in class in your arguments. You must also address the arguments made by proponents of the other side of these positions.

Frozen embryos: Frozen embryos are children and therefore are entitled to the full protection of the law.

Human cloning: Couples have the right to clone their embryos and to use those embryos in any way they see fit.

Post-menopausal reproduction: Women should not be allowed to bear children beyond their natural child-bearing years.

Your paper should be 4-5 pages long and is due in class on Thursday, Nov. 13.

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Paper # 5

The essay by John Harris entitled "Intimations of Immortality" projects, as a possible outcome of the genetic technologies we have been studying, a greatly increased life span for humans. It also points out potential problems that would accompany this increase in longevity. Harris feels that it is unlikely that we can stop this march to immortality and suggests that we need to start thinking about how human society can "live decently and creatively" with it.

Let us assume that Harris' premise is correct, that humans will experience extended life spans and hence a measure of immortality. Do you think governments (either national or international) should take steps to limit immortality in one or more of the ways Harris suggests in order to prevent these problems? Why or why not? Identify ways you would limit immortality, if that is your position. Provide arguments for your position based, at least in part, on the ethical principles discussed in class. You must also address the arguments made by proponents supporting the other side.

Your paper should be 4-5 pages long and is due in class on Thursday, Dec. 11.