HEALTH CARE ETHICS, PH.D.

Saint Louis University’s doctoral program in health care ethics prepares students for a successful career in academic, corporate, research or clinical bioethics settings.

Curriculum Overview

SLU’s Ph.D. in health care ethics is offered by the Albert Gnaegi Center for Health Care Ethics (https://www.slu.edu/arts-and-sciences/bioethics/). The health care ethics Ph.D. integrates an interdisciplinary curriculum with several practica and offers four concentrations to further specialize your doctoral studies.

All students in the traditional Ph.D. in Health Care Ethics program are required to complete 60 credits of coursework in five categories of courses: Foundations of Health Care Ethics (12 credits); Context of Health Care (12 credits); Disciplinary Lens (12 credits); Bioethics Content (12 credits) and Dissertation Research (12 credits). With the approval of the Ph.D. program director, up to 12 credits (in 5000-level courses or higher) from previous graduate coursework may count as advanced standing toward the Disciplinary Lens or Bioethics Content elective categories. Students pursuing the J.D./Ph.D., M.D./Ph.D., M.A./Ph.D. or the joint Ph.D. in Theology and Health Care Ethics follow a modified curriculum.

You may opt to complete a concentration in one of four areas: Catholic tradition, clinical ethics, empirical research methods or research ethics.

Catholic Tradition Concentration

Students enrolled in the Ph.D. program in health care ethics may take 15 credits of coursework with an emphasis on health care ethics in the Catholic tradition and write a dissertation (12 credits) in the Catholic tradition to develop expertise in the area of Catholic health care ethics. To enroll in the concentration in health care ethics in the Catholic tradition, students must already hold a master’s degree in theology or religious studies or be enrolled in the M.A./Ph.D. dual-degree program.

Clinical Ethics Concentration

Students enrolled in the Ph.D. program in health care ethics may take 15 credits of coursework with an emphasis on clinical ethics (12 credits). They’ll also write a dissertation on a topic relevant to clinical ethics to develop expertise in clinical health care ethics.

Empirical Research Concentration

With the approval of the concentration directors and the Ph.D. program director, students enrolled in the PhD program in health care ethics may opt to complete this concentration to develop an expertise in empirical research methods. The aim of this concentration is to prepare students to incorporate empirical methods into a normative dissertation and future research. The focus of the track will be in qualitative research methods (such as ethnography, interviews, focus groups, public deliberation, etc.), though, in consultation with the directors of the concentration, students will have the option of adopting quantitative or mixed methods approaches. Completion of the concentration is meant to indicate special competencies over and above those gained in the Ph.D. program, specifically those that pertain to qualitative empirical research in the field of bioethics.

Students must elect to pursue this concentration by the end of their first semester at the latest. The empirical concentration curriculum plan of each student must be approved by a concentration director. The concentration requires at least 12 hours of coursework.

Research Ethics Concentration

Students enrolled in the Ph.D. program in health care ethics may take 15 credits of coursework with an emphasis on research ethics and write a dissertation (12 credits) in research ethics to develop expertise in the area of human research ethics.

Fieldwork and Research Opportunities

All Ph.D. students take a three-semester, 150-hour clinical practicum to gain experience working in a clinical setting. Students interested in the clinical ethics concentration can complete an additional advanced practicum in which students are placed in active clinical ethics consultation services for 300+ hours. In addition to these fieldwork opportunities, most Ph.D. students graduate with two or more publications.

Careers

Professionals from the fields of law, medicine, nursing, public health, philosophy and religious studies have joined SLU’s Ph.D. program in health care ethics. Our graduates have been highly successful in finding excellent full-time positions both in education (teaching and conducting research in health care ethics) and in health care systems (as professional ethicists).

Admission Requirements

Students entering the Ph.D. program in health care ethics will have an undergraduate or graduate degree in a relevant field, for instance, philosophy, theology, a clinical field, social sciences or law. Successful applicants usually have a high GPA, high GRE percentiles (especially in the verbal and analytical writing categories), a strong normative writing sample and a demonstration of overall fit with the program’s educational objectives.

The Catholic Health Association has recommended that ethicists working in Catholic health care with an interdisciplinary Ph.D. degree should additionally hold an M.A. in Theology. It is strongly recommend that students who do not already hold an M.A. in theology complete the dual-degree program, offered in collaboration with the Aquinas Institute of Theology. Alternately, students should plan on completing an M.A. prior to commencing work in Catholic health care.

Application Requirements

- Transcript(s)
- Three letters of recommendation
- GRE scores
- Résumé
- Writing sample
- Professional goal statement
- Application deadline Dec. 1

Requirements for International Students

All admission policies and requirements for domestic students apply to international students along with the following:

- Demonstrate English Language Proficiency (http://catalog.slu.edu/academic-policies/office-admission/undergraduate/english-language-proficiency/)
- Proof of financial support must include:
- A letter of financial support from the person(s) or sponsoring agency funding the time at Saint Louis University
- A letter from the sponsor's bank verifying that the funds are available and will be so for the duration of study at the University
- Academic records, in English translation, of students who have undertaken postsecondary studies outside the United States must include the courses taken and/or lectures attended, practical laboratory work, the maximum and minimum grades attainable, the grades earned or the results of all end-of-term examinations, and any honors or degrees received. WES and ECE transcripts are accepted.

**Assistanship Deadline**

Applicants who are admitted to the Ph.D. program will be invited to submit a separate application for assistantship funding. Contact the Ph.D. program director for more information.

**Review Process**

Applications are reviewed by a committee of faculty members from the Albert Gnaegi Center for Health Care Ethics.

**Scholarships, Assistantships and Financial Aid**

For priority consideration for a graduate assistantship, applicants should complete their applications by the program admission deadlines listed. Fellowships and assistantships provide a stipend and may include health insurance and a tuition scholarship for the duration of the award.

For more information, visit the student financial services office online at [http://www.slu.edu/financial-aid](http://www.slu.edu/financial-aid/).

**Learning Outcomes**

1. Graduates will be able to demonstrate a broad knowledge of the foundational disciplines, methods, topics and issues in health care ethics required for the scholarly analysis of issues in the field.
2. Graduates will be able to demonstrate a proficiency in formulating original, normative arguments on topics related to health care ethics.
3. Graduates will be able to demonstrate the ability to conceptualize, develop and bring to successful completion an original, sustained and coherent independent research project that contributes to the field (i.e. the dissertation).
4. Graduates will be able to demonstrate an ability to generate appropriate job search materials (i.e. curriculum vitae, teaching portfolio, writing sample, etc.)

**Requirements**

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<tr>
<th>Code</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Credits</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>HCE 6010</td>
<td>Methods in Philosophical Ethics</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HCE 6020</td>
<td>Methods in Religious Ethics</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HCE 6040</td>
<td>Interdisciplinary Research in Health Care Ethics</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Disciplinary Lens**

The Disciplinary Lens courses are elective courses that provide students the opportunity to gain a deeper understanding of a primary disciplinary lens (e.g. philosophy, theology, empirical methods, anthropology/sociology), through which topics and arguments in the field might be examined and constructed. The disciplinary lens courses should ideally correspond to the student's intended dissertation method and should ordinarily be clustered in the same discipline. These courses are electives and students are encouraged to take courses in outside departments, with the approval of the PhD Program Director. Up to 9 credit hours of advanced standing from previous graduate coursework may be applied to these 12 credit hours, with the approval of the PhD Program Director.

**Bioethics Content**

The Bioethics Content courses are elective courses that provide students exposure to a variety of health care ethics-related topics, thinkers and practices. Ideally, at least some of the Bioethics Content courses should correspond to the student's intended dissertation topic. These courses are electives and students are encouraged to take courses in outside departments, with the approval of the PhD Program Director. Up to 9 credit hours of advanced standing from previous graduate coursework may be applied to these 12 credit hours, with the approval of the PhD Program Director.

**Dissertation Research**

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<tr>
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<th>Title</th>
<th>Credits</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>HCE 6990</td>
<td>Dissertation Research (taken over multiple semesters)</td>
<td>12</td>
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</table>

**Clinical Ethics Concentration**

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Code</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Credits</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>HCE 6130</td>
<td>Clinical Ethics</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HCE 6540</td>
<td>Advanced Clinical Ethics Practicum</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elective</td>
<td>Additional Course in Clinical Ethics</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HCE 6150</td>
<td>Practicum, Health Care Ethics</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HCE 6980</td>
<td>Graduate Reading Course</td>
<td>3</td>
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</table>

**Dissertation on a Clinical Ethics Topic**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Code</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Credits</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>HCE 6990</td>
<td>Dissertation Research</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Catholic Tradition Concentration**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Code</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Credits</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>HCE 6020</td>
<td>Methods in Religious Ethics</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HCE 6310</td>
<td>Health Care Ethics: Catholic Tradition</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elective</td>
<td>Additional Course in Health Care &amp; Catholic Tradition (usually taken outside of HCE)</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The student will then address the comments of the readers and submit a revised proposal to the chair. This process may be repeated until the chair, readers and student are satisfied with the proposal.

**Dissertations: Non-Traditional Format**

Ordinarily, doctoral candidates in the Ph.D. program in health care ethics will follow the traditional guidelines for dissertations. However, when appropriate, a student’s dissertation committee may permit the student to write a dissertation using a nontraditional format, the body of which consists of at least three thematically related original article-length manuscripts, at least two of which must be accepted for publication. As is always the case, all dissertation content must receive final approval by the student’s dissertation committee. The mere fact that a manuscript has been published or accepted for publication does not guarantee that it can be used toward a nontraditional dissertation. Ordinarily, if a faculty member serves as a co-author on one of the publications, this faculty member would not serve as the student’s dissertation chair. The nontraditional dissertation format requires that:

1. The three incorporated articles be preceded by a substantive introduction chapter and followed by a substantive conclusion chapter, which will integrate the three manuscripts into a coherent whole.
2. Ordinarily, the student is the sole or primary author of all three manuscripts.
3. At least two of the three manuscripts must be fully accepted for publication and the third at least under review.
5. All articles incorporated into the dissertation must have been submitted while enrolled in the Ph.D. program.

**Oral Defense of the Dissertation**

Upon completion of the dissertation, students publicly present and defend their dissertation before their dissertation committee, CHCE faculty and doctoral students.

**Continuation Standards**

Students must maintain a cumulative grade point average (GPA) of 3.00 in all graduate/professional courses.

**Roadmap**

Roadmaps are recommended semester-by-semester plans of study for programs and assume full-time enrollment unless otherwise noted.

Courses and milestones designated as critical (marked with !) must be completed in the semester listed to ensure a timely graduation. Transfer credit may change the roadmap.

This roadmap should not be used in the place of regular academic advising appointments. All students are encouraged to meet with their advisor/mentor each semester. Requirements, course availability and sequencing are subject to change.

**Course** | **Title** | **Credits**
--- | --- | ---
**Year One**
**Fall**
HCE 6050 | Philosophical Foundations | 3
or HCE 6070 | or Foundations of Catholic Morality | 3

CONCENTRATION CREDITS

**Empirical Research Methods Concentration**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Code</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Credits</th>
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<tr>
<td>HCE 6040</td>
<td>Interdisciplinary Research in Health Care Ethics</td>
<td>3</td>
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<tr>
<td>HCE 6520</td>
<td>Quantitative Research in Descriptive Ethics</td>
<td>3</td>
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<tr>
<td>HCE 6150</td>
<td>Practicum, Health Care Ethics (Students will focus</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>on the population the student intends to research</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>in their dissertation)</td>
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</table>

**Qualitative Methods Elective**

Two (preferably three) graduate-level level qualitative methods courses, usually outside HCE. The third course can be either a methods course or a course covering the content area of the student’s empirical research.

**Total Credits**

15

**Research Ethics Concentration**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Code</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Credits</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>HCE 6140</td>
<td>Research Ethics</td>
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</table>
| Elective in Research Methodology

Concentration students would be required to take a class in research methodology or would be required to demonstrate advanced standing in this area. This will be treated as one of the Topics and Scholars electives required as part of the Ph.D. program.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Elective</th>
<th>Additional Course in Research Ethics</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>HCE 6980</td>
<td>Graduate Reading Course</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HCE 6150</td>
<td>Practicum, Health Care Ethics</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HCE 6990</td>
<td>Dissertation Research (with focus on research ethics)</td>
<td>3</td>
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</table>

**Non-Course Requirements**

**Research Tools**

These competencies are essential for success in health care ethics. Students may develop these competencies through different mechanisms.

1. Competency in medical terminology
2. Competency in library database skills
3. Competency in reading statistics and study design

**Comprehensive Examinations**

The comprehensive examinations occur after completing all course work and practica.

**Dissertation Proposal**

The student will work closely with the dissertation chair to select a dissertation topic and plan the dissertation proposal in a timely manner. In the dissertation proposal, the student must present substantial evidence of the ability to develop and sustain an extended normative project on a bioethics topic. Once the chair is satisfied with the proposal, it will be sent to the two faculty readers for their comments. It is at this stage that the readers are expected to influence the general outline of the dissertation. The student will then address the comments of the readers and submit a revised proposal to the chair. This process may be repeated until the chair, readers and student are satisfied with the proposal.

**Dissertation on Health Care Ethics in the Catholic Tradition**

**HCE 6990** | Dissertation Research | 12   |
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Course</th>
<th>Title</th>
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<tr>
<td>HCE 6040</td>
<td>Interdisciplinary Research in Health Care Ethics</td>
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<tr>
<td>HCE 6110</td>
<td>Intro-Medicine for Ethicists</td>
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<tr>
<td>Library Database Skills</td>
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<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spring</td>
<td></td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HCE 6130</td>
<td>Clinical Ethics</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LAW 8005</td>
<td>Bioethics and the Law (PL)</td>
<td>2</td>
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<tr>
<td>HCE 6150</td>
<td>Practicum, Health Care Ethics</td>
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<tr>
<td>Elective</td>
<td>6xxx-level HCE course or course in a related discipline approved by the PhD Program Director</td>
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### Year Two

#### Fall

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<th>Course</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>HCE 6010</td>
<td>Methods in Philosophical Ethics</td>
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<td>HCE 6020</td>
<td>Methods in Religious Ethics</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>HCE 6150</td>
<td>Practicum, Health Care Ethics</td>
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<tr>
<td>Elective</td>
<td>6xxx-level HCE course or course in a related discipline approved by the PhD Program Director</td>
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<tr>
<td>Credits</td>
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#### Spring

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<tr>
<td>HCE 6140</td>
<td>Research Ethics</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>HCE 6150</td>
<td>Practicum, Health Care Ethics</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elective</td>
<td>6xxx-level HCE course or course in a related discipline approved by the PhD Program Director</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HCE 6980</td>
<td>Graduate Reading Course</td>
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### Year Three

#### Fall

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<th>Course</th>
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<th>Credits</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Comprehensive Exam (Written exam and oral exam)</td>
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<td>0</td>
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<tr>
<td>HCE 6990</td>
<td>Dissertation Research</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Credits</td>
<td></td>
<td>6</td>
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#### Spring

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<tr>
<th>Course</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Credits</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
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<td>Dissertation Research</td>
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<td>Credits</td>
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### Year Four

#### Fall

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<tbody>
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<td>HCE 6990</td>
<td>Dissertation Research</td>
<td>0</td>
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<tr>
<td>Credits</td>
<td></td>
<td>0</td>
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#### Spring

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<tr>
<th>Course</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Credits</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>HCE 6990</td>
<td>Dissertation Research</td>
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### Year Five

#### Fall

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<th>Course</th>
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<th>Credits</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>HCE 6990</td>
<td>Dissertation Research</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Credits</td>
<td></td>
<td>0</td>
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### Program Notes

- Students are encouraged to concentrate elective courses in a primary methodological or content area, versus a broad sampling of courses. Common choices are 6xxx-level courses in theology and philosophy.

- **Concentration in Research Ethics**: Electives will be focused on topics related to research ethics and dissertation will be written on a research ethics topic. One elective will be in research methodology; one elective will be an Advanced Research Ethics Practicum; one elective will be a non-HCE elective related to research ethics and the elective in the final semester will be a directed reading on Research Ethics, preparing the student’s dissertation prospectus.

- **Concentration in Catholic Tradition**: Electives will be focused on topics related to Catholic health care ethics and dissertation will be written on a Catholic health care topic. One elective will be HCE 6310 Health Care Ethics: Catholic Tradition (3 cr); one elective will be an elective related to health care and the Catholic tradition, usually in theology; the elective in the final semester will be a directed reading on Catholic health care ethics, preparing the student’s dissertation prospectus.

- **Concentration in Clinical Ethics**: Electives will be focused on topics related to clinical ethics and dissertation will be written on a clinical ethics topic. One elective will be HCE 6540 Advanced Clinical Ethics Practicum (3 cr); one elective will be a non-HCE elective related to clinical ethics and the elective in the final semester will be a directed reading on clinical ethics, preparing the student’s dissertation prospectus.

- **Concentration in Empirical Research Methods in Ethics**: Electives will be focused on topics related to empirical research methods and dissertation will be written using an empirical research method. Two (preferably three) electives will be graduate-level methods courses taught outside HCE and the elective in the final semester will be HCE 6520 Quantitative Research in Descriptive Ethics (3 cr), preparing the student’s dissertation prospectus.

### Contact Us

For additional information about our program, please contact

**Erica Salter, Ph.D.**
Graduate Program Coordinator, Health Care Ethics
erica.salter@slu.edu