Task: Research / Philosophical Analysis

Write a policy recommendation and ethical analysis of a particular developing biotechnology to submit to the President's Council on Bioethics. Pick a topic for your paper that is conceptually connected to one of the issues that is discussed in the books from the second half of the course (Garreau, Kass, Kitcher). Your paper should have a clearly defined focus—a thesis to defend, a specific question to answer or an issue to explore. Check with me if you are unsure whether your idea is appropriate. I'll expect that the paper to exhibit (1) breadth and depth of research on the topic and (2) your own reflective analysis about the philosophical issues involved.

For (1) you should do a thorough background search in the library on your topic. Your paper should demonstrate that you are now something of an expert on the literature on your topic. You should be familiar with the original writings of the main people who have written on the topic; you may make use of secondary sources so long as you then also trace them back to the primary materials.

Your bibliography should be annotated with short paragraphs that concisely describe the content of each of the cited books or articles that was relevant to your topic. (The purpose of an annotated bibliography is to provide information to readers of your paper about what they would find in the referenced works so that they would have a guide to the literature should they want to investigate the topic further.) Here is an example:


Ross asks why the 5,000 to 39,000 permanently unconscious patients in the US are continuing to receive treatment. She gives statistics on how patients and families in the United States feels about being in a Permanent Vegetative State (PVS). She suggests that is might be best to leave the question of whether to treat a PVS patient to the patient's advanced directive or the surrogate's judgment.
For (2) I will be looking to see that you have grasped and grappled with the philosophical issues. You should demonstrate that you have understood the issues by giving a clear explanation of the concepts and positions that are in play in the literature. This will require that you define the terms of the debate, being careful to note if different authors use the same word but with different intended meanings. You will also have to be able to articulate what is at stake (i.e. why the issue you have selected is important) and what are the arguments and evidence given, for and against, the positions but their proponents and opponents. As for “grappling” with the issues, by this I mean that you should become a participant in the debate, not merely be a reporter of it. I’ll look to see that your explanations are reflective, that you have critically evaluated the arguments, and that you have taken a stand on the issue and defended your view.

Of course, I will also expect the paper to be clearly written and carefully proofread for spelling, grammatical and typographical errors. Finally, staple your paper together; please don’t use those slippery plastic cover sheets!

**Length:** Body 10 - 11 pages (3000 – 3500 words) typed double-space, plus annotated bibliography.

**Submission:**
You will need to (1) bring a hard copy to class and also (2) submit electronically to Turnitin.com. The Turnitin class ID is 3499236 and the password is “singularity”.

**Due:** May 2, 10 a.m.