

A globe of the Earth is shown, completely encased in a layer of clear, crinkled plastic. The globe is being held by two hands wearing bright blue nitrile gloves. The background is a plain, light grey color. A large, semi-transparent white circle is centered over the globe, containing the title and author information.

Pandemic Resources for Teachers

by Lewis Vaughn

Ethics in the Pandemic:

Teacher Resources

The COVID-19 pandemic is a threat to tens of millions of people, and the medical and public health priorities are clear: prevent the virus' spread and care for those who are affected. But combating the disease also raises a host of ethical questions about medical triage and rationing care, politics and preventive measures, the integrity of medical research, medical misinformation, and more. Teachers have been thinking about these questions, and there are many good sources that offer accurate, timely information on the virus and attempts to deal with its ethical implications. Here are some of them:

Pandemic Facts and Official Reports from Professional Ethicists

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, "Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19): Frequently Asked Questions,"

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/faq.html>.

The Hastings Center, "Ethical Framework for Health Care Institutions and Institutional Ethics Services Responding to the Coronavirus Pandemic," March 16, 2020.

<https://www.thehastingscenter.org/ethicalframeworkcovid19/>.

The Hastings Center, "Pandemics: The Ethics of Mandatory and Voluntary Interventions,"

<https://www.thehastingscenter.org/briefingbook/pandemic/>.

American Medical Association, "Ethics Guidance during a Pandemic: An Overview," July 29, 2020.

<https://www.ama-assn.org/delivering-care/ethics/ethics-guidance-during-pandemic-overview>.

Personal Ethics in the Pandemic

Colleen Walsh, "Why Some Americans Refuse to Social Distance and Wear Masks," The Harvard Gazette, August 28, 2020,. An interview with ethicist Michael Sandel about the ethics of what we owe each other in a pandemic

<https://news.harvard.edu/gazette/story/2020/08/sandel-explores-ethics-of-what-we-owe-each-other-in-a-pandemic/>.

Beth Daley, "Mask or No Mask? This Simple Ethical Approach Can Help with Your Pandemic Etiquette," The Conversation, August 17, 2020. <https://theconversation.com/mask-or-no-mask-this-simple-ethical-approach-can-help-with-your-pandemic-etiquette-144552>.

Michael W. Austin, "Ethics in a Pandemic Age," Psychology Today, March 18, 2020. The need to move beyond rules, rights, and responsibilities to grace, generosity, and gratitude.

<https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/ethics-everyone/202003/ethics-in-pandemic-age>.

Tia Powell, "The Ethics of Reopening During the COVID-19 Pandemic," Psychiatric Times, August 31, 2020. Morally sound—and unsound—approaches to reopening the country. <https://www.psychiatrictimes.com/view/the-ethics-reopening-during-the-covid-19-pandemic>.

Havi Carel, Matthew Ratcliffe, and Tom Froese, "Reflecting on experiences of social distancing," The Lancet, June 30, 2020. Thoughts on what we have gained and lost because of social distancing during the pandemic

[https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lancet/article/PIIS0140-6736\(20\)31485-9/fulltext#%20](https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lancet/article/PIIS0140-6736(20)31485-9/fulltext#%20).

Personal Ethics in the Pandemic (continued)

Grant Gillett, "COVID-19 Ethics—Looking Down the Muzzle," Journal of Bioethical Inquiry (2020). Ethical decision-making on the personal level in the pandemic.

<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC7445817/>

Maxwell J. Smith and Ross E.G. Upshur, "Learning Lessons from COVID-19 Requires Recognizing Moral Failures," Journal of Bioethical Inquiry, 2020. Reflections on our inability to learn from our past moral failures in dealing with mass outbreaks.

<https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s11673-020-10019-6>.

The Ethics of Allocating Tests, Treatment, and Vaccines

Ezekiel J. Emanuel, Govind Persad, Adam Kern, et al, "An ethical framework

for global vaccine allocation," Science, Sept. 11, 2020. A timely article by prominent bioethicists who propose an "ethical framework for reconciling competing values, one that [experts] will rightly accept as ethical

and not just as an assertion of power."

<https://science.sciencemag.org/content/369/6509/1309>.

Rene Robert, Nancy Kentish-Barnes, Alexander Boyer, et al, "Ethical Dilemmas Due to the COVID-19 Pandemic," Annals of Intensive Care, June 17, 2020. Discussion of some critical ethics choices that ICU caregivers have faced.

<https://annalsofintensivecare.springeropen.com/articles/10.1186/s13613-020-00702-7>.

The Ethics of Allocating Tests, Treatment, and Vaccines (continued)

Ryan M. Antiel, Farr A. Curlin, Govind Persad, et al,

“Should Pediatric Patients Be Prioritized When Rationing Life-Saving Treatments During COVID-19 Pandemic?” *Pediatrics*, Sept. 2020,

<https://pediatrics.aappublications.org/content/146/3/e2020012542>.

David G. Kirchhoffer, “Dignity, Autonomy, and

Allocation of Scarce Medical Resources During COVID-19,” *Journal of Bioethical Inquiry* (2020). Allocating scarce resources when the relevant moral principles conflict.

<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC7445686/>

Christina Pagel et al, “COVID-19: How to Triage Effectively

in a Pandemic,” *British Medical Journal*, March 9, 2020. A brief review of the factors to take into account in the allocation of care in the coronavirus pandemic.

<https://blogs.bmj.com/bmj/2020/03/09/covid-19-triage-in-a-pandemic-is-even-thornier-than-you-might-think/>.

Heidi Malm, Thomas May, et al, “Ethics, Pandemics, and the Duty

to Treat,” *American Journal of Bioethics*, 8 (8):4-19 (2008). An examination of the grounds for asserting a duty to treat in an infectious disease pandemic. <https://philpapers.org/rec/MALEPA>.

WNYC Studios, Radiolab, “Playing God,” August 21, 2016. A

podcast on healthcare rationing, focusing on decisions about which patients should receive a ventilator in a pandemic.

<https://www.wnycstudios.org/podcasts/radiolab/articles/playing-god>.

The Ethics of Allocating Tests, Treatment, and Vaccines (continued)

Isaac Chotiner, "The Medical Ethics of the Coronavirus Crisis," *The New Yorker*, March 11, 2020. An interview with Christine Mitchell, director at the Center for Bioethics at Harvard Medical School. The discussion covers "what ethicists tend to focus on during a health crisis, how existing health-care access affects crisis response, and the importance of institutions talking through the ethical implications of their decisions." <https://www.newyorker.com/news/q-and-a/the-medical-ethics-of-the-coronavirus-crisis>

Silvia Camporesi and Maurizio Mori, "Ethicists, doctors and triage decisions: who should decide? And on what basis?" *Journal of Medical Ethics*, July 10, 2020. A report on the dispute in Italy concerning triage criteria for critically ill COVID-19 patients.

https://jme.bmj.com/content/early/2020/07/10/medethics-2020-106499?rss=1&utm_campaign=jme&utm_content=consumer&utm_medium=cpc&utm_source=trendmd&utm_term=usage-042019.

The Ethics of Misinformation in the Pandemic

Christina Pazzanese, "Battling the 'Pandemic of Misinformation,'" *The Harvard Gazette*, May 8, 2020. How the ubiquity of social media has made it easier to spread or even create COVID-19 falsehoods, making the work of public health officials harder.

<https://news.harvard.edu/gazette/story/2020/05/social-media-used-to-spread-create-covid-19-falsehoods/>

The Ethics of Misinformation in the Pandemic (continued)

Lavinia Marin, "Three contextual dimensions of information on social media: lessons learned from the COVID-19 infodemic," *Ethics and Information Technology*, 2020. The effectiveness of countermeasures in three informational contexts.

<https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s10676-020-09550-2>.

Aimi Nadia Mohd Yusof, Muhamad Zaid Muuti, et al, "Sharing Information on COVID-19: The Ethical Challenges in the Malaysian Setting," *Asian Bioethical Review*, June 25, 2020. The ethics of sharing personal (unscientific) information and the sharing of fake news and misinformation.

<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC7315401>.

Jeffrey Kluger, "The Misinformation Age Has Exacerbated—and Been Exacerbated by—the Coronavirus Pandemic," *Time*, July 23, 2020.

<https://time.com/5870464/coronavirus-pandemic-misinformation/>.

COVID-19 and Racial Inequities

Sandra Soo-Jin Lee, Columbia University Irving Medical Center, "COVID-19 Ethics: Health, Inequality, and Justice." A site curating scholarly work in social sciences and humanities that pertains directly to ethical issues of equity and justice.

<https://www.mhe.cuimc.columbia.edu/division-ethics/covid-19-resources>.

COVID-19 and Racial Inequities (continued)

CDC, "Health Equity Considerations and Racial and Ethnic Minority Groups," Coronavirus Disease, July 24, 2020. Facts about inequities in incidence and treatment during the pandemic.

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/health-equity/race-ethnicity.html>.

Richard A. Oppel, Jr., Robert Gebeloff, et al, "The Fullest Look Yet at the Racial Inequality of Coronavirus," New York Times, July 5, 2020. New data confirming racial disparities in coronavirus incidence.

<https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2020/07/05/us/coronavirus-latino-african-americans-cdc-data.html>.

About the author

Lewis Vaughn is the author or coauthor of several textbooks, including ***Bioethics***, Fourth Edition (2020), ***Philosophy Here and Now***, Third Edition (2018), ***Applying Critical Thinking to Modern Media*** (2021), and ***Living Philosophy***, Third Edition, (2021)