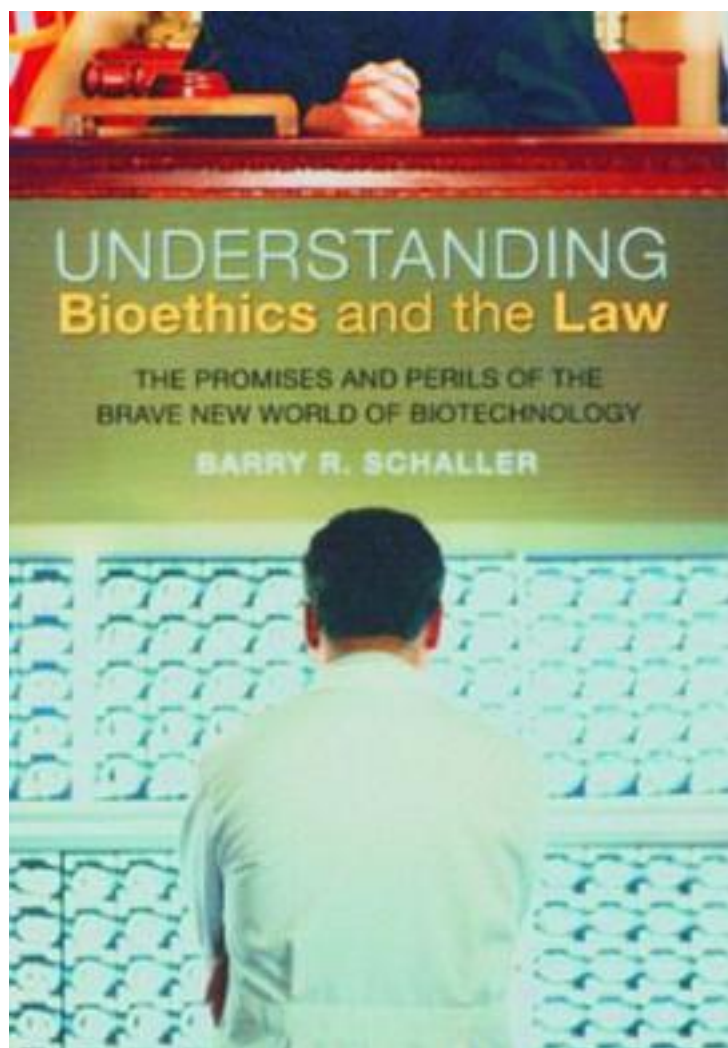# Understanding Bioethics and the Law

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In this book, the author provides a thorough examination of the impact of biotechnology and biomedical advances on the everyday lives of people in modern society. Individuals and institutions are increasingly faced with a growing number of critical personal and ethical decisions that present themselves at all stages of life, from birth to death. These issues include the physician-patient relationship, informed consent, confidentiality and privacy, reproductive choices, end-of-life choices, health care, drug choices, and the allocation of scarce resources such as human organs, sperm, and eggs.Although bioethics as an independent discipline is barely thirty years old, bioethics issues already pervade everyday life and regularly capture the attention of the media. The field is constantly changing because of new developments in technology and medicine. Many significant controversies in bioethics are developing without a great deal of policy regulation. In the absence of policy, individuals and institutions are increasingly turning to courts for decisions on crucial controversies. Judgements in court cases have a great impact, not only in terms of resolving particular controversies, but also in transforming bioethical issues in ways that cannot be anticipated.Advances and discoveries in medicine and the life sciences will continue to have important and yet unpredictable impacts, not only on the lives of individuals, but on society as a whole. The great promise of new developments is offset by numerous perils. Individual and public policy choices must take into account the full range of possibilities, and the author has provided an invaluable guide to this ethical minefield.

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目录:

[Understanding Bioethics and the Law_下载链接1_](#)

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