

# THE KAREN ANN QUINLAN CASE:

## ITS LEGACY AND NEW JERSEY'S CONTRIBUTIONS TO END-OF-LIFE JURISPRUDENCE BETWEEN 1975 AND 2025

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### Course Information

Thursdays from 1:30-3:30 p.m. for six weeks beginning October 23 through December 4,  
no class on 11/27.

**In-Person - Lecture/Discussion - Max 20**

### Course Description

We will examine historical, legal, and ethical aspects of the so-called right to die movement which began with the New Jersey Supreme Court's decision known as "In re Quinlan". The first two sessions of this six-session course will look closely at the circumstances giving rise to the "Quinlan" case, the arguments advanced in support of and opposition to the claimed right of Karen Quinlan's parents to terminate the life-support system for their comatose daughter, and the judicial decisions of both the lower court and the Supreme Court based on a constitutional right of privacy. Some comparative review of decisions rendered by courts in other states on this issue after the landmark "Quinlan" ruling as well as the further development of case law in New Jersey over the next decade concerning end-of-life decision-making.

We will then look at the impact of "Quinlan" on some subsidiary issues including living wills or advance directives, the determination of death on neurological criteria known as brain death, and the development, the use of hospital ethics committees, and the challenge of medical futility. The influence of "Quinlan" in distinguishing the withholding or withdrawing of life-sustaining medical treatment from suicide and euthanasia will be evaluated as well as the enactment of a statute in New Jersey and a few other states authorizing medical aid in dying for terminally ill individuals will be covered.

The presentation of these court cases is intended to stimulate thoughtful discussion of the moral and ethical questions that these circumstances raise. While the court decisions will be summarized and presented during the class sessions, access to the principal court opinions will be made available for independent reading and study

during the course. However, the “Quinlan” opinions from the Superior Court and the Supreme Court will be posted in advance of the first session along with some other materials to provide a sociological and culture context.