

Practical Ethics

Preliminaries

1. Logistics I would like you to write six essays (1,600-2,000 words each) for me across the term. It is up to you in which weeks you write these essays. For each topic I have suggested an essay question. It is up to you whether you answer this question or come up with your own. In weeks when you do write an essay, please email it to me by 19.00 the day before our tutorial to give me a chance to read through it before we meet. When emailing me your essay, I would appreciate it if you could include both your name and the essay topic in the name of the document. In the two weeks in which you do not write an essay, you should still aim to do the reading for that week's topic. If for any reason (illness, a pileup of other commitments, etc.) writing an essay proves to be difficult in a week when an essay is due, do not worry: just email me and we can sort something out (e.g. writing the essay in week 9, or whatever works best).

2. Reading (i) *Order* I recommend reading the texts listed for each topic in roughly the order I have listed them. (ii) *Quantity* I do not expect you to get through all the texts listed for a given topic during the given week in term time, but you should aim to get through at least half. (iii) *Note-taking* It is important that as you read you take high-quality notes from which you will later be able to revise. You will be better-off in the long-run reading fewer texts while taking high-quality notes than reading more texts without taking high-quality notes. (iv) *Revising* At the end of term you should decide which four topics you will prepare to answer on in Finals, and use the vacation to get through any remaining texts listed for those topics. You should also make sure to consult the faculty reading list for those topics prior to Finals.

3. Writing I strongly recommend reading Rachel Fraser's "Essay Writing Instructions" and "What Not to Do" before writing your first essay, available here: <https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1V-fuU89qX-IZAXVu3V3zWS1dQNz0bjQd>.

Week 1: The Moral Demands of Affluence

QUESTION: Is it always wrong for me to spend money on a vacation when I could give the money to a life-saving charity instead?

Peter Singer, "Famine, Affluence, and Morality" in *Philosophy & Public Affairs* Vol.1 no.3 (1972), pp.229-243.

Frances M. Kamm, "Does Distance Matter to the Duty of Rescue?" in *Law and Philosophy* Vol.19 no.6 (2000), pp.655-681.

Violetta Igneski, "Distance, Determinacy, and the Duty to Aid: A Reply to Kamm" in *Law and Philosophy* Vol.20 no.6 (2001), pp.605-616.

Richard W. Miller, "Beneficence, Duty and Distance" in *Philosophy & Public Affairs* Vol.32 no.4 (2004), pp.357-383.

Liam B. Murphy, "The Demands of Beneficence" in *Philosophy & Public Affairs* Vol.22 no.4 (1993), pp.267-292.

Gareth Cullity, "Asking Too Much" in *The Monist* Vol.86 no.3 (2003), pp.402-418.

Sarah Buss, "Needs (Someone Else's), Projects (My Own), and Reasons" in *Journal of Philosophy* Vol.103 no.8 (2006), pp.373-402.

Week 2: Effective Altruism

QUESTION: Are we conditionally obligated to be effective altruists?

William MacAskill, *Doing Good Better: Effective Altruism and a Radical New Way to Make a Difference* (London: Faber and Faber, 2015), esp. Ch.2 "Hard Trade-offs" and Ch.3 "How You Can Save Hundreds of Lives".

Theron Pummer, "Whether and Where to Give" in *Philosophy & Public Affairs* Vol.44 no.1 (2016), pp.77-95.

Joe Horton, "The All or Nothing Problem" in *Journal of Philosophy* Vol.114 no.4 (2017), pp.94-104.

Thomas Sinclair, "Are We Conditionally Obligated to Be Effective Altruists?" in *Philosophy & Public Affairs* Vol.46 no.1 (2018), pp.36-59.

Iason Gabriel, "Effective Altruism and its Critics" in *Journal of Applied Philosophy* Vol.34 no.4 (2016), pp.457-473.

Amia Srinivasan, "Stop the Robot Apocalypse" in *The London Review of Books* Vol.37 no.18 (2015).

Alice Crary, "Against "Effective Altruism"" in Carol J. Adams, Alice Crary, and Lori Gruen eds., *The Good It Promises, The Harm It Does: Critical Essays on Effective Altruism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2023), pp.225-247.

Week 3: Health

QUESTION: EITHER What is health? OR What is a mental illness?

Christopher Boorse, "Health as a Theoretical Concept" in *Philosophy of Science* Vol.44 no.4 (1977), pp.542-573.

Jerome C. Wakefield, "The Concept of Mental Disorder: On the Boundary Between Biological Facts and Social Values" in *The American Psychologist* Vol.47 no.3 (1992), pp.373-388.

Rachel Cooper, "What's Special About Mental Health and Disorder?" in Stephen M. Downes and Edouard Machery eds., *Arguing About Human Nature: Contemporary Debates* (London: Routledge, 2013), pp.487-499.

Quill R. Kukla, "What Counts as a Disease, and Why Does It Matter?" in *Journal of Philosophy of Disability* Vol.2 (2022), pp.130-156.

Elizabeth Barnes, *Health Problems: Philosophical Puzzles About the Nature of Health* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2023), Ch.1 "Theories of Health" and Ch.5 "Ameliorative Skepticism and the Nature of Health".

Micha Frazer-Carroll, *Mad World: The Politics of Mental Health* (London: Pluto Press, 2023).

Week 4: Disability

QUESTION: Is disability a mere difference?

Elizabeth Barnes, "Valuing Disability, Causing Disability" in *Ethics* Vol.125 no.1 (2014), pp.88-113.

Guy Kahane and Julian Savulescu, "Disability and Mere Difference" in *Ethics* Vol.126 no.3 (2016), pp.774-788.

Elizabeth Barnes, "Reply to Guy Kahane and Julian Savulescu" in *Res Philosophica* Vol.93 no.1 (2016), pp.295-309.

Thomas Nadelhoffer, "Chronic Pain, Mere-Differences, and Disability Variantism" in *Journal of Philosophy of Disability* Vol.2 (2022), pp.6-27.

Tom Shakespeare, "The Social Model of Disability" in L.J. Davis ed., *The Disability Studies Reader* (5th ed., London: Routledge, 2016), pp.214-221.

Alison Kafer, *Feminist Queer Crip* (Bloomington, IA: Indiana University Press, 2013), Ch.3 "Debating Feminist Futures".

Marta Russell and Ravi Malhotra, "Introduction: Capitalism and the Disability Rights Movement" in Keith Rosenthal ed., *Capitalism & Disability: Selected Writings by Marta Russell* (Chicago: Haymarket Books, 2019), pp.1-10.

Week 5: Death

QUESTION: What is bad about death?

Bernard Williams, "The Makropulos Case: Reflections on the Tedium of Immortality" in *Problems of the Self* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1973), pp.82-100.

Thomas Nagel, "Death" in *Mortal Questions* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979), pp.1-10.

John Broome, "The Badness of Death and the Goodness of Life" in Ben Bradley, Fred Feldman and Jens Johansson eds., *The Oxford Handbook of Philosophy of Death* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), pp.218-233.

Shelly Kagan, *Death* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2012), Ch.10 "The Badness of Death".

Jeff McMahan, *The Ethics of Killing: Problems at the Margins of Life* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), Ch.2 "Death".

David Benatar, *The Human Predicament: A Candid Guide to Life's Biggest Questions* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), Ch.5 "Death".

Week 6: Animals

QUESTION: "We ought not to eat meat for the reason that animals are sentient." Is this right?

Peter Singer, *Animal Liberation* (2nd ed., London: Random House, 1995), Ch.1 "All Animals Are Equal".

Tom Regan, "Animal Rights, Human Wrongs" in *Environmental Ethics* Vol.2 (1980), pp.99-120.

Shelly Kagan, "What's Wrong with Speciesism?" in *Journal of Applied Philosophy* Vol.33 (2016), pp.1-21.

Jeff McMahan, "Eating Animals the Nice Way" in *Daedalus* Vol.137 (2008), pp.1-11.

Cora Diamond, "Eating Meat and Eating People" in *Philosophy* Vol.53 (1978), pp.465-479.

Sunaura Taylor, "Beasts of Burden: Disability Studies and Animal Rights" in *Qui Parle: Critical Humanities and Social Sciences* Vol.19 no.2 (2011), pp.191-222.

Carol J. Adams, *The Sexual Politics of Meat: A Feminist-Vegetarian Critical Theory* (3rd ed., London: Bloomsbury, 2015), Ch.1 "The Sexual Politics of Meat".

Week 7: Abortion

QUESTION: Under what circumstances, if any, is abortion permissible?

Margaret Olivia Little, "Abortion" in R.G. Frey and Christopher Heath Wellman eds., *A Companion to Applied Ethics* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2005), pp.313-325.

Judith Jarvis Thomson, "A Defense of Abortion" in *Philosophy & Public Affairs* Vol.1 no.1 (1971), pp.47-66.

Michael Tooley, "Abortion and Infanticide" in *Philosophy & Public Affairs* Vol.2 no.1 (1972), pp.37-65.

Don Marquis, "Why Abortion is Immoral" in *Journal of Philosophy* Vol.86 no.4 (1989), pp.183-202.

Dan Moller, "Abortion and Moral Risk" in *Philosophy* Vol.86 no.337 (2011), pp.425-443.

Alison M. Jaggar, "Abortion Rights and Gender Justice Worldwide" in Michael Tooley et al., *Abortion: Three Perspectives* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), pp.120-179.

Alexandria Boyle, "Lady Parts and Baby Parts: What is a Foetus?" in *Philosophy & Phenomenological Research* (forthcoming).

Week 8: Surrogacy

QUESTION: Should women's reproductive labour be treated differently from other forms of labour?

Rosemarie Tong, "Surrogate Motherhood" in R.G. Frey and Christopher Heath Wellman eds., *A Companion to Applied Ethics* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2005), pp.369-381.

Elizabeth S. Anderson, "Is Women's Labor a Commodity?" in *Philosophy & Public Affairs* Vol.19 no.1 (1990), pp.71-92.

Debra Satz, "Markets in Women's Reproductive Labor" in *Philosophy & Public Affairs* Vol.21 no.2 (1992), pp.107-131.

Richard J. Arneson, "Commodification and Commercial Surrogacy" in *Philosophy & Public Affairs* Vol.21 no.2 (1992), pp.132-164.

Alan Wertheimer, "Two Questions About Surrogacy and Exploitation" in *Philosophy & Public Affairs* Vol.21 no.3 (1992), pp.211-239.

Sophie Lewis, *Full Surrogacy Now* (London: Verso, 2018), Ch.1 "Introduction" and Ch.2 ""But Aren't You Against It?"".

Shulamith Firestone, *The Dialectic of Sex: The Case for Feminist Revolution* (London: Verso, 2015), Chs.1, 4, and 10.