

FINAL EXAM QUESTION BANK

Instructions: Your final exam will be similar to the midterm. The exam will consist of a true/false portion, a multiple-choice section and one long essay. For the essay portion of the exam, I will select at least three of the following questions. You will be required to answer one of the questions I select. Since you have the questions in advance, I expect your answer to be clearly organized and more complete than I would otherwise expect. As before, you are free to study any way you want: work in groups, divide questions among friends, or whatever. However, the exam is “closed book” and “closed notes”. On the day of the exam, it is just you, a pen and the blank exam booklet. Make sure you understand the material clearly enough not only to be able to follow it but to be able to explain it yourself.

Remember, your exam is on Tuesday, December 7th from 7:30 a.m. – 9:18 a.m.

1. What is “speciesism”? Present and critically evaluate its various forms. Can a good argument be given for the claim that an individual’s species is directly morally relevant to its moral status? Defend your position against the sorts of criticisms that were discussed in class and readings.
2. Some defenses of special moral status for humans appeal to the special abilities that human have. What are the problems with this approach to justifying a special moral status for humans?
3. We discussed two arguments for the claim that non-human animals (even if not self-conscious and of very low intelligence) have a right to life (or that even the painless killing of them was significantly morally wrong). Present and critically evaluate those two arguments.
4. Bonnie Steinbock presents a moderate position on the moral status of animals. Present and critically evaluate her position. How does she respond to the standard problems that arise for “special abilities” approaches to justifying a special status for humans? Is this response adequate?
5. Discuss the different reasons given by those labeled ‘conservative’, ‘moderate’ and ‘liberal’ on abortion for marking the beginning of a person’s life at the point each does? Making reference to readings and lecture, critically evaluate these reasons. What do you take to be the most defensible answer to the question of when a person’s life begins? Defend it against plausible criticisms.
6. Consider any three of the arguments labeled “Other Bad (or Badly Used) Arguments on Abortion”. Explain them in as much detail and in as plausible a form as you are able. Explain why they were claimed in class to be fallacious (or to be employed inappropriately). Are the criticisms that were raised against these arguments sound?
7. Describe the “Moral Safety Argument” for the prohibition of abortion in as much detail as you are able. What can be said in defense of the premises of the argument? Is the argument successful? Defend your answer.
8. Many believe that if one succeeds in showing that the fetus is a person with a right to life from the point of conception, no further argument is needed to show that abortion ought to be prohibited. Judith Thomson denies this and argues that in virtually all cases a woman has a right to get an abortion if she wishes even if we grant that the fetus is a person with a right to life. How does she defend this view? Critically evaluate her position.

9. Mary Anne Warren offers a theory of the moral and legal status of abortion that rests crucially on the moral status of the fetus. What criteria does she argue are relevant to the fetus having a right to life? How does she defend this position? What are the major problems with her theory and how, if at all, does she reply to them?
10. Don Marquis argues that abortion is immoral because it involves depriving a thing of a “future like ours.” Develop Marquis’s argument in as much detail as possible and critically evaluate the argument. Is it successful? Defend your answer as fully as you can.
11. George Harris argues that under certain conditions the biological father of a fetus can have a right to the fetus’s being born. Under what conditions does he think this is true, and why? Critically evaluate his position. Address in as much detail as you can one or both of the following questions:
 - Do you believe that there could be conditions under which a biological father could have a right to a fetus *not* being born? Justify your answer.
 - Short of having a right that the fetus *not* be born, are there any legitimate means by which a father (to be) could exercise his choice not to become a father *after* conception has taken place? Justify your answer.
12. (An Invitation to Be Creative.) Based on our readings and lecture concerning Kant and Bentham, discuss how Kant and Bentham might address the question of abortion. Is it clear what each should say about the morality of abortion and of legal restrictions on abortion? If not, what questions would have each philosopher have to have answered about the nature of the fetus, the act of abortion or anything else in order to determine the moral status of abortion and legal restrictions on it? (That is, given their theories, what issues would be relevant to determining the morality of abortion and legal restrictions on abortion?)