

Philosophy 367: Contemporary Social and Moral Problems in the United States

Winter 2006

M&W 8:30-10:18
University Hall 353

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Course Call #: 15740-0

1. Course Description

This is an intensive college-level writing course, concentrating on the analysis and evaluation of ethical perspectives concerning contemporary social and moral problems about gender, race and ethnicity, and class.

2. Course Aims

- To develop and build upon the fundamental skills of expository writing set forth in the student's first writing course (i.e., to produce writing characterized by a clear sense of purpose, effectively ordered and supported ideas, with style appropriate to purpose and audience, and control of grammatical and mechanical elements)
- To develop the student's skills in oral discussion
- To develop the student's ability to read carefully and listen carefully
- To extend the student's ability to express ideas clearly, directly, and effectively
- To provide students with guidelines for addressing conflicts of moral values
- To develop the student's ability to think creatively and constructively, and to find common ground within ethical debates
- To foster an understanding of the pluralistic nature of institutions, society, and culture in the United States, with special emphasis on race and ethnicity, gender, and class
- To emphasize an appreciation of diversity and the importance of the values of tolerance and equality

3. Course Materials

- *Morality Matters: Race, Class, and Gender in Applied Ethics*, ed. Jeffrey R. Di Leo
- *Ethical Issues in the Courts*, 2nd edition, ed. Julie C. van Camp
- *Writing with Style: Conversations on the Art of Writing*, 2nd edition, by John R. Trimble
- **Optional:** *A 21st Century Ethical Toolbox*, by Anthony Weston
- Additional material may be assigned, with due notice given to students, at the instructor's discretion

4. Course Expectations

- Students are expected to abide by the OSU Code of Student Conduct
- Students are expected to carefully read the selections assigned for each discussion.
- Each student bears *sole* responsibility for keeping up with assignments.
- Regular class attendance is expected. Extensive absences will be detrimental to one's grade.
- Students are expected to participate courteously in class discussions. A lack of participation will be detrimental to one's grade. A lack of courtesy will also be detrimental to one's grade.
- Students are expected to participate in discussions in a way that is conducive to a non-hostile, non-threatening classroom environment.
- Students are expected, and encouraged, to ask questions and share thoughts during discussion, especially if something is not understood or the instructor says something obviously false.
- Students are expected to write in a way that befits a second college writing course.
- Students who have writing difficulties are expected to consult with the OSU Writing Center.
- Any student who feels that accommodations based on the impact of a disability are required should contact the instructor privately to discuss specific needs. Please contact the Office of Disability Services at 614.292-3307 in Pomerene Hall 150 as well; they will coordinate reasonable accommodations for students with documented disabilities.

5. Course Readings

All readings are from the Di Leo anthology, unless otherwise noted.

Unit 1: Poverty

- The US Bill of Rights and the UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights (esp. #22-25)
- Pearce, "The Feminization of Poverty"
- Fraser, "Women, Welfare, and the Politics of Need Interpretation"
- Wilkerson & Gresham, "The Racialization of Poverty"
- *Optional*: Bray, "So How Did I Get Here?" (in Weston, 329-337)
- *Optional*: Bunch, "Women's Rights as Human Rights"
- Nielson, "Radical Egalitarianism"
- Machan, "The Nonexistence of Basic Welfare Rights"
- Singer, "Famine, Affluence, and Morality"
- Hardin, "Lifeboat Ethics"

Unit 2: Gay Marriage

- Mohr, "Gay Basics"
- Levin, "Why Homosexuality is Abnormal"
- Calhoun, "Feminism, Lesbianism, and the Family"

- *Griswold v. Connecticut* (van Camp, 33-34)
- *Loving v. Virginia* (van Camp, 37-38)
- *Lawrence v. Texas* (van Camp, 41-45)
- *Watkins v. United States Army* (van Camp, 45-47)
- *Baker v. Vermont* (van Camp, 49-51)
- *Goodridge v. Department of Public Health* (van Camp, 51-54)

Unit 3: Affirmative Action

- Boxill, "Blacks and Social Justice"
- Graglia, "Affirmative Discrimination"
- Kahlenberg, "Class, not Race"
- *Plessy v. Ferguson* (van Camp, 112-114)
- *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka* (van Camp, 114-116)
- *Regents of the University of California v. Bakke* (van Camp, 116-120)
- *Grutter v. Bollinger* (van Camp, 121-124)
- *The Coalition v. Pete Wilson* (van Camp, 125-126)

Unit 4: Sexism

- Frye, "Sexism"
- Goldberg, "The Inevitability of Patriarchy"
- Pineau, "Date Rape"
- Martin & Hummer, "Fraternities and Rape on Campus"
- Pharr, "Hate Violence Against Women"
- Davis, "Rape, Racism, and the Myth of the Black Rapist"
- *United States v. Virginia* (van Camp, 132-134)
- *Michael M. v. Superior Court of Sonoma County* (van Camp, 130-132)

Unit 5: Abortion

- Marquis, "Why Abortion is Immoral"
- Markowitz, "Abortion and Feminism"
- Ross, "African-American Women and Abortion"
- *Optional: Rapp, "XYLO"* (Weston, 289-294)
- *Optional: Rosenblatt, "How to End the Abortion War"* (Weston, 127-131)
- *Roe v. Wade* (van Camp, 1-3)
- *Planned Parenthood of Southeastern Pennsylvania v. Casey* (van Camp, 3-6)
- *Stenberg v. Carhart* (van Camp, 9)

6. Assessment

- The instructor is not responsible for "lost" material. Retain a copy of all finished work until the end of the quarter.
- Electronic submission of work is not accepted. No exceptions. Students who cannot attend class should submit their work to the instructor's mailbox, when this is permissible.
- Each student is required to submit **two summaries of assigned readings from the Di Leo text for each unit**, due *in class* on the day the reading is discussed. These summaries are worth a total of **30% of the final grade**. Each summary should be either typed or handwritten in legible print, and suitably bound together. Each summary should be at least three-quarters of a double-spaced page in length and no more than two pages in length. Each summary is graded according to whether its content is above average, average, or below average. Electronic submissions are not accepted; *nor are mailbox submissions accepted; nor are submissions by proxy*. No late summaries are accepted, for any reason whatsoever. These assignments are designed to foster adequate class preparation, to facilitate class discussions, to develop student's ability to identify the sources of conflicts among moral values, and to develop student's ability to express ideas clearly, directly, and effectively.
 - The summary should state the author's main thesis, briefly outline the author's argument in favor of that thesis, identify the moral values that inform the author's argument, and offer at least one criticism of the author's argument (an objection to the argument itself, not just to the conclusion of the argument).
- Each student is required to give one 5 to 10 minute **in-class presentation** on an assigned reading, worth **5% of the final grade**. Presentations are assigned at the beginning of the term. This assignment is designed to develop public speaking skills, to develop skills in expressing ideas clearly and effectively, and to encourage class discussion through peer-presentation of topics.
 - For readings in the Di Leo text: The presenter should state the author's main thesis, briefly outline the author's argument in favor of that thesis, identify the moral values that inform the author's argument, and offer at least one criticism of the author's argument (an objection to the argument itself, not just to the conclusion of the argument).
 - For readings in the van Camp text: The presenter should identify the adversaries in the court case, the facts of the case that prompted the legal dispute, and the central issue(s) of the case; the presenter should also briefly outline the court's holding and its attendant reasoning, any possible objections to this reasoning identified by the court and the court's responses; the presenter should also briefly present any dissenting opinions, and the reasons given for the dissent.
- Each student is required to submit a **Statement of Values** paper by Wednesday, **January 11**, worth **10% of the final grade**. The paper should be between 5 to 7 double-spaced pages in length, typewritten in a reasonably sized font with margins no larger than 1.2 inches, and suitably bound together. *No cover pages!* This assignment is designed to get students thinking about ethics and to test their command of the fundamental skills of expository writing.
 - The paper should address the following prompt: What values (moral and otherwise) are most important to you? What is it that you most deeply care

about? Love? Money? Satisfying and productive work? One or two things, or a great deal? Things that are easily described in a few words, or things that take a long story to explain? Spell some of this out. If stories are required, tell them. Are there people whose lives you'd like your own to be like? Who -- and why? What about moral values (values that give voice to the needs and legitimate expectations of others as well as yourself)? What moral values are most important to you? Respect? Well-being? Fairness? Keeping your word? Are there one or two things, or a great many? Things easily described in a few words, or things that take a long story to explain? Spell some of this out. Finally, what is your view on at least one moral issue that is being discussed in the contemporary United States? How do your moral values commit you to this position? How do they put you in opposition to the opposing position?

- This paper is graded according to the following criteria: Is the writing characterized by a clear sense of purpose (e.g., clear and concise sentences, good organization)? Are ideas effectively ordered and supported (e.g., is there a natural flow to the paper)? Is the writing style appropriate to purpose and audience? Is there a demonstrated control of grammatical and mechanical elements (e.g., introduction and conclusion, spelling, grammar, punctuation, transition sentences, lack of sentence fragments)? Does the paper adequately and thoroughly address the prompt?
- Students may submit a revision of this paper, but this is not mandatory; *optional revisions* are due by *Monday, January 23*.
- Each student is required to submit a *draft* of **Mapping a Moral Debate** paper by Wednesday, **February 8**, and a *revision* of this draft by **Monday, February 20**. This paper is worth **15% of the final grade**. Revision of the draft is mandatory. The paper should be between 5 to 10 double-spaced pages in length, typewritten in a reasonably sized font with margins no larger than 1.2 inches, and suitably bound together. *No cover pages!* This assignment is designed to test the student's ability to address conflicts of moral values, and to test the student's ability to express ideas clearly, directly, and effectively in writing.
 - The prompt for this paper will be announced in class.
 - The paper is graded according to the criteria from the Statement of Values of paper, and these additional criteria: Does the paper demonstrate an understanding of arguments given by others? What is the overall level of understanding of the topic of the paper, as exhibited by the paper? To what extent does the final draft respond to comments from the rough draft?
- Each student is required to submit a *draft* of a **Position Paper** by **Wednesday, March 1**, and a *revision* of this paper by **Monday, March 13**. This paper is worth **20% of the final grade**. Revision of the draft is mandatory. The paper should be between 5 to 10 double-spaced pages in length, typewritten in a reasonably sized font with margins no larger than 1.2 inches, and suitably bound together. *No cover pages!* This assignment is designed to challenge the student to think creatively and constructively, and to find common ground within ethical debates.
 - The prompt for this paper will be announced in class.
 - The paper is graded according to the criteria from the Mapping a Moral Debate paper, and these additional criteria: Is there a clear statement of the thesis? Is the

thesis philosophically meritorious or interesting? Is the argument original? Does the argument support the thesis?

- There will be periodic in-class multiple-choice **quizzes** and periodic in-class **debates**, worth a total of **10% of the final grade**. There will be an announcement of each quiz / debate at least one class meeting prior to the quiz /debate. Each student is responsible for being aware of when quizzes / debates are to be held. Make-up quizzes will be administered at student request, up to (but no longer than) one week after the quiz has been given. This assessment is designed to keep students engaged in the course material, and to test the student's ability to read carefully and listen carefully.
- **Participation** is worth **10% of the final grade**. Meaningful participation (stimulates or advances discussion) at least once per week is required to receive full-credit. This assessment is designed to encourage class discussion and to develop the student's ability to orally express ideas in a clear, direct, and concise manner.
- There are no examinations, and *a fortiori* no make-up examinations or final examination.
- The instructor reserves the right to augment the final grades of students who consistently demonstrate superior class performance, or to lower the grades of students who consistently demonstrate a dereliction of their work.
- Plagiarism and other academic misconduct will be promptly reported to OSU's Committee on Academic Misconduct. Plagiarism is defined as "the act of appropriating the literary composition of another, or parts or passages of his writings, or the ideas or language of the same, and passing them off as the product's of one's own mind" --Black's Law Dictionary, 5th edition.

7. Miscellany

Philosophy, especially ethics, is not easy. You must make a serious effort to understand and articulate the material.

If at any time you would like to discuss the issues covered in class or philosophy in general, feel free to visit during office hours or arrange a meeting.

If at any time you are having problems with the subject matter or the manner of its presentation, do not hesitate to bring this to my attention (in person, via email or anonymous note, etc). It is your responsibility to bring any course-related concerns to my attention. I will do what I can to fix problems.

I encourage a free and tolerant atmosphere in class. I encourage and expect questions and challenges at appropriate times during class. I welcome visits to my office: I never consider meeting with a student to be an imposition. *I am here to help you learn.*

I expressly reserve the right to alter any or all portions of this syllabus, at my sole discretion, at any time, and in any manner.

Reading	Presenter
"The Feminization of Poverty"	n/a
"Women, Welfare, & the Politics of Need Interpretation"	n/a
"The Racialization of Poverty"	n/a
"Radical Egalitarianism"	
"The Nonexistence of Basic Welfare Rights"	
"Famine, Affluence, & Morality"	
"Lifeboat Ethics"	
"Gay Basics"	
"Why Homosexuality is Abnormal"	
"Feminism, Lesbianism, & the Family"	
<i>Griswold v. Connecticut</i>	
<i>Loving v. Virginia</i>	
<i>Lawrence v. Texas</i>	
<i>Watkins v. United States Army</i>	
<i>Baker v. Vermont</i>	
<i>Goodridge v. Department of Public Health</i>	
"Blacks & Social Justice"	
"Affirmative Discrimination"	
"Class, not Race"	
<i>Plessy v. Ferguson</i>	
<i>Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka</i>	
<i>Regents of the University of California v. Bakke</i>	
<i>Grutter v. Bollinger</i>	
<i>The Coalition v. Pete</i>	

Reading

Presenter

"Sexism"

"The Inevitability of Patriarchy"

"Date Rape"

"Fraternities & Rape on Campus"

"Hate Violence Against Women"

"Rape, Racism, & the Myth of the Black Rapist"

United States v. Virginia

Michael M. v. Superior Court of Sonoma County

"Why Abortion is Immoral"

"Abortion & Feminism"

"African-American Women & Abortion"

Roe v. Wade

Planned Parenthood v. Casey

Stenberg v. Carhart

Paper #3 - Philosophy 367 - Winter 2006

A draft of this paper is due by Wednesday, March 1. Drafts will be returned, with comments, during class on Monday, March 6. A mandatory revision of the draft is due by 4:00 pm on Monday, March 13 -- this is the Monday of Finals Week. Revisions should be submitted either to my mailbox in 214 University Hall, or to one of the secretaries in 350 University Hall. *No email submissions will be accepted.* Failure to submit a revision carries a penalty of 20 points deducted from the score on the draft.

The paper should be between 5 to 10 double-spaced pages in length, typewritten in a reasonably sized font with margins no larger than 1.2 inches, and suitably bound together. *No cover pages!* Do not plagiarize: papers that plagiarize will receive a score of zero.

The paper is graded according to the following criteria: Is the writing characterized by a clear sense of purpose (e.g., clear and concise sentences, good organization)? Are ideas effectively ordered and supported (e.g., is there a natural flow to the paper)? Is the writing style appropriate to purpose and audience? Is there a demonstrated control of grammatical and mechanical elements (e.g., introduction and conclusion, spelling, grammar, punctuation, transition sentences, lack of sentence fragments)? Does the paper demonstrate an understanding of arguments given by others? What is the overall level of understanding of the topic of the paper, as exhibited by the paper? Is there a clear statement of the student's contribution? Is the student's contribution philosophically meritorious or interesting? Is the contribution original? Is the argumentation convincing? To what extent does the final draft respond to comments from the rough draft? Does the paper adequately and thoroughly address the prompt?

- ▶ Note that part of the grade for your paper is the *originality* of the compromise proposals you make: for example, if you crib something from a court case, then you will lose points.
- ▶ For pointers on how to construct compromise positions (but in connection with a *different* moral debate), consult the court opinion in *Roe v. Wade*.
- ▶ If you encounter difficulties at any point in your writing of this paper, please do not hesitate to contact me. I am happy to provide whatever assistance I can (within the bounds of fairness), via email correspondence or by meeting in person. You are welcome to schedule appointments for times other than my office hours. You are also welcome to show me outlines or very rough drafts.

Respond to *one* of the following prompts:

1. Should the government meet the basic needs of all of its citizens through a system of welfare? Kai Nielsen argues "Yes"; Tibor Machan argues "No". (1) Map the moral debate. Show what moral values are important to each side of the debate and how those values motivate each position. (Discuss moral values, not legal issues.) (2) Next, discuss the reasons that each side might give for why their values are *more important* than the values on the opposing side. (3) Finally, construct a position that is a fair compromise for both sides to the debate -- a position that is sensitive to the moral values on each side of the debate. For each compromise position that you suggest, provide an *argument* for why that position satisfies at least some of the moral values from both sides of the debate. If the position you construct cannot satisfy *all* of the values from both sides of a debate, briefly discuss why. Saying that there is no compromise position does not constitute an adequate response to this prompt and will result in a deduction of 15 points from the final grade.

► If you would like to discuss a debate other than the one given in Prompt #1, you may discuss it if you first receive my permission. If you don't receive my permission, you'll lose points.

2. We *have* discussed the following questions: Should our government sanction same-sex marriages? Should it sanction affirmative action on the basis of race? (You pick the kind of affirmative action this question is about.) Should it provide extensive monetary aid to poor countries?

We have *not* discussed the following questions: Should our society allow people to immigrate to the United States? Should our society consider hitting children as punishment to be a form of violence that is punishable by the law? Should our society permit divorce? Should our society sanction the adoption of children by same-sex couples? Should colleges allow hate speech on campus?

Select exactly *three* of these questions; at least one question that you select should be from the first group of questions (questions already discussed). (1) Map the moral debate for each question that you select: show what moral values are important to each side of the debate. Substantiate your claims: provide a good reason to show that your attribution of a moral value to one side of a debate is fair and accurate. (Do not discuss *legal* issues related to these questions; map the debates from a *moral* point of view.) (2) Then, for each debate, construct a position that is a *fair compromise* for both sides to the debate -- a position that is sensitive to the moral values on each side of the debate. For each compromise position that you suggest, provide an *argument* for why that position satisfies at least some of the moral values from both sides of the debate. If the position you construct cannot satisfy *all* of the values from both sides of a debate, briefly discuss why. Saying that there is no compromise position does not constitute an adequate response to this prompt and will result in a deduction of 15 points from the final grade.

► If you would like to discuss a question for Prompt #2 that is not part of the list, you may discuss it if you first receive my permission. If you don't receive my permission, you will lose points.

Reading Summary: Pearce, The Feminization of Poverty

Thesis: The feminization of poverty is due to economic factors beyond the control of individual women.

1. Poverty is becoming feminized: the burden of poverty is increasingly being born by women rather than men: i.e., proportionally more females who head households than males who head households are poor.
 - a. From the mid-1950s to the late 1980s, the number of women-headed families has more than doubled, increasing at a rate of 100,000 families per year; the proportion of poor women-headed families has risen from 23% of all families to 51% of all families.
 - b. This trend is also present within each racial group: e.g., in 1959, 20% of poor white families were headed by women; in 1986, 42% of all poor white families were headed by women.
2. Women-headed families show a steady decline in their economic status relative to married couples.
 - a. In 1947, 70% of women-headed families had incomes comparable to incomes of married couples; by 1987, this percentage decreased to 42%.
 - b. 60% of families that are persistently poor (poor 8 out of 10 years) are women-headed families.
3. These statistics *underestimate* the number of poor women-headed households.
 - a. They do not include families who live with other families (share housing).
 - b. The poverty threshold for single-parent families is lower than the threshold for two-parent families, so that single-parent families that would count as poor according to the threshold for two-parent families are not counted as poor.
 - c. Official statistics do not count homeless families, and women-headed families are the most rapidly increasing homeless group.
4. There are two reasons that contribute to the feminization of poverty.
 - a. First, there has been a decrease in two-parent households and an increase in single-parent families.
 - b. Second, many groups that have traditionally been impoverished (elderly households and male-headed families) have risen to the middle class status due to economic growth, but this growth has not helped women-headed households as much as other families: so the proportion of women-headed families in poverty increases.
5. There are several reasons that economic growth does not ameliorate women's poverty.
 - a. The labor market discriminates against women: even women who are employed are often poor.
 - b. It is difficult for women to maintain full-time jobs, due to the child-rearing responsibilities and the lack of affordable day care.
 - c. Many jobs created by economic growth (service, retail) are only part-time and do not pay a living wage: e.g., in 1985 one-third of new jobs were part-time. Only 40% of women who are heads of household have full-time jobs (in 1985).
 - d. Part-time jobs also do not provide benefits (health insurance, etc).
 - e. Increasingly, single mothers have never been married, and divorce is more frequent: so women-headed families have more needs and fewer resources to meet those needs.
 - f. The amount of support, public and private (welfare benefits, child support), provided to women-headed families has decreased, and elderly divorced women often receive little or no money from their ex-husband's pensions.
 - g. Women also tend to outlive their husbands, and pensions typically stop with the death of one's spouse.

Criticism: ???

Discussion Question: Are our welfare programs sexist, not enough attention to specifically female needs?

Reading Summary: Fraser, Women, Welfare, and the Politics of Need Interpretation

Thesis: Our welfare state is two-tiered, the tiers are unequal, and this is unfair to women.

1. Women are the principal subjects of the welfare state.
 - a. They comprise the majority of recipients of welfare -- both in terms of social security beneficiaries, and in terms of family assistance (food stamps, health care, etc).
 - b. They comprise the majority of paid social service workers.
 - c. Women tend to perform the majority of unpaid care-giving -- sexual division of labor.
2. The welfare state itself is two-tiered.
 - a. Some programs are geared towards individuals and linked to previous participation in the workforce -- social security (retirement insurance), unemployment insurance, Medicare (age-based health insurance), supplemental social security insurance (disability insurance for former workers).
 - b. Other programs are geared towards households and linked to household income: food stamps, Medicaid, etc.
 - c. The individual-oriented programs compensate for *work* when the work cannot be performed.
 - d. The household-oriented programs compensate for family necessities, when the necessities cannot be provided.
3. This two-tiered system divides society into two spheres: a sphere outside the home, in which work is performed; and a sphere inside the home, in which families are provided for. This division corresponds to the traditional sexual division of labor into nondomestic and domestic. So the two different tiers are implicitly "masculine" and "feminine".
4. The "masculine" programs are social insurance schemes.
 - a. The recipients must have a history of *paid* work.
 - b. The recipients contribute to these programs through their wages.
 - c. The programs are administered on a national basis; benefit levels are uniform.
 - d. There are few regulations overseeing the recipients, and benefits are relatively easy to obtain.
 - e. *This all portrays recipients of these programs as rights-bearers, as having a right to what they receive because they have contributed funds to these programs.
5. The "feminine" programs are charitable schemes.
 - a. Anyone may qualify, regardless of their (paid or unpaid) work history.
 - b. The programs are funded from general tax revenues, not by participants.
 - c. The programs are administered state-by-state, not nationally, with diverse benefit levels.
 - d. There are many regulations overseeing the recipients: heavy surveillance, many standards to qualify and remain eligible, rules governing how to spend one's benefits, etc -- very controlled.
 - e. *This all portrays recipients of these programs as clients of public charities, not having a right to what they receive.
6. This two-tiered welfare state is unfair to women.
 - a. The welfare state does not offer single women with a family the *opportunity* to be participants in the "masculine" programs, because the welfare system does not provide women with the resources to succeed at paid work: no day care, job training, jobs that pay a "family wage", etc.
 - b. This shows that the welfare state treats single women with families primarily as mothers, hence interprets their needs as maternal needs. So they receive the "feminine" programs only.

Criticism: ???

Reading Summary: Wilkerson & Gresham, The Racialization of Poverty

Thesis: There are significant racial barriers to black employment that tend to increase the proportion of black families that are impoverished, and these barriers ought to be removed.

1. There is discrimination against black males in the workplace
 - a. In terms of unequal pay for equal work: 47% of black college graduates earn the same amount per year as white high school graduates.
 - b. In terms of availability of jobs: although the amount of black males who hold professional, technical, and managerial jobs has increased, 45% of black males are unemployed.
2. This discrimination causes an increase in the number of black female-headed families (and the cause is *not* black females having babies outside of wedlock), because many men abandon their families when they are under economic duress.
3. But this is not the reason for the increase of impoverished black female-headed households: the reason is that black women are caught in oppressive circumstances.
 - a. The presence of black women in corporate management positions is negligible, as opposed to the presence of white women.
 - b. Many black women have a lower class status, and so cannot choose whether they want to work full-time or part-time.
 - c. Welfare requires that mothers with children older than 3 must seek employment, but there is no provision for adequate child care services (day care) and no provision of transportation.
 - d. This lack of provision results in black women having less energy to raise their children, which tends to leave the next generation in poverty.
 - e. The welfare system also makes its recipients to feel shamed and demeaned by their economic position, which is an affront to human dignity -- and this leads many black women to not seek welfare in the first place.
 - f. Welfare programs do not support poor students in four-year schools, only students in two-year or vocational schools: this keeps the poor, poor.
 - g. Since the 1960s, 86% of welfare spending has gone to the elderly rather than single-parent families and their offspring.
 - h. One out of every two black children in America is *born* poor.
4. Overall, our economic system does not provide opportunities for black families to escape poverty, nor does it provide jobs, decent wages, adequate public services for the black poor.
5. Our economic system ought to be changed so that it provides adequate support to poor black families, and so that it provides opportunities for poor black families to escape poverty.

Criticism: ???

Discussion Questions: To what extent are our welfare programs racist? Do we have an obligation to assist poor families, or to change our economic system?

Reading Summary: Nielsen, Radical Egalitarianism

Thesis: Our goal should be a classless society: everyone, so far as possible, should have equal life prospects; and everyone, as fully as possible compatible with everyone else doing likewise, should have their needs and wants satisfied.

1. It is wrong for one adult to have power over another adult, if this power does not rest upon revocable consent by the person subject to the power. This is because it is wrong for a person not to be in a position to control their own life: value of **autonomy** and value of **self-respect**.
2. Society should guarantee equal access to equal resources, qualified by each person's varying needs, and equal sharing of societal burdens, qualified by each person's ability to share such burdens: value of **fairness (fair terms of cooperation)** and value of **social responsibility**.
 - a. Equal access: shelter, food, meaningful work opportunities, self-determination, political and economic participation.
 - b. Equal sharing: e.g., every able-bodied person in a certain age range should spend one year performing the necessary, but unpleasant jobs, in society (trash collecting, etc).
 - c. Fairness is a barrier to immoral power structures: it prevents people from acquiring the resources that allow them to have irrevocable power over others.
 - d. Rationale: We all want a life in which our needs are satisfied as much as possible; justice requires that we *treat like cases alike*; hence, it is only fair that each of us has our needs considered, and that we have them considered in a way that is compatible with everyone else having their needs considered equally.
 - e. Slogan: Each person should give according to ability and receive according to need.
3. Equality is conditional upon society having the resources to spare, and conditional upon our having the institutional means to spread those resources around.
 - a. If A's needs are equally important as B's needs, and there is only resources to satisfy one person's needs, then if satisfying A's needs results in more satisfaction of the needs of others, or less undermining of the satisfaction of the needs of others, satisfy A's needs.
 - b. Ex: If contest is between A getting food to prevent starvation and B getting a vacation after long, hard work, A gets the food: value of **fairness** and value of **human decency**.
4. Objection: Sometimes people are entitled to what they have; even if taking their possessions from them results in satisfaction of more needs, it does not respect what they are entitled to: value of **entitlement / property rights / non-interference**.

Reply: If it turns out that taking possessions is required in order to satisfy the basic needs of people, then the value of fairness *overrides* the entitlement to value of non-interference -- this is similar to the doctrine of eminent domain in the law.

Also, the value of non-interference is not absolute: every society must interfere in some respects (e.g., can't take neighbor's dog for walk without permission)
5. Corollary: Capitalist societies, at least in their present form, are defective in justice, because they do not satisfy the demands of justice: equal sharing of burdens, equal wealth, equal liberty, equal opportunity.

Reading Summary: Machan, The Nonexistence of Basic Welfare Rights

Thesis: There are no (positive) welfare rights; there are only (negative) rights to non-interference.

1. The point of rights is to secure mutually peaceful and consistent moral conduct.
 - a. Rights to life, liberty, and property ensure that people are able to protect and retain their own sphere of jurisdiction; and having this sphere is required in order to respect human dignity, the sovereignty of the individual to govern their own life: value of **autonomy** and value of **dignity**.
 - b. Hence, any action which violates these rights is an affront to human dignity, and thereby wrong: it treats the victim's life and its productive results as if they are unowned resources available for public consumption.
 - c. This expresses a confidence in the ability of virtually all persons to make headway in life.
2. There is no good reason to think that the rights of some people, founded upon their needs, amount to claims upon the lives or properties of other people.
 - a. People are responsible for satisfying their own needs: value of **self-responsibility**.
 - b. If a putative welfare right would violate right to life, liberty, or property, then it is not a right.
3. Some people cannot satisfy their own needs, through no fault of their own; but they can always ask for help.
 - a. It is nice of people to help, but they are under no moral obligation to do so.
 - b. If people do not offer help when asked, they might be acting uncharitably, indecently, pitilessly, ungenerously, etc: but they are not violating anyone's right to receive help, because there is no such right.
 - c. Ex: If your car breaks down on the highway and no one is in the nearest house, then even if you need to use their phone, you have no right to break into their house; and even if they are home, they need not allow you the use of their phone.

Lecture on Ethical Theory I

Categories of Moral Values

There are, in general, three categories of moral values

- **Goods/Benefits:** Happiness and well-being, satisfaction, pleasure, relief of pain and suffering, fulfillment. Social benefits (social, political, or economic services and programs that promote happiness and well-being), reduced social costs.
- **Rights/Duties:** Appropriate respect for the dignity and worth of each person. Fairness, justice, respecting human rights. Treating others as equals, not acting as though others are somehow inferior to ourselves.
- **Virtues:** Good personal character. Acting as a good person ought to act. Living up to the best of what we are. Responsibility, honesty, loyalty, benevolence, self-reliance, good work ethic, self-discipline, compassion, friendship, confidence, courage, perseverance, patience, being nurturing and caring, trust, trustworthiness, being supportive, bravery, generosity, sense of humor, being fair, liveliness, imagination, sustaining relationships, solidarity, perceptiveness, sensitivity, creativity, acceptance, tolerance, intelligence, open-mindedness.
 - "Religious" Virtues: faith, hope (confidence in the future), charity, prudence (having discretion), justice, temperance (acting in moderation), humility (not trying to control everything), chastity, fortitude (power to endure hardship).

Ethical Theories

There are, in general, three kinds of ethical theories. Each kind of theory provides a way to systematize and unify the moral values from one of the above categories.

These theories are useful *tools* for resolving conflicts among moral values -- but they are no substitute for wise judgment.

The *motivation* for each theory is a claim about what is most important about human nature: that our ultimate aim is happiness; that we are dignified; that our distinctive excellence is the ability to regulate our own actions. This claim guides the way in which moral values get unified.

- **Utilitarianism:**
 - The ultimate goal of human action is well-being, having a satisfactory life: most of our actions are directed towards attaining some sort of happiness for ourselves or others (or both). And we tend to avoid actions that impede or counteract the production of happiness and well-being.
 - So we should act in ways that maximize well-being and minimize pain and suffering. This is the central claim of Utilitarianism.

- This is compatible with sometimes acting in ways that produce pain and suffering -- provided that in the long run such actions produce more happiness than misery. (Example: Strenuous workouts can be painful, but they are beneficial in the long run.)
 - This is *not* a form of selfishness. There is no justification for saying that the happiness of others is of no concern to you because you're you and they're them. Happiness and well-being are the ultimate goal no matter where they occur or who possesses them. We should act in ways that maximize happiness *for all persons* and minimize suffering *for all persons*. Seek the greatest happiness of the greatest number!
 - Here's the procedure: first, consider all the individuals affected by the action; second, figure out how much happiness or unhappiness each person will experience as a result of the action (qualitatively, use common sense); third, sum the results, counting each person once and no person more than once.
- Corollary: When there is a *conflict* among goods and benefits, one should weigh the overall costs and the overall benefits. Morality requires that we perform the action with the maximum benefits and minimum costs for everyone involved.
- **Deontology:**
 - There is something about us that gives us *dignity*. (Rocks, for example, do not have this; they are not dignified.)
 - We are dignified because we are not mere things or objects. We are also *subjects of a life*: we make free choices, act on the basis of reasons (sometimes), and generally have some degree of control over what happens to us. Mere things do not have this control -- they are victims of circumstance, their existence is determined entirely by things beyond their control. We have *autonomy*; mere things do not.
 - We are all equal to each other in being dignified. So we should treat each other as equals -- our having dignity compels respect among persons.
 - So we should act in ways that treat persons as *ends-in-themselves*, and never act in ways that treat persons as *mere means*. This is the central claim of deontology.
 - Treating someone as a means is the same as using someone to get what you want.
 - It is okay to treat people as a means, provided that they *consent* to being treated in that way. (Example: We routinely use waitresses as a means of getting food at restaurants; but they consent to being used in this way, so it is morally permissible.)

- It is not okay to treat people as mere means -- to use them to get what you want without regard for whether they consent to being used and without regard for their status as a dignified person. (Example: The telemarketer who hangs up on you in mid-sentence upon realizing that he is not going to make a sale. Or the photographer who reduces a woman to certain parts of her body (as if that were all she is) in order to sell x-rated pictures.)
 - When there is a *conflict* of rights, the more basic rights "trump" the less basic ones. Morality requires that, when we must violate some rights, we violate the rights that are the least basic.
 - We need to have a ranking of the various rights, to determine which take precedence over others. (Example: If two children are fighting over a toy that one of them owns, then the right of the child to her toy trumps the right of the other child to being treated as an equal. And the right to be free from assault and injury trumps the right to engage in whatever behaviors one desires, when those behaviors endanger others.)
- **Virtue Ethics:**
 - The most distinctive characteristic of humans is the ability of self-regulation, the ability to bring a complex self into order as the self develops (without succumbing to exaggerations of natural tendencies).
 - So we should act in ways that exercise this ability -- we should act in ways that exercise our capacity to find the "Golden Mean" (appropriate middle ground) between extremes of emotion or action. This is the central claim of virtue ethics.
 - Example: In responding to danger, we might feel either fear or confidence. These emotions could lead to either cowardice (too much fear, not enough confidence) or foolhardiness (too much confidence, not enough fear). Rather than acting in either of these ways, we should find the appropriate middle ground -- in this case, the virtue of courage.
 - What counts as a middle ground for one person need not be a middle ground for everyone else. Example: When given food, we might respond by eating too much (gluttony) or not eating enough (anorexia?). Instead of either of these responses, we should act with temperance and prudence: we should eat an amount that is healthy for our body. This amount need not be healthy for every body: weight lifters need to eat more than babies to stay healthy.
 - There is no algorithm for finding the Golden Mean: it takes wisdom and good judgment, things acquired by modeling ourselves after virtuous people (role models).

- When there is a *conflict* of virtues, more basic virtues "trump" less basic virtues.
 - Prioritizing the virtues probably requires a theory of human nature. (Example: A theist probably would emphasize the religious virtues over the secular ones, given the theory that humans are designed to achieve communion with God.)
 - Priorities will also depend upon specific situations. (Example: a person will have different priorities depending upon whether she is acting as a mother or a lawyer.)

Inter-Category Conflicts

What if there is a *conflict* of moral values that involves goods, rights, *and* virtues?

- According to Utilitarianism, rights and virtues can be "translated", or "cashed out" in terms of goods.
 - Example: Fairness appears to be a right. But it can also be understood in terms of happiness: fairness tends to promote social stability, which leads to happiness; and when people are treated unfairly they tend to resist, which leads to unhappiness. So we should promote fairness, not because it respects the dignity of persons, but because it helps to maximize overall well-being.
 - Example: Honesty appears to be a virtue. But it can also be understood in terms of happiness: dishonesty is emotionally draining, takes a lot of work (to avoid getting caught), and can have bad consequences. Dishonesty promotes displeasure. So we should promote honesty not because it is a virtue, but because it helps to maximize overall well-being.
- According to Deontology, inter-categorical conflicts are to be resolved by appealing to our moral intuitions -- our sense of what is and is not moral.
 - Example: Imagine you are a surgeon who finds a plane crash. Five people have major injuries; a sixth has minor injuries. The five can be saved, but only if organs are taken from the sixth person for transplant. The sixth person will die if his organs are taken. What has priority: the sixth person's right to life or the maximization of well-being among the group? What is your intuition (your gut reaction)?
- According to Virtue Ethics, inter-categorical conflicts are to be resolved by appealing to good judgment -- by being wise.

Ethical theory will not always provide a clear resolution when moral values conflict. Nonetheless, using the theories can help you gain insight into the conflict -- a handy tool to have if you are trying to *understand* moral conflicts.

There are also *integrative* approaches to moral conflicts -- more on them some other time.

Integrative Approaches to Ethical Debates

Assume that both sides are right about *something*, that both sides have a legitimate point. Why assume this? Because there are generally people every bit as intelligent, informed, reasonable, and as well intentioned as you, but who disagree with your opinions. It would be unreasonable and ill-intentioned of *you* to assume that *everyone* who disagrees with you is entirely wrong. The fanatics are probably fewer and more far between than you think.

How to find what each side is right about: look for the strong points instead of hunting for the weak points. (Ignore the weak points.)

Once you find what each side is right about, you can try conflict resolution.

- The goal of conflict resolution is to find a way of acknowledging all of the contending values, a way to respond to each moral value at least to some extent.
- The aim is *not* to prioritize the contending values and then reject one side because it has the "wrong" priorities: this polarizes the debate instead of resolving it.
- The aim is to find "win/win" solutions -- ways in which both sides get something of what they most care about.

Strategies for Conflict Resolution

- Compromise: split the difference
- Different values might turn out to be compatible: try to satisfy both simultaneously
- Most disagreements are framed by deeper shared values: work from this hidden common ground towards jointly agreeable resolutions (focus on shared values instead of disagreement). Don't try to polarize the sides: focus on the main points, and allow for some complexity and subtlety.
- Try some creative thinking!

Tools for Creativity

We are creatures of habit. Some habits constrain our thought, limiting it to the comfortable and familiar, blinding us to other possibilities. The challenge of creative thinking for ethical issues is how to overcome limitations that are invisible to us! There are (at least) two ways: multiply options and shift problems.

How to Multiply Options

- Ask around -- friends, children, strangers, Magic 8 Balls, psychics, etc.
 - Come to understand others
 - Broaden your horizons
 - Get fresh perspectives that might jar you out of habitual ways of thinking
 - Gain access to experiences you might not have had
 - Trying to explain the problem to someone else might "set off a lightbulb"

- Brainstorm -- generate new ideas with others without regard for their plausibility.
 - Ideas hitchhike on each other -- holding back criticism and sharing ideas allows people to develop the ideas into more realistic suggestions
 - Start with extremely wild or implausible ideas -- they evolve into better results
 - It is easier to listen when we are not formulating why we think it is false: you can actually *pay attention* if you suspend judgment
 - Avoid the automatic comeback: speak calmly and listen *a lot*.
 - Always be *for* something instead of just *against* something.
 - Avoid slogans, cliches, stereotypes, rhetoric, vague generalities, sound-bites: speak in an open-ended way, be collaborative and cooperative

- Random Association
 - Go to any book (e.g., a dictionary). Pick a page at random. Pick a word on that page at random. Free associate until you discover a new idea.
 - This immediately provides a new stimulus to get beyond your habits.
 - Don't quit or start over until you find a new possibility!

- Imagine the Intermediate Impossible
 - Imagine the perfect solution to the problem. It is probably impossible: so work backwards, toward "intermediate" solutions, until you find a realistic solution.
 - The initial solution should be big and wild: otherwise your idea will be a little different but basically a minor change on familiar ideas.
 - Don't go to a realistic solution too quickly -- you need to prevent your habits from taking control. Make concessions only if it is absolutely required.

- "What If ...?" Thinking
 - *Escape*: Identify a taken-for-granted feature of a problem and deliberately distort or remove that feature.
 - *Exaggerate*: Push a normal feature of the problem situation to extremes
 - *Fantasize*: Introduce fantasy solutions; answer "Wouldn't it be nice if ...?"

How to Shift Problems

- Find the Source
 - Why is it that the problem is a problem, anyway?
 - Are there ways to prevent this underlying problem? Ways to remove it?

- Make the Problem an Opportunity
 - Make use of the problem in a new and unexpected way. Is there way to turn the problem into an advantage?
 - Ask what would happen if we used this disagreement for our advantage?

Take-Home Lesson: You can be a machine that repeats what has already been said; or you can be a creative thinker who advances the discussion. Being a machine is easy: we're creatures of habit. Being creative takes effort, involves using your imagination, requires exploring wild and implausible possibilities, and demands not settling for more of the same old bullsh**.