

Unit Information Sheet 2012

Intro to Philosophy A: Life, Death, & Morality (ATS1371)

This is an introduction to moral philosophy. The focus is the ethics of killing. We examine questions such as: When, if ever, is killing justified? Many of us think that killing is permissible in emergency rescue situations, or in self-defence. Is it possible to explain this in a way that is consistent with our more typical attitudes to killing? What about killing non-human animals for food? Like all philosophy classes, this will also develop critical and analytic thinking skills.

Assessments

Assessment Tasks	Value	Due Date
AT1 (Short answer, 600 words)	5%	Tues. February 21st
AT2 (Short answer, 600 words)	10%	Tues. March 13th
AT3 (Short answer, 600 words)	15%	Tues. April 17th
Essay (1250 words)	30%	Tues. May 8th
Exam (2 hours)	40%	May 28th–Jun 1st

Required texts:

1. *Unit Study Guide/Reader* - collection of readings (see below) and summaries of topics; available for purchase in Bookshop.
2. Peter Singer, *Practical Ethics*, 3rd edition, Cambridge University Press (2011).

Required Readings (in Reader):

Topic 1: What's Wrong with Killing?

Singer, Ch. 1, "About Ethics" pp. 1-15.

Singer, Ch. 4, "What's Wrong with Killing?" only pp. 71-93.

Thomson, Judith Jarvis (1977). "Some Ruminations on Rights" (excerpts). *The Arizona Law Review* 19.

Thomson, Judith Jarvis (1985). "The Trolley Problem" (excerpts). *Yale Law Journal* 94. (Reprinted in Thomson 1986, *Rights, Restitution, and Risk*. Harvard University Press.)

Thomson, Judith Jarvis. (1990). "The trolley problem" (excerpts). From *The Realm of Rights*, Harvard University Press.

Topic 2: Defensive Killing

Optional: Thomson (1991) "Self-Defense" *Philosophy and Public Affairs* 20: 283–310.

Otsuka, Michael (1994). "Killing the Innocent in Self-Defense". *Philosophy and Public Affairs* 23:74–94.

Hobbes, Thomas (1651/2005). *Leviathan* (excerpts). Online: Early Modern Texts. Edited and arranged by Jonathan Bennett.



Topic 3: Taking the Lives of Other Animals

Singer, Ch. 2, "Equality and Its Implications" pp. 16-47.

Singer, Ch. 4 "What's Wrong with Killing" only pp. 85–90

Singer, Ch. 5, "Taking Life: Animals" only pp. 100–122, then pp. 94-100, then pp. 104-19.

Topic 4: Abortion and Infanticide

Singer, Ch. 5, Section Heading "Killing other Animals" only p. 104.

Singer, Ch. 6, "Taking Life: The Embryo and Fetus" only pp. 123–138.

Hursthouse, Rosalind (1987). *Beginning Lives* (excerpts). Blackwell, pp. 103–5.

Singer, Ch. 6, "Taking Life: The Embryo and Fetus" only pp. 138–141.

Marquis, Don (1989). "Why Abortion is Immoral." *The Journal of Philosophy* 86: 183–202.

Thomson, Judith Jarvis (1971). "A Defense of Abortion" (excerpts). *Philosophy and Public Affairs* 1. (Reprinted in Thomson 1986, *Rights, Restitution, and Risk*. Harvard University Press.)

Warren, Mary Anne (1989). "The Moral Significance of Birth." *Hypatia* 4.

Topic 5: Virtue, Value, & Relativism

Rachels, James (1989). "Morality, Parents, and Children." In *Person to Person*, ed. by G. Graham and H. LaFollette. Temple University Press.

Singer, Ch. 3, "Equality for Animals?" only pp. 61-64.