

MHB 559 / PHIL 543: The Ethics of Abortion
Revised Syllabus, Fall 2004
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I. Administrative Information

Professor: Robert Streiffer

Lectures: 382 Van Hise, Wednesday 2:25-4:55

Office Hours: Philosophy Office, Wednesday 9:30-10:30 and by appointment

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II. Course Description

This course is for upper-level undergraduates and graduate students. It is an in-depth study of a selection of ethical and legal issues arising from the practice of abortion. We will look at four models for thinking about the ethics of abortion: (1) the personhood model, according to which the permissibility of abortion turns primarily on whether abortion is the killing of an innocent person, (2) the valuable-future-like-ours model (sometimes referred to as the potentiality model), according to which the permissibility of abortion turns primarily on whether abortion deprives an entity of a valuable future, (3) the good samaritan model, according to which the permissibility of abortion turns primarily on whether the pregnant woman has a duty to aid the fetus by allowing it the use of her body, and (4) the intrinsic value model, according to which the permissibility of abortion turns primarily on whether abortion can show adequate respect for the intrinsic value of human life. We will look at two of the most important Supreme Court cases regarding abortion: *Roe v. Wade*, which found that women have a constitutional right to abortion, and *Planned Parenthood v. Casey*, which reaffirmed that right while also finding that it is nonetheless permissible for the state to regulate abortion in various ways. Finally, we will examine the debate surrounding human embryonic stem cell research and cloning, which intersects the abortion debate at many points.

There are three overall objectives of the course:

1. To improve your familiarity with the facts, concepts, theories, and arguments from the relevant ethical and legal literature.
2. To improve your ability to think about and discuss the ethical and legal issues in this area, including your ability to critically examine your own views.
3. To be more appreciative of opposing viewpoints on controversial ethical and legal questions.

This final objective is worth stopping over. Abortion is one of the most divisive and explosive topics on the American political scene, but in this class, I expect everyone to treat everyone else respectfully and civilly. This does not preclude honest criticism of one another's views, which consists in giving reasons against the view itself or the arguments that have been presented for it, but it does require civility and respect while criticizing others, and it does preclude personal attacks or insults against those who hold those views.

Requirements

1. Read all of the assignments, and read them carefully and critically. In a seminar, the contribution that each person makes to the discussions is important. The average number of pages to read per week is 45.
2. Lecture attendance is mandatory, and, unfortunately, UW does not allow professors to cancel classes for the Wednesday before Thanksgiving holiday. You will be expected to show familiarity with the lecture material in your papers. Class participation will count for 10% of your grade.
3. Two shorter papers, 575 - 625 words (roughly 2 pages) in length, each worth 10% of your grade. These papers are primarily to give you the opportunity to practice writing a philosophy paper and to get you engaged with the readings early in the course. I will hand out a list of paper topics for you to choose from.
4. Two longer papers 1450-1550 words (roughly 5 pages) in length, each worth 35% of your grade. I will hand out a list of paper topics for you to choose from.

Paper Dates

Date Assigned	Date Due	Paper Length	Time
Wednesday, Sept. 15	Wednesday, Sept. 22	575-625 words (2 pages)	1 week
Wednesday, Oct 6	Wednesday, Oct. 13	575-625 words (2 pages)	1 week
Wednesday, Oct 27	Wednesday, Nov. 10	1450-1550 words (5 pages)	2 weeks
Wednesday, Dec. 1	Wednesday, Dec 15	1450-1550 words (5 pages)	2 weeks

Materials

We will be using the anthology, *The Abortion Controversy: 25 Years after Roe V. Wade*, 2nd edition, edited by Louis Pojman and Francis Beckwith, and *Stem Cell Research* edited by James Humber and Robert Almeder. Both are available in the UW Bookstore, as are two recommended books, *The Elements of Style* by Strunk and White, and *A Rulebook for Arguments* by Anthony Weston. Additional readings are marked with an "*" and will be available in a reader from Bob's Copy Shop in University Square.

III. Course Schedule

1. **September 8**
Course Overview, Logic Terminology, Factual Background on Abortions and Embryo Development
2. **September 15 (First paper topics assigned)**
The Personhood Model I (31 Pages)
 - John T. Noonan, Jr., "Abortion is Morally Wrong," Ch. 11, 203-208 (6 pages).
 - Michael Tooley, "In Defense of Abortion and Infanticide," Ch. 12, 209-233 (25 pages). [Move to next time, start with Noonan only. Cut the potentiality discussion from the reading for this time, and move it to the valuable future model section.]
3. **September 22 (First papers due at the beginning of class)**
The Personhood Model II (32 Pages)
 - Stephen Schwarz, "Personhood Begins at Conception," Ch. 14, 257-273 (17 pages).
 - Louis P. Pojman, "Abortion: A Defense of the Personhood Argument," Ch. 15, 275-289 (15 pages).

4. September 29

The Valuable-Future-Like-Ours Model I (41 Pages)

- Philip Devine, "The Scope of the Prohibition Against Killing," Ch. 13, 234-256 (23 pages).
- Don Marquis, "Why Abortion is Immoral," Ch. 20, 339-356 (18 pages).

5. October 6 (Second paper topics handed out)

The Valuable-Future-Like-Ours Model II (43 Pages)

- * Walter Sinnott-Armstrong, "You Can't Lose What You Ain't Never Had: A Reply to Marquis on Abortion", *Philosophical Studies* 96 (1997): 59-72 (14 pages).
- * Elizabeth Harman, "The Potentiality Problem," forthcoming in *Philosophical Studies* (29 pages).

6. October 13 (Second papers due at the beginning of class)

Continue Previous Discussions

7. October 20

Continue Previous Discussions

8. October 27 (Third paper topics handed out)

The Good-Samaritan Model I (34 Pages)

- Judith Jarvis Thomson, "A Defense of Abortion," Ch. 7, 117-131 (15 pages).
- Francis J. Beckwith, "Arguments from Bodily Rights: A Critical Analysis," Ch. 8, 132-150 (19 pages).
- Kerry/Bush Debate Preparation

9. November 3

The Court Cases (50 Pages)

- The U. S. Supreme Court, *Roe v. Wade* (1973), Ch. 2, 19-35 (17 pages).
- The U. S. Supreme Court, *Planned Parenthood v. Casey* (1992), Ch. 3, 36-68 (33 pages).
- Dennis J. Horan and Thomas J. Balch, "Roe v. Wade: No Basis in Law, Logic, or History," Ch. 4, 73-94 (22 pages).
- Kerry/Bush Debate Preparation

10. November 10 (Third papers due at the beginning of class)

The Intrinsic Value Model (53 pages)

- * Ronald Dworkin, excerpt from "Edges of Life," in *Life's Dominion* (New York: Vintage Books, 1993): 6-24 (19 pages).
- * Ronald Dworkin, "What Is Sacred," in *Life's Dominion* (New York: Vintage Books, 1993): 68-101 (34 pages).
- Kerry/Bush Debate Preparation

11. November 17

Abortion, Intrinsic Value, and State Neutrality (58 Pages)

- Ronald Dworkin, "Abortion, the Court, and State Neutrality," Ch. 29, 462-468 (7 pages).
- * Sarah Stroud, "Dworkin and Casey on Abortion" in *Philosophy and Public Affairs* 25: 140-170 (31 pages).
- * Judith Jarvis Thomson, "Abortion" and Responses in *Boston Review*, Summer 1995 (13 pages).
- Francis J. Beckwith, "Pluralism, Tolerance, and Abortion Rights," Ch. 28, 455-461 (7 pages).
- Kerry/Bush Debate Preparation

12. November 24

Human Embryonic Stem Cells: Overview (53 pages)

- Richard Werner, "An Analogical Argument for Stem Cell Research," 3-22 (20 pages).
- James McCartney, "Recent Ethical Controversies about Stem Cell Research," 87-119 (33 pages).

13. December 1 (Fourth paper topics handed out)

Kerry/Bush Debate

Complicity and hES Cell Research (49 pages)

- Dennis Cooley, "Nazi Experiments and Stem Cell Research," 61-84 (24 pages).
- Jan Heller, "Complicity in Embryonic and Fetal Stem Cell Research and Applications: Exploring and Extending Catholic Responses," 123-147 (25 pages)

14. December 8

Interspecific Chimeras (18 pages)

- * Jason Robert and Francoise Baylis, "Crossing Species Boundaries," *American Journal of Bioethics* 3 (3) 1-13 (13 pages).
- * Phillip Karpowicz, Cynthia Cohen, and Derek van der Kooy, "It Is Ethical to Transplant Human Stem Cells into Nonhuman Embryos," *Nature Medicine* 10 (4): 331-335 (5 pages).

15. December 15 (Fourth papers due at the beginning of class)

Human Cloning (69 pages)

- * Leon Kass, "The Wisdom of Repugnance," in *The Ethics of Human Cloning*, by Leon Kass and James Wilson (Washington D.C.: the AEI Press, 1998) 3-59 (57 pages).
- * Laurence Tribe, "On Not Banning Cloning for the Wrong Reasons," in *Clones and Clones: Facts and Fantasies about Human Cloning*, Martha Nussbaum and Cass Sunstein, eds. (New York: W. W. Norton and Company, 1998). 221-232 (12 pages).