

S20/HSS317/Ethics/**Assignment-V**/26-March-2020

Use the format for submitting assignments uploaded in Moodle. The word limit is 700. Please write clearly. Avoid grammatical errors, spelling mistakes and long winding sentences.

Total points: 10

The COVID-19 pandemic is upon us. Since an effective vaccine is yet to be discovered, mitigation efforts are directed to curb the spread of the virus so that our healthcare system is not overburdened. To “[flatten the curve](#)”, we are to take measures like social distancing, school shutdowns, travel restrictions and so on. So what seems like an “overreaction” (e.g. the risk of you being infected with COVID-19 may not be any higher than the risk of you getting another known harmful disease) in a situation like what we have now might be ethically justified. In their short article titled “[Ethics of Precaution: Individual and Systemic Risk](#)” Taleb and Norman try to do just that. On the other hand, one might be skeptical of such drastic precautionary measures. Well known epidemiologist John Ioannidis has called the measures adopted in response to the pandemic as “[draconian countermeasures](#)”, questioning the lack of reliable data.

- (1) Based on what you have learnt in the course so far, what ethical view would you ascribe to the precautionary principle given by Taleb and Norman? Explain.
- (2) Without going too much into the data about the COVID-19 pandemic, do you think an ethical position like the one advocated by Taleb and Norman is affected by the kind of worries raised by Ioannidis? Explain in the light of your answer to (1).

(5 + 5 points)

[You may also make use of your ideas in Assignment-IV in answering the above questions]