

## Discussions for Philosophy 104 Bioethics (Summer 2023)

Below is a detailed explanation of how online discussions work for our class.

- ✓ The 15 questions we will discuss in this course are straightforward, but my expectations for how we will conduct these discussions are quite detailed.
- ✓ Some of my expectations are about the *mechanics* of our discussions: since this is part of what informs how the discussions are graded, please be sure you do each bit each time on time—or even better, early.
- ✓ Some of my expectations are about the *content* of our discussions: this affects grades too, so please be sure that you include certain concepts in certain discussions, no matter what conclusions you eventually reach.

Here is a reminder of what the syllabus said about discussions:

- ✓ **Discussions (30 points per module x 15 modules = 450 points):** For each module, use the discussions to make your own long reply to the target question by 11:59pm each Wednesday (10 points), your own medium replies to three long replies of other students in your small group by 11:59pm each Saturday (15 points), and your own short replies to the remaining long replies of other students in your small group by 11:59pm each Saturday (5 points). See details in the 'Discussions' PDF and each module.

Here is a detailed breakdown of how to earn the available points:

**(10 points) Your own long reply reacting to the target question is due by 11:59 pm each Wednesday.**

### *Basic idea:*

For each Module of our course, you are required to make one long reply to the yes-or-no question that is the focus of the relevant Part of our textbook *Contemporary Debates in Bioethics* by giving your own well-informed opinion on this target question. Our readings and lectures for each Module will give you enough material to do this long reply well. You are permitted to refer to things outside of our readings and lectures if you wish.

For each Part of our textbook, one author defends a “yes” answer and another author defends a “no” answer to the yes-or-no question for that part. For example, the title of Part 2 asks “Is it morally acceptable to buy and sell organs for human transplantation?”

You will likely lean a little (or a lot!) towards agreeing with a “yes” answer (or a “no” answer!) whether or not you agree with the arguments given by a particular author for that answer. Likewise, you may be perfectly neutral or undecided or “on the fence” about the target question—even after doing the readings and listening to the lectures.

*Title:*

Begin your long reply with a title stating “Long Reply:” and then a whole number between 1 and 9. 1 represents the strongest possible “No” answer to the target question, 9 represents the strongest possible “Yes” answer to the target question, 5 represents being perfectly neutral or undecided or “on the fence” about the target question. Then finish your title with a phrase to distinguish your title from the titles of other students. For example: “Long Reply: 2—there is no way it is acceptable to sell your own body parts,” “Long Reply: 5—I am still not sure on this one,” “Long Reply: 6—affirmative, but just slightly, and only for certain organs.” Then hit enter and skip to the next line.

*Length:*

Including your title, your long reply answering the yes-or-no target question must be at least 200 words, but the maximum length is whatever you want. Not including your title, your long reply must include exactly two distinct clearly labeled paragraphs which reflect two elements aligned with specific learning objectives of the module and the course: the philosophy-writing element and the GE-area-D element.

*The philosophy-writing element (5 points, label PW):*

In your first paragraph, prove you meet the learning objective for this module that relates to learning objective #7 for the course, “represent and express philosophical reasoning about advances in biology and medicine by writing clear and concise analytical and argumentative prose.” For example, the related module 2 learning objective you must prove you meet is “represent and express philosophical reasoning about human organ markets by writing clear and concise analytical and argumentative prose.” The relevant module learning objective is re-stated in each discussion prompt. Copy and paste it when constructing this paragraph of your long reply.

*The GE-area-D element (5 points, label GED):*

In your second paragraph, prove you meet the learning objective for this module that relates to a CSUS General Education area D (The Individual and Society) learning objective for the course. For example, course learning objective #2 is “explain and critically examine social dynamics and issues in their historical and cultural contexts,” and the related module 2 learning objective you must prove you meet is “explain a social dynamic related to human organ markets (like “supply and demand”) in its historical context.” The relevant module learning objective is re-stated in each discussion prompt. Copy and paste it when constructing this paragraph of your long reply.

*Formatting specifics for each long reply:*

- Begin each long reply by labeling it at the top of the body of the message as a “Long Reply” followed by a whole number (“1” – “9”) and a phrase (“[you pick the phrase]”) and then hit enter and skip to the next line.
- Start each of your required two paragraphs with the relevant letters and module learning objective: “PW: [module learning objective]” for the paragraph emphasizing the philosophy-writing element, “GED: [module learning objective]” for the paragraph emphasizing the GE-area-D element. Hit enter and skip to the next line before starting each paragraph.
- Finish by adding your signature which is your preferred name in the class. This makes it easier for your small group members who reply to you to address you by your preferred name, which is not always the same as the name that Canvas automatically displays next to your photograph.

*Please study the following example of a long reply that does everything satisfactory:*

*Long Reply: 6—It's morally acceptable to buy/sell non-vital organs, with a few exceptions.*

*PW: "represent and express philosophical reasoning about human organ markets by writing clear and concise analytical and argumentative prose."*

*Mark Cherry had the stance of "it's my body and I'll do what I want with it". The human organ market that he portrays is one that any organ can be sold, whereas Caplan doesn't agree with this and wants to keep altruism in the short run but to switch to bioengineering organs to combat the scarcity of organs in the long run. I believe that it is morally acceptable to buy/sell non-vital organs in Caplan's view of the short run, but only as a temporary solution until bioengineering of organs is reliable and proven safe. Once this is made possible, I would no longer agree with the buying and selling of any organ as there are alternative means without any risk or harm associated with others. I had to take into consideration the scarcity of organs and the respect for human life but at the same time the well-being of a patient. It doesn't make sense to not buy/sell non-vital organs when a patient is suffering waiting for a donation, and the costs associated with trying to live without a replacement organ could stack up in a short period of time. I also do believe in Caplan's "default to donation" as it gives everyone the choice of whether or not they want to donate organs when they pass as they could still be of use to other people.*

*GED: "explain a social dynamic related to human organ markets (like "supply and demand") in its historical context."*

*The buying and selling of human organs is an issue that needs to be addressed as there is a scarcity of them that is causing adverse financial and health effects to patients. "The system of altruism is not working adequately whereas a market in human organs and other body parts would efficiently and effectively save lives, reduce human suffering, encourage highly skilled professional medical practice, and respect the authority of persons over their own body". When it's illegal to buy and sell organs people are willing to spend more to buy organs and due to this might look for organs that are being trafficked on the black market. If it were legal to buy/sell organs prices would be substantially lower with more supply to meet the demand in times of organ scarcity like there is now. I would suggest that there would have to be fixed prices on these organs that are bought/sold to be fair to everyone and ensure that there isn't any price gouging. When we can bioengineer organs, we will no longer have to worry about organ transplant scarcity and can rely on having the organs in a more timely manner which will help both patients and medical facilities. This will prevent harm caused to others from risks of transplants from donors or sellers.*

*Donald*

**(15 points) Your own medium replies to three long replies of other students in your small group are due by 11:59 pm each Saturday.**

*Basic idea:*

Make three medium replies of 100+ words to three long replies of others in your small group for each module. Each medium reply must choose a different structure from the three approaches below: you need to do at least one approach A, at least one approach B, and at least one approach C for each module.

*Relation to learning objectives:*

The medium and short replies are designed to let students meet the learning objective for this module that relates to learning objective #6 for the course, “critically examine how thoughtful and diverse experts and peers apply moral concepts and theories to moral issues raised by advances in biology and medicine.” For example, the related module 2 learning objective is “critically examine how thoughtful and diverse experts and peers apply moral concepts and theories to moral issues raised by human organ markets.” (But you do not need to copy and paste it when constructing your medium and short replies.)

*Approach A: Problematic (5 points).*

Define your medium reply in terms of arguments and views of the long reply’s student author that you find problematic. In your medium reply, show how the student author’s conclusion does not follow, either because

- (A1) the student author’s reasons are false or
- (A2) the student author’s reasoning is mistaken, or
- (A3) the student author has failed to make other important considerations that tend to undermine the conclusion.

*Approach B: Agree (5 points).*

Define your medium reply in terms of arguments and views of the long reply’s student author that you basically agree with. In your medium reply,

- (B1) consider ways in which the student author’s views might reasonably be criticized. Then
- (B2) attempt to strengthen the student author’s position by showing how these criticisms can actually be met. If you use this technique, be sure you don’t consider criticisms that the student author actually does respond to in the context of their long reply (unless, of course, you think that the student author has failed to answer the objections effectively).

*Approach C: Interesting (5 points).*

Define your medium reply in terms of arguments and views of the long reply’s student author that you find interesting, but which you are currently disinclined to either fully accept or fully reject.

- (C1) Carefully articulate the strongest considerations in favor of the student author’s view and
- (C2) carefully articulate the strongest considerations against the student author’s view. Then
- (C3) carefully explain why you remain undecided and
- (C4) indicate precisely what sort of information or arguments would be required for you to be able to make up your mind.

*Formatting specifics for each medium reply:*

- Begin each medium reply by labeling it at the top of the body of the message as a “Medium Reply,” and then hit enter and skip to the next line.
- Label each medium reply with the relevant letter and the label (either “Approach A: Problematic” or “Approach B: Agree” or “Approach C: Interesting”), and then hit enter and skip to the next line.
- Continue by adding a salutation which addresses the student author you are replying to by using his or her preferred name ("Hey Kylo", "Hey Luke", "Hey Leia", "Hey Rey") and then hit enter and skip to the next line.
- Then hit enter before starting each of your required paragraphs with its relevant letter-number combination followed by what that letter-number combination represents:

exactly one paragraph if “Approach A: Problematic” (either "A1" or "A2" or "A3"),

exactly two paragraphs if “Approach B: Agree” (both "B1" and "B2"),

exactly four paragraphs if “Approach C: Interesting” (all of "C1" and "C2" and "C3" and "C4").

- Please remember to start each of the paragraphs by stating up front the relevant letter-number combination and what it represents, rather than mentioning this somewhere else in the paragraph.
- Perhaps the easiest way to do this (and one I suggest) is to copy and paste the following abbreviations, adding or subtracting text as needed:

*Approach A: Problematic*

*(A1) I think your conclusion does not follow because your reasons are false. OR*

*(A2) I think your conclusion does not follow because your reasoning is mistaken. OR*

*(A3) I think there are other important considerations that tend to undermine the conclusion.*

*Approach B: Agree*

*(B1) ways in which your views might reasonably be criticized: AND*

*(B2) how these criticisms can actually be met:*

*Approach C: Interesting*

*(C1) the strongest considerations in favor of your view: AND*

*(C2) the strongest considerations against your view: AND*

*(C3) why I remain undecided: AND*

*(C4) what would be required for me to make up my mind:*

- Finish by adding your signature which is your preferred name in the class.

*Please study the following 3 examples of medium replies that do everything satisfactory:*

*Medium Reply*

*Approach A: Problematic*

*Hey Donald,*

*(A3) I think there are other important considerations that tend to undermine the conclusion.*

*I completely agree with almost everything you said except for one thing: allowing the transaction of certain organ even if it is temporary. The problem with this solution, even though it might sound really good on paper, is that in practice, it will create more harm than a solution. By "opening the gates" of monetary transactions of human organs it would still label the organ as a commodity. What would stop people from saying: hey, I know I am going to die from a brain tumor, let me sell you my kidney and heart. Or poor family from saying: my kid has been given 3 weeks to live due to this degenerative disease and I have other 4 kids that are dying of hunger, let me sell you his organs. In addition, once people get used to the idea to the monetary exchange for an organ transplant, it will be a legal battle to take it away, as it will become common and even accepted in society, and that is where the danger exists: people get used to the idea (and even the acceptance) of seeing organs as replaceable goods.*

*Nancy*

*Medium Reply*

*Approach B: Agree*

*Hey LeBron,*

*(B1) ways in which your views might reasonably be criticized:*

*One reasonable criticism of your view runs like this: Even if selling organs may be a very wrong thing to do, what if it is the only option that will help the society/community run financially? Some places may rely on organ sales as a way to keep their economy going since a relatively quick way to earn money would be resorting to selling organs since organs are currently very difficult to duplicate.*

*(B2) how these criticisms can actually be met:*

*That being said, I actually think this reasonable criticism can be met, since I agree with you on how even though people around the world may be in need of organ donations, and even if many countries around the world may rely on selling organs to be financially stable, still, we should not do here it because it would be disrespecting the human body. It is very unfortunate that in other parts of the world medicine is seen as a commodity, when its true purpose, what makes medicine different than other things, is to help others in desperate need.*

*Kevin*

*Medium Reply*

*Approach C: Interesting*

*Hello Simone,*

*(C1) the strongest considerations in favor of your view:*

*I completely agree with you when you say: "it is not a risk-free procedure- so what value do we place on risking a civilian life for another?" What about if a person gets greedy when he is 18 and just uses the money to buy a fancy car. But in later years, due to bad choices, he is poor and harms his own kidney. Now, he will be a burden for his family and the government.*

*(C2) the strongest considerations against your view:*

*I found a bit erroneous the comparison between the volunteers and emergency response teams, as it cannot be comparable. Your examples are services, but organs cannot. You can only give one heart, and I feel that is the basis of this difficult argument*

*(C3) why I remain undecided:*

*Either way, I remain a bit undecided, as I see both points of view as valid. I tend to lean to not allowing the selling of organs but only by a margin.*

*(C4) what would be required for me to make up my mind:*

*I am not sure if I can be convinced, maybe if examples are given that make change the way I see organs. I believe seeing them as commodities or goods is a dangerous game.*

*Mary Lou*

**(5 points) Your own short replies to the remaining long replies of other students in your small group are due by 11:59 pm each Saturday.**

*Basic idea:*

give each on-time long reply in your small group either a short reply or a medium reply, but not both.

*Formatting specifics for each short reply:*

- Begin each short reply by labeling it at the top of the body of the message as a “Short Reply,” and then hit enter and skip to the next line.
- Continue by adding a salutation which addresses the student author you are replying to by using his or her preferred name ("Dear Forrest", "Dear Jenny," and so on) and then hit enter and skip to the next line.
- Continue by writing at least one full sentence that clearly proves that you read the long reply of the student author you are replying to.
- Finish by adding your signature which is your preferred name in the class.

*Please study the following example of a short reply that does everything satisfactory:*

*Short Reply*

*Hi Anna,*

*I like your post, but I would have to disagree with Kant when he says we have the right to do things without input from others, because most people who sell their organs are not doing it out of the goodness of their heart, but because they need the money. Good post!*

*Lyuda*

**Discussion grades reflect the “Definition of Grade Symbols” at the University's Academic Policies page (<http://catalog.csus.edu/academic-policies/#text>):**

- **A:** Exemplary achievement of the course objectives. In addition to being clearly and significantly above the requirements, work exhibited is of an independent, creative, contributory nature.
- **B:** Superior achievement of the course objectives. The performance is clearly and significantly above the satisfactory fulfillment of course requirements.
- **C:** Satisfactory achievement of the course objectives. The student is now prepared for advanced work or study.
- **D:** Unsatisfactory achievement of course objectives, yet achievement of a sufficient proportion of the objectives so that it is not necessary to repeat the course unless required to do so by the academic department.
- **F:** Unsatisfactory achievement of course objectives to an extent that the student must repeat the course to receive credit.