

# PHI 212: CONTEMPORARY MORAL ISSUES

## THIRD PAPER TOPICS

### The (not so) Fine Print

**Due Date for paper:** Thursday, 12/5/19, in class.

- *I will not accept late papers unless you have an excused absence (arranged in advance).*
- *If you would like to turn in a draft for me to look over, the due date for drafts is Tuesday, 11/26/19.*
- ***Papers should be at least 4 but no more than 6 (double-spaced, size 12 font, 1" margin) pages.***
- *The grading criteria and style requirements are in my "Writing a Philosophy 212 Paper," on my website, and will be used to assess your papers.*

### The Topics

Using **ONLY** the textbook (and the philosophers' own words, NOT Vaughn's summaries OR my website, OR any other websites, books, or sources -- unless specifically instructed to do so in the topic), and citing page numbers after every sentence quoted or paraphrased to explain the philosophers' view (not including explanations of a quotation), and relevant readings (and authors we've covered to date, when necessary), choose ONE (1) of these topics and compose an essay that answers the following questions. If you use Dr. Y's website to explain something or argue in favor or against a philosopher, be sure to give your own examples of the principle(s) involved, and have a works cited page with the link to the precise page, so you avoid plagiarizing.

**1. DEATH PENALTY:** First, have an Introduction (see "Hints" below). Then do these things/answer these questions, in separate paragraphs:

- (1) Explain (what you think) the best overall argument is either in favor of or against the moral permissibility of the death penalty: Either **Primoratz, van den Haag, Nathanson** or **Bedau's** article (only one of them). [Notes: (1) Be sure to say something about each section (if the article has sections), or each page (if the article does not have sections); and (2) this question is not asking which one, of all the arguments that a specific author mentioned, was their best argument. It is asking you to explain the whole position (all of the arguments/main points) of the author whom you believe has the most plausible view on the issue. (3) **ONLY** explain the view here with lots of page numbers; do not tout it and say what you like about it here.]
- (2) Why is this the most plausible view on the death penalty? [Give your reasons here. These should be arguments, not just quoting or restating what your preferred author thinks. Why should I think your preferred author is making good points for his/her/their view?]
- (3) Give a good objection to your view.
- (4) Reply to your objection.
- (5) Give a second objection to your view.
- (6) Reply to the second objection.
- (7) Have a Conclusion (see "Hints" below).

**2. PORNOGRAPHY:** First, have an Introduction (see "Hints" below). Then do these things/answer these questions, in separate paragraphs:

- (1) Explain (what you think) the best argument is either in favor of or against the moral permissibility of pornography: Either **Strossen's, MacKinnon's, or Dworkin's** article (only one of them). [Notes: (1) Be sure to say something about each section (if the article has sections), or each page (if the article does not have sections); and (2) this question is not asking which one, of all the arguments that a specific author mentioned, was their best argument. It is asking you to explain the whole position (all of the arguments/main points) of the author whom you believe has the most plausible view on the issue. (3) **ONLY** explain the view here with lots of page numbers; do not tout it and say what you like about it here.]
- (2) Why is this the most plausible view on pornography? [Give your reasons here. These should be arguments, not just quoting or restating what your preferred author thinks. Why should I think your preferred author is

making good points for his/her/their view?]

(3) Give a good objection to your view.

(4) Reply to your objection.

(5) Give a second objection to your view.

(6) Reply to the second objection.

(7) Have a Conclusion (see “Hints” below).

**3. ANIMAL RIGHTS:** First, have an Introduction (see “Hints” below). Then do these things/answer these questions, in separate paragraphs:

(1) Explain (what you think) the best argument is either in favor of or against animal rights/vegetarianism: Either **Singer’s**, **Rachels’**, or **Frey’s** article (only one of them). [Notes: (1) Be sure to say something about each section (if the article has sections), or each page (if the article does not have sections); and (2) this question is not asking which one, of all the arguments that a specific author mentioned, was their best argument. It is asking you to explain the whole position (all of the arguments/main points) of the author whom you believe has the most plausible view on the issue. (3) **ONLY** explain the view here with lots of page numbers; do not tout it and say what you like about it here.]

(2) Why is this the most plausible view on animal rights/vegetarianism? [Give your reasons here. These should be arguments, not just quoting or restating what your preferred author thinks. Why should I think your preferred author is making good points for his/her/their view?]

(3) Give a good objection to your view. [Notes: (1) See Hints below for Objections; and (2) If you use Dr. Y’s Objections from his website, you must have a Works Cited that includes "Yount = <<insert url here.>>, to avoid plagiarizing his work.]

(4) Reply to your objection.

(5) Give a second objection to your view.

(6) Reply to the second objection.

(7) Have a Conclusion (see “Hints” below).

**4. POPULATION:** First, have an Introduction (see “Hints” below). Then do these things/answer these questions, in separate paragraphs:

(1) Explain (what you think) the best argument is either in favor of or against the idea of the limited carrying capacity of the Earth: Either **Hardin’s** or **Murdoch and Oaten’s** article. [Notes: (1) Be sure to say something about each section (if the article has sections), or each page (if the article does not have sections); and (2) this question is not asking which one, of all the arguments that a specific author mentioned, was their best argument. It is asking you to explain the whole position (all of the arguments/main points) of the author whom you believe has the most plausible view on the issue. (3) **ONLY** explain the view here with lots of page numbers; do not tout it and say what you like about it here.]

(2) If you have to choose only one of these positions, which is more plausible, and why? [Give your reasons here. These should be arguments, not just quoting or restating what your preferred author thinks. Why should I think your preferred author is making good points for his/her/their view?]

(3) Give a good objection to your view.

(4) Reply to your objection.

(5) Give a second objection to your view.

(6) Reply to the second objection.

(7) Have a Conclusion (see “Hints” below).

**5. NAME YOUR OWN TOPIC:** Is there an article or issue that you wanted to write about but were not yet able to do so? You may name your own topic, *provided* that you discuss the topic first with me, and you (will be required to) turn in a draft. [*Warning: If you do not turn in a draft for this option, you will receive an F for this assignment (the draft requirement is for your protection).*]

**HINTS:** You should have your paper organized in general by paragraphs, as follows:

- **INTRODUCTION** – List every term or argument you will explain, exactly, and in order [e.g., "In this paper, I will explain X, Y, and Z (concepts) or A, B, C arguments"], be sure to mention what stance you'll be arguing -- in favor or against the philosopher.

- ANSWER EVERY EXPLANATORY-TYPE QUESTION (in separate paragraphs, as instructed in the topic). BE SURE TO USE PAGE NUMBERS TO SHOW WHERE THE PHILOSOPHER/AUTHOR(S) SAYS WHAT YOU SAY THAT THEY SAY, WHETHER YOU PARAPHRASE OR DIRECTLY QUOTE. For instance, "Kant states that intelligence, wit and other talents of the mind can be used to do bad things (85c1)." Or: "Kant states, "X, Y, Z" (85c1)." You should not ONLY paraphrase the philosopher, since you will not be giving an exact account in the philosopher's words. On the other hand, you should not ONLY give direct quotations, since you need to also explain the quotation, so I can know that you understand what the philosopher is saying. Do both. And when you explain a philosopher's quotation you just quoted, you do not need to have a page number at the end of the sentence. Lastly, quote the philosopher FIRST, and then EXPLAIN it.
- GIVE YOUR VIEW – Is the argument/view a sound/good one? Give your opinion in the form of an argument here. If you are arguing IN FAVOR of the philosopher you're covering, you should address whatever objections you had against the philosopher (at least briefly), or your paper will be incomplete or inconsistent, both of which are not good! IF you defend the philosopher's view, you must defend the whole view on the subject topic (you should at least BRIEFLY mention why the points you explained above are plausible - don't just focus on one main point and say why you like it); do NOT state that you like certain parts of the person's view, but not the whole view. IF you are against the view, you need to mention at least one major reason why the view is implausible. [NOTE: In these topics, for this part of the paper ("Your View"), I am not asking if you agree with the philosopher's conclusion (because you have to agree with basically every premise or point they argue to reach that conclusion); I am not asking if you disagree with their opponent as your main motivation for defending this view (you may be unsure about whether each side is right); I am not asking if this view appeals to you in some way, or if you are psychologically fond of it, or if you would LIKE for it to be true; I AM asking if this view is philosophically defensible against ALL major OBJs, to your knowledge.]
- FIRST OBJECTION TO YOUR VIEW: Give your opponent (either your own objection or another author who does not agree with you) a whole paragraph to voice *one* (not lots of different points), *strong* (not a weak one that's easy to reply to), developed (i.e., not one or two sentences - give an example and explain it well) against your view. NOTE: You may use an objection from an author who is opposed to your view, or one that we discussed as being a strong objection in class (or, for instance, for the animal rights/vegetarianism topic: from Dr. Y's documents on vegetarianism from his website). However, you must have an original reply to the objection; moreover, you may not just paraphrase or quote objections and replies from the author's article.
- YOUR REPLY TO THE OBJECTION YOU JUST RAISED: Answer the objection to the best of your ability. If you cannot answer the objection, switch sides and argue opposite to what you originally said (I'll have no way of knowing what you originally were going to answer). Pick the most plausible side as you see it and defend that side of the argument.
- SECOND OBJECTION TO YOUR VIEW. [See notes for First Objection ...]
- YOUR REPLY TO THE SECOND OBJECTION. [See notes for Second Objection...]
- CONCLUSION – List EVERY issue or argument you explained, exactly, and in order ("In conclusion, I explained X, Y, Z, etc."), the view(s) you defended, and summarize briefly your objections and replies (or at least mention that you raised and responded to two objections), and perhaps say something about future implications of your view (or the issue). NOTES: DO not introduce any NEW objections or concepts you never raised in the paper thus far. Also, do not re-explain any of the things you've already explained. Just list what you have explained.