

Syllabus as of 02/03/19

FRS 140. Freshman Seminar:

Designing Life: The Ethics of Creation and its Control

Spring 2019

Mondays 1:30-4:20pm

Professor: Elizabeth Harman
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Office: 1879 Hall, Room 120
Office Hours: Wednesdays 3:15-4:15pm and by appointment

This course examines the following questions:

Is genetic enhancement permissible? Is genetic selection permissible? Is genetic selection of desirable traits permissible? Is genetic selection of disabilities, such as deafness, permissible? Is selection against disability permissible?

Can creating someone harm her? Perhaps creating someone whose life is utterly miserable harms her. But can creating someone whose life is worth living harm her? How could it be that someone *should* create a non-disabled rather than a disabled child, if she has both options?

What risks it is reasonable to take while pregnant (and planning to continue the pregnancy)? Should we avoid anything that might harm a fetus? Do we have a tendency to be overly risk-averse in our advice to pregnant women? Do we overestimate some risks and underestimate others? How should we reform our advice and medical practices regarding pregnancy?

What do we owe to the people we create? Do we owe them the best lives they could have? Do we owe them the best food we can give them? Is breastfeeding always best for babies? Is it morally required for mothers to breastfeed their babies?

Is stem-cell research permissible? Do human embryos have moral status? If they do, do they have the same moral status as adult persons? If stem cell research does not require the destruction of the embryo, is it permissible?

Is abortion permissible? If we assume the fetus has the moral status of an adult person, does it follow that abortion is permissible?

Goals of the Course:

This course has three primary goals. One goal is to explore the questions stated above. The second goal is to develop your critical thinking skills. We will work on presenting the arguments we read as valid arguments, coming up with objections to those arguments, and coming up with responses to these objections on behalf of the original arguments. The third goal is to develop your skills at writing clear, well-structured papers.

Grade Distribution:

- 5% Class Participation
- 5% Debate and Homework
- 5% A presentation discussing an argument found in a news source
- 5% First Argument Analysis (2-3 pages)
- 5% Second Argument Analysis (2-3 pages)
- 20% First Paper (6 pages)
- 5% A presentation on the topic of the second paper
- 25% Second Paper (8 pages)
- 25% Final Exam

Failure to complete any part of the course will result in an “F” in the course. An “F” on any assignment due to plagiarism will result in an “F” in the course.

Class Participation:

Attendance is required. Because this course meets only once a week, it is particularly important not to miss class.

Because this is a small seminar, every student is expected to participate fully and actively in class discussions, every time we meet. In order to participate fully and helpfully in class discussions, it will be important to have done the reading for the day.

Readings:

The philosophy papers that we will be reading are harder to read than texts for some other courses. The number of pages we read per week will be small compared to other courses, but that does not mean the readings will take less time. To understand these papers it will be necessary to read slowly and carefully, and to read them more than once. Please *print out* the readings and bring them to class.

In-Class Debate:

We will have an in-class debate on March 25. The debate resolution will be announced one week in advance, and the “pro-“ and “con-“ sides will be assigned. You will then have to plan with your team by developing arguments for your assigned position, as well as by anticipating arguments for your opponents’ position and developing responses.

Homework:

Often, there will be a short homework assignment. These are designed to encourage you to read actively and engage critically with what you are reading. Sometimes the homework will simply be to come up with some questions about the reading. Sometimes I will ask you a question for you to discuss in 1-2 pages (double-spaced).

In-Class Presentations:

Each student will give two in-class presentations during the semester. The first presentation will discuss an argument found in a news source. The second presentation will discuss the topic of the student’s second paper. Each presentation should include a handout, no longer than one side of a page, double-spaced. Each presentation should include some discussion questions and should involve some discussion.

For the first presentations, the reading to be discussed (from a popular news source) must be sent to me by 8pm on the Thursday before the seminar, for approval. Please choose a reading that *makes an argument*. Please either choose a reading that is no more than 1500 words, or (if you’ve chosen a longer reading), please send me a PDF that highlights some paragraphs so that the chosen reading is only 1500 words long. (Please both send a link to the reading and send a PDF of the reading.)

Argument Analyses:

For each argument analysis, I will distribute a short passage. In 2-3 pages (double-spaced), you will present that argument in valid form with premises numbered, and with indications of which premises follow from which other premises. Then you will explain the argument and briefly critique it. We will discuss these assignments more in class, and do some practice argument analyses together.

Papers:

The first paper will be a 5-6 page paper (double-spaced). The second paper will be a 7-8 page paper. (I may offer word-count guidelines in place of page number guidelines.)

Deadlines:

Papers and argument analyses must be emailed to me as .doc or .docx files, by 12noon on the due date.

If written work is handed in late, it will be penalized one-third of a letter grade for each day late (for example, from A to A-, from A- to B+, and so on). Weekend days count. If you finish a late paper during a weekend, email it to me right away. A paper is one day late if it is at all late; two days late if it is more than 24 hours late; three days late if it is more than 48 hours late; etc.

Homework:	Due most weeks
First Argument Analysis:	Due February 18
First Paper:	Due March 11
Debate:	March 25
Second Argument Analysis:	Due April 1
Second Paper:	Due April 30
Review Session:	During Reading Period
Final Exam (a take-home exam):	Due during Exam Period

Extensions will not be granted except under extreme circumstances.

Plagiarism is very serious. If I suspect plagiarism, I will refer the case to the University Committee on Discipline. If plagiarism is found to have occurred, this will result in an “F” on that assignment, and as a result, an “F” in the course. For an introduction to what constitutes plagiarism, please read the guide “Academic Integrity at Princeton,” which is linked to from this page:

<http://www.princeton.edu/pr/pub/integrity/pages/intro/>

Consult me if you have any further questions.

Films:

The films will be available to be watched, streaming, on Blackboard.

Electronics:

Laptops, phones, and tablets may not be used during class without my permission; these should remain *out of sight, inside bags* during class. Students with disabilities may request, as a disability accommodation, permission to use electronics during class. Any student may request permission to use electronics, and permission might be granted even in the absence of a disability, though it is not easy to get permission in these cases. Any student who receives permission to

use electronics during class thereby promises to use electronics only for class purposes.

Schedule of the Course:

This schedule is approximate. This list of readings is tentative. Readings may be removed, and readings may be added.

All readings will be available on the course Blackboard site, or can be found at the websites listed with the readings.

For some readings, only part of the document is assigned. In these cases, the syllabus lists which selection should be read.

February 4:

- Pryor, James “Guidelines on Reading Philosophy” and “Philosophical Terms and Methods” available at: <http://www.jimpryor.net/teaching/guidelines/reading.html> and <http://www.jimpryor.net/teaching/vocab/index.html> (Read all six sections.)
- Silver, Lee. “The Virtual Child” and “The Designer Child,” Chapters 17-18 (pp. 199-239) of *Remaking Eden*. Avon 1998.
- Kass, Leon “Perfect Babies: Prenatal Diagnosis and the Equal Right to Life,” Chapter 3 of *Toward a More Natural Science* 1985.

February 11:

- Bostrom, Nick and Toby Ord. “The Reversal Test: Eliminating Status Quo Bias in Applied Ethics” Sections 1-4 (pp. 656-674) *Ethics* 2006.
- Sandel, Michael, “Mastery and Gift,” Chapter 5 of *The Case Against Perfection* 2007.
- The film “Gattaca” 1997.
- First day of in-class presentations

February 18:

- Spriggs, M. “Lesbian couple create a child who is deaf like them.” *Journal of Medical Ethics* 2002.
- Anstey, K.W. “Are attempts to have impaired children justifiable?” *Journal of Medical Ethics* 2002.
- Levy, N. “Deafness, culture, and choice.” *Journal of Medical Ethics* 2002.
- Savulescu, Julian. “Deaf lesbians, 'designer disability,' and the future of medicine.” *British Medical Journal* 2002.
- The film “Sound and Fury” 2000.
- First Argument Analysis Due

February 25:

Professor Matthew Liao (New York University) will be a guest professor for this session.

- Liao, Matthew. "Human Engineering and Climate Change," *Ethics, Policy, and the Environment* 2012.
- Liao, Matthew. "Designing Humans: A Human Rights Approach," *Bioethics* 2019.

March 4:

- Parfit, Derek. Chapter 16: "The non-identity problem." From *Reasons and Persons*, Oxford University Press, 1984.
- Woodward, James. "The Non-Identity Problem." *Ethics* 1986.
- Hanser, Matthew. "Harming Future People." *Philosophy and Public Affairs* 1990.

March 11:

- George, Robert P. "Embryo Ethics," *Daedalus* 2008.
- Singer, Peter, and Agata Sagan. "The Moral Status of Stem Cells," *Metaphilosophy* 2007.
- First Paper Due

March 18:

Spring Break.

March 25:

- Debate
- No in-class presentations

April 1:

Elizabeth M. Armstrong (Princeton University) will be a guest professor for this session.

- Anne Drapkin Lyerly, Lisa M. Mitchell, Elizabeth Mitchell Armstrong, Lisa H. Harris, Rebecca Kukla, Miriam Kupperman, and Margaret Olivia Little, "Risk and the Pregnant Body," *Hastings Center Report* 2009.
- Armstrong, Elizabeth M. selections from *Conceiving Risk, Bearing Responsibility: Fetal Alcohol Syndrome and the Diagnosis of Moral Disorder*, Johns Hopkins University Press 2003.
- Second Argument Analysis Due

April 8:

- Silver, Lee. "The Embryonic Soul." Chapter 7 of *Challenging Nature* 2006. Read pp. 98-116.
- McMahan, Jeff. "Killing Embryos for Stem Cell Research." *Metaphilosophy* 2007.

April 15:

Anne Barnhill (Johns Hopkins University) will be a guest professor for this session.

- American Academy of Family Physicians. “Breastfeeding [Policy Statement]”
- American Academy of Pediatrics. “Benefits of Breastfeeding”
- Baby-Friendly USA. “The Ten Steps to Successful Breastfeeding”
- Martucci, Jessica and Anne Barnhill. “Examining the use of ‘natural’ in breastfeeding promotion: ethical and practical concerns,” *Journal of Medical Ethics* 2018.
- Kukla, Rebecca. “Ethics and Ideology in Breastfeeding Advocacy Campaigns,” *Hypatia* 2006.
- Oster, Emily. “Everybody Calm Down About Breastfeeding” Fivethirtyeight, May 20, 2015.
- *Optional reading:* Colen, Cynthia and David Ramney. “Is breast truly best? Estimating the effects of breastfeeding on long-term child health and wellbeing in the United States using sibling comparisons,” *Social Science and Medicine* 2014.

April 23:

- Thomson, Judith Jarvis. “A Defense of Abortion,” *Philosophy and Public Affairs* 1971.
- Marquis, Don. “Why Abortion is Immoral” *Journal of Philosophy* 1989.

April 30:

- Hare, R. M. “Abortion and the Golden Rule” *Philosophy and Public Affairs* 1975.
- Tooley, Michael, “Abortion and Infanticide,” *Philosophy and Public Affairs* 1972.
- Second Paper Due

Review Session to be scheduled during Reading Period:

- Possibly some in-class presentations
- Overview of the Semester
- Review for Final Exam

The **final exam** will be a take-home exam due during Exam Period.