

Ethics: Selected Topics
G83.2285-002
Fall 2003
Elizabeth Harman
Monday 3-5pm

This course will discuss several related ethical questions. They may include: Is the doctrine of double effect true? Is there a morally significant difference between making something happen and allowing it to happen? Do a person's intentions affect the permissibility of her actions? Does a person have stronger ethical obligations to those who are near to her than to those who are on the other side of the world?

Course Requirements—For Those Enrolled in the Class For Credit:

1. One presentation: By noon on the Friday before the presentation, email to all the class participants either 1-2 pages of your thoughts or some discussion questions. Then begin class by either explaining your thoughts or leading discussion of the questions.

2. A seminar paper, of approximately 20 pages

Topics of seminar papers are due to me by Monday, December 1. (This is a one-paragraph explanation of the topic of the paper, what thesis you guess you will be arguing for, and what readings you will be discussing.)

Everyone must write two drafts of the seminar paper—a first, *serious* draft and then a second, final draft.

If you want to get your grade on time: first draft due on Monday, December 8;
second draft due on Wednesday, December 17.

If you want to take an incomplete: first draft due on Wednesday, December 17;
second draft due on Tuesday, January 20.

These are firm deadlines.

You cannot get an incomplete (as opposed to an “F”) without handing in a serious first draft.

*The standards for the paper will be *reasonable*, so that the time provided will be plenty of time to write a paper that meets the standards . . . NYU Philosophy Ph.D. students: if you want to make your paper amazing, you can revise it in an associated writing course during second semester or later.*

Requirements For Those Auditing The Class:

- One presentation: By noon on the Friday before the presentation, email to all the class participants either 1-2 pages of your thoughts or some discussion questions. Then begin class by either explaining your thoughts or leading discussion of the questions.

Schedule of Readings

*This schedule is *very tentative*.*

Dates will certainly change.

Readings may be removed, and readings may be added.

“(SN)” indicates the reading is in *Killing and Letting Die*, Ed. Steinbock and Norcross
“(JSTOR)” indicates the reading can be found at www.jstor.org

All readings will be made available to be photocopied.

Monday, September 8: Course Overview

- No Readings

Monday, September 15:

- Philippa Foot, “The Problem of Abortion and the Doctrine of Double Effect” (SN)
- Philippa Foot, “Killing and Letting Die” (SN)
- Judith Thomson, “Killing, Letting Die, and the Trolley Problem” in her *Rights, Restitution, and Risk*

Monday, September 22:

- Judith Thomson, “The Trolley Problem,” in her *Rights, Restitution, and Risk*
- Warren Quinn, “Actions, Intentions, and Consequences: The Doctrine of Doing and Allowing” (SN)

Monday, September 29:

- Warren Quinn, “Actions, Intentions, and Consequences: The Doctrine of Double Effect” (his *Morality and Action*)

Monday, October 6:

- John Taurek, “Should the Numbers Count?” *Philosophy and Public Affairs* 1977 (JSTOR)
- Derek Parfit, “Innumerate Ethics”, *Philosophy and Public Affairs* 1978 (JSTOR)

Monday, October 13:

- selections from Jonathan Bennett, *The Act Itself*
- Judith Thomson, review of Bennett’s book in *Nous* 1996
- Jeff McMahan, “A Challenge to Common Sense”, review of Bennett’s book in *Ethics* 108 (January 1988): 394-418 (JSTOR)

Monday, October 20:

- selections from Frances Kamm, *Morality, Mortality, Volume II*
- Kagan, “The Additive Fallacy” *Ethics* (JSTOR)

Monday, October 27:

- James Rachels, "Active and Passive Euthanasia" (SN)
- Philippa Foot, "Euthanasia" *Philosophy and Public Affairs* (JSTOR)

Monday, November 3:

- Jeff McMahan, "Killing, Letting Die, and Withdrawing Aid" (SN)
- Tooley, "An Irrelevant Consideration: Killing Versus Letting Die" (SN)

Monday, November 10:

- Foot, "Utilitarianism and the Virtues," *Mind* 1985 (JSTOR)

Monday, November 17:

- Singer, "Famine, Affluence, and Morality," *Philosophy and Public Affairs* 1972 (JSTOR)
- selections from Unger, *Living High and Letting Die*

Monday, November 24:

- Kamm, "Famine Ethics: the Problem of Distance in Morality and Singer's Ethical Theory" in *Singer and His Critics*, ed. Dale Jamieson

Monday, December 1:

- Thomas Scanlon, "Intention and Permissibility I," *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society*, Suppl. Vol. 74 (2000), pp. 301-317.
- Thomas Scanlon, "Moral Assessment and the Agent's Point of View" *manuscript*

Monday, December 8:

- Frances Kamm, "The Doctrine of Triple Effect and Why an Agent Need Not Intend the Means to his End," *Aristotelian Society Supplementary Volume LXXIV* (2000), pp. 21-39.
- Alison McIntyre, "Doing Away with Double Effect," *Ethics* January 2001