Cabrillo College
Philosophy16 – Contemporary Moral Issues

Case Study Instructions

At the end of each chapter covering specific ethical issues in Part Two of our text are discussion cases. You are to pick **one** of these cases from the relevant chapter and answer the following questions. In each case, this assignment is worth 50 points. Your completed assignment should not exceed two pages. My late policy for the first three assignments is 15% off the total possible points for the first class day late with an additional 10% off for each subsequent class day the assignment is not turned in. **No late work will be accepted for the last assignment.**

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<th>Case #</th>
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<td>8: Euthanasia or 9: Abortion</td>
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**Questions to Cover:**

1. The moral universe: Who are the key figures most affected by the decision made? What impact might the decision have on those not immediately involved?
2. What sort of information might you want to know before making a final determination on this case? Note: I do not expect you to research these questions only to raise them.
3. Briefly describe two possible alternative responses.
4. Referring to the ethical theories we’ve studied, sketch a brief but charitable defense of the alternative you find most defensible at least initially, pending the development of further information.

**Notes on the Format of Your Assignment:**

- Use a 12 point font with 1” margins – *no hand-written work will be accepted*. I have provided an example of a satisfactorily completed assignment (though the topic & case study would be inappropriate for this semester). **Please use this format as your model.** You should identify which chapter and discussion case you will be using in your header and clearly separate and number each part of the assignment.
- All together, this should be **two pages double spaced**.
- Citations may follow MLA or APA formats. Be consistent. If the reference comes from the assigned text, all you need to do is indicate the page number in parentheses after the quote. **Remember all direct quotes, close paraphrases and references must be cited.**
Sample Case Study – Chapter 16: “What is a Panther Worth?”

1. In the case of the panthers in the Florida Everglades, the most obvious human members of this moral universe include residents and visitors to Florida and, all those who work for or care about the preservation of the endangered panthers. I also include, following the advice of Jeremy Bentham, the current population of endangered panthers as they are clearly capable of suffering. (p.393) Not so obviously, one might include future generations of both humans and panthers who would be affected by the preservation or extinction of this species as well as those other inhabitants of the Everglades which most probably would be affected by these plans.

2. I would want to know how many panthers are hit annually and what percentage this represents compared to other causes of death for these panthers and to the total population of panthers existing in the Everglades today. I would also like to know if automobiles represent the greatest preventable threat to this population. An exhaustive environmental impact study on the construction of these bridges would have to be completed as the Everglades are critical habitat to more species than just the panthers. What percentage does the $27 million represent as a portion of Florida’s budget? Given limited state resources, if Florida spent the $27 million on the bridges, what would be sacrificed that might have been funded without the bridges? A transportation study would also be useful evaluating the efficacy of closing key portions of the panther habitat in the Everglades to vehicular traffic.

3. The clearest alternatives are to build the bridges or not to build the bridges.
4. I will argue against the building of these bridges. In formulating this position, I am going to assume that not building the bridges does not necessarily imply the automatic extinction of the panthers. I have two major objections to this plan.

First is the issue of opportunity costs; given the dire conditions of state and local budgets, building the bridges could well spell severe cutbacks to other more numerous beings who also suffer. That $27 million could come from other critical service areas such as animal shelters, K-12 education, homeless shelters, child protection services, public defenders offices, firefighters, etc. The service each of these agencies provides is quantifiable; the future efficacy of the bridges is not. In an economic triage, one is forced into utilitarian concerns, ensuring that every dollar spent provides the greatest good to the greatest number of those in our moral universe. (p.53)

Secondly, building the bridges could potentially harm other members of this moral universe. What is needed here is not more access but less. The perpetuation of these incredible creatures must be a concern. MacKinnon writes, “If a being suffers there can be no moral justification for refusing to take that suffering into consideration.” (p.393)

But, protection of the panthers is not the only concern; The Florida Everglades and its other inhabitants play a critical role in our global environment. Could a greater portion of the Everglades habitat be closed to vehicular traffic? On those essential routes, perhaps much reduced speed laws could be enforced coupled with the institution of an effective public awareness campaign thus increasing the margin of safety for the panthers and the human travelers. I am advocating a position not of sacrifice but of “compromise and accommodation” whereby everyone’s needs – though not necessarily all their wants - are met. (“Introduction to Ethic of Care” http://www.cabrillo.edu/~cclose/)
I. The Introduction/Opening Paragraph
Authors often complain that the most difficult sentence to write is the first one. For these assignments the first sentence or paragraph is about the context of the paper. You need to let your reader know what the question is and a simple thesis statement is helpful. You do not need to re-type the question. You do need to raise the issue and give your reader whatever necessary context or background they need to understand your answer. Avoid grandiose and/or meaningless statements like, “Since the dawn of time, humans have struggled with issues of knowledge.” or, “Descartes’ theory of knowledge is similar and different from that of Locke’s.” Also avoid biographical or historical information that is not essential to your answer.

II. Structure & The Body of the Paper
I value very crisp, clean structure. Each sentence should have just one topic, and each paragraph should take on just one issue. The questions I ask usually can be broken down into sub-issues. I usually think about how many jobs a question involves and allocate each job to just one paragraph, ordering them into a logical order that advances your explanation or argument. Each paragraph should open with a transition sentence helping your reader with the development of your argument.

III. Tone/Voice
Ever since George Carlin pointed out that “using your own words” would result in a private and hence meaningless expression, I’ve had to give up on the phrase, however a certain degree of originality is still important. Your task is to explain a concept as if you were the Teaching Assistant for this class. If you simply repeat the text or my lecture, you haven’t helped your imaginary student. You need to clarify the argument/concept in a way that demonstrates that you really understand it and can express the same ideas in a way that is different than has already been explained by the text or by me.

1 Please note that these guidelines are for my class assignments. Individual instructors may have other format preferences and you should consult with your teacher for the details before completing your assignment.
IV. **Conclusion/Last Paragraph**
Because my paper assignments are all short, a summary conclusion is not necessary. Your last paragraph is just the last issue you need to address in order to answer the question fully. Summaries are necessary when the papers are longer just to insure that your reader winds up where you intended and you want to draw conclusions on more complex multi-layered arguments.

V. **Citations**
I also value good scholarship, but a short paper, half of which is quotations is not sufficient for a good expository assignment. The task is maintaining proper balance. Quoting is a way of supporting your interpretation of an argument or theory. The length of the quote must be appropriate to the length of the assignment: short papers require shorter quotes. Generally, although I allow you to quote lectures, it is much more scholarly to quote the written word – preferably directly from the text- whenever possible since that is verifiable in a way that the spoken work is not. It is also preferable to choose quotations from the philosopher’s own work rather than the editor’s secondary commentary. All quotations, references and close paraphrases (where you are restating an author’s claims using very similar language) must be properly cited. For my papers, endnotes, footnotes or a modified version of the MLA style is appropriate – just choose one format and be consistent. (See sample paper & paper assignment for specific instructions)

VI. **Length**
Part of the criteria for success is efficient use of the space allowed. If you write a half of a page for a two page assignment, you have not satisfied this criterion. However, this is not an invitation to use the additional space for stream-of-consciousness or irrelevant information not pertinent to the assigned issue. If you are having difficulties with the length, it is usually because you have not recognized or developed sufficiently the various issues involved. Conversely, if your draft is too long, you need to whittle it down to just the relevant essentials, perhaps editing out the anecdotes or redundancies; more is not always better! I am very willing to help if you submit drafts sufficiently before the due date.
Standards (Rubrics) for Grading Paper Assignments

Excellent (100-90% of points):
- Well organized with strong structure:
  The paper provides adequate context and the paragraphs flow logically from one to the next with each paragraph taking on just one task. By “logical flow,” I mean that you should demonstrate how and why one premise leads to the next and directly relates to the conclusion.
- Clear focus
  The paper answers what the question is asking and keeps strictly to those issues.
- Complete – Fully answers the questions
  You will not get full credit if you answer only part of the question even if that part is really good! The excellent paper includes all the relevant premises – with no logical leaps or missing supports. The excellent answer is as thorough as possible making the most effective use of the space allowed.
- Texturally correct – Stays true to the author’s intent/argument
  While we don't usually refer to philosophy answers as “right” or “wrong” (except on your objective exams!), strong mischaracterizations are possible. The excellent characterization of an argument is as close to the original intent as possible.
- Clear – Explains the answer comprehensibly
  You are to demonstrate that you have understood a theory or argument by explaining it clearly. The best papers will make something more understandable without oversimplifying or mischaracterizing the point
- Effective use of language
  I value straightforward, clear writing with no undefined jargon, tortuous grammar or derivative language. I will not be awarding points for flowery style or effusive jargon. This means using ordinary, garden-variety language, which is as simple and straightforward as possible. This also means that you need to be using your own “voice” and not quoting or closely paraphrasing my lectures or the texts. The excellent paper cites all quotes and close paraphrasing and supports those with supplementary explanations.
- Well Supported
  Your central claims should be supported with reference to the text, and, if space allows, with examples drawn from your own life or from newspapers, etc. These supports should be of appropriate length to the assignment – short assignments imply very short, pithy quotes and very brief examples. Quotes are best when taken from the philosopher's own works rather than from the secondary commentary or from lecture.
- Demonstrates insight into the issue
  I must admit that this is the most difficult to explain. The excellent paper will demonstrate a certain level of discernment or understanding which goes beyond just explaining the argument. Insight means that the paper documents the student really understanding what the issue is all about. To a certain extent, the student has taken ownership of the concepts and has presented an explanation that is uniquely their own.

Good (89-80% points)
The good paper will demonstrate all the above qualities but perhaps to a lesser degree or, will demonstrate some of the above qualities excellently, but not all of the qualities will be presented at a consistently high level.

Satisfactory (79-70% points)
The satisfactory paper will present all of the above qualities but not as strongly as the good paper or, some qualities may be stronger with some not as strong. Insight is not usually present.

Needs Work (69-60% points)
This paper is weak on many of the desired qualities.

Really Needs Work – Pretty Much Unacceptable (59-0% points) This paper presents few if any of the desired qualities.