

First Exam

(To be taken in class February 29, 2016)

Please bring this sheet and a test booklet along with you on exam day. This is to be a closed book, no notes exam except you will be allowed one 4 x 6 inch note card to record empirical facts¹ that you wish to use in your answers. Aside from that card, you should have neither the reading assignments nor any notes with you in class while you take the exam. Please return this handout, with your name on it, along with the test and your note card at the end of the test period. ***We will be collecting note cards with the exam so bring at least a blank card.***

Answer each of the four parts of the question below. **Clearly indicate which part of the question you are answering at each point in your essay.** (Numbers in the margins will do, as will saying “This is the normative principle I am arguing from . . .”, “The empirical claims I’m relying on are . . .” and so on. Whatever you do don’t make us guess which part of the question you are answering.)

(1) What should this country, its government and its citizens should do in response to famines and poverty abroad? Be as specific as you can concerning the actions or policies advocated. If you choose you can focus on a particular region and make specific proposals. Just remember that any claims you make in your thesis will need support in sections (2) and (3). (You might think of this as the thesis paragraph of the essay.)

(2) State explicitly and clearly what *normative principle or principles* you are relying on to justify this answer. Also, if your view is consequentialist, say what kinds of consequences are the ones that matter. In other words, how are we to decide which outcomes are better than which?

(3a) State explicitly and clearly which *empirical bridging claims and/or conceptual bridging claims* you are relying on to reach the practical conclusions for action you are drawing from the normative principles you cite. In other words, describe which bridging claims together with your Normative Principle lead to the conclusion in (1). Typically, you will need empirical claims here as bridging claims, and you may or may not need conceptual claims as well.

Empirical bridging claims should be supported with evidence. Often a general empirical claim will be supported by a more specific claim about which you can find evidence. For instance, you may say that a certain sort of aid will be effective – that’s a general claim. And then you can support that claim with a more specific claim, such as that that sort of aid worked in a particular place in the past.

(3b) Please also explain *how* the normative principles in section (2) together with these bridging claims support the conclusion you stated in the first section. (You don’t need to label parts 3a and 3b separately, but you should do both tasks in section 3.) The answers to (2) and (3) together should give a (close to) sound justification for taking the actions or adopting the policies you advocate.

(4) Defend the normative principle or principles you use in your argument. Why should we accept it? (This is asking for a defense of the principle you give as an answer to section 2, not another defense of your conclusion.)

The point of this test is to help you get better at formulating good arguments for practical conclusions, and to help you identify the considerations leading to your conclusions. So what we will be

¹ We will collect your note cards to make sure that nothing besides empirical claims appear on the card, so be careful that you don’t put something else on there such as your normative claims or your position *vis a vis* consequentialism. Points may be lost if the card doesn’t conform to the instructions.

looking for is how well the normative principles and empirical or conceptual factual statements you use in the second and third parts together serve as arguments for your conclusion. A good argument will be valid or nearly so, meaning that the truth or acceptability of the premises supplied by the normative principle and empirical or conceptual statements in sections (2) and (3) together support the truth (or acceptability) of the overall conclusion for action stated in section (1). In addition, the empirical claims in the third section must be backed up with evidence if they aren't common knowledge. Since this is an exam we're not looking for actual citations, but explaining where information comes from (for example, by saying "A study by so and so showed that . . ." when you make relevant empirical claims will make these claims more credible.

In the fourth section we will be looking for some justification of your normative premises as given in section 2. Remember that we've seen two different strategies for defending normative principles in the readings. (1) Arguing that a principle explains what's right in some set of examples about which we are confident we know what to do, or (2) explaining how it fits with or follows from some attractive normative theory.

Other things equal, a more detailed answer will be better than a less detailed answer. But remember that more detail in your conclusion or your normative principle will also require more detail to justify in sections 3 or 4.

You are encouraged to study with other students for the exam. Exam scores will not be curved, so no one will be penalized by the good performance of a classmate. However, **the essay you submit should be in your own words**, even if you end up agreeing with those you study with. Memorizing the word of the exact same essay as a classmate is plagiarism and will be treated as such. There is no reason you should need to do this anyway, since we are looking for understanding of the issues as opposed to your ability to memorize. Saying the same thing in different words is fine. You may of course quote someone if you use appropriate quotation marks. And in general, if you do borrow an idea from someone, you should say where you got it. In a real paper that would be in a footnote. On an exam you can do it more informally in the body of the paper by just saying where the information comes from.

Good luck!

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