

First Exam

The question below will be the exam question that you will be asked to write on in class. 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. Having the question ahead of time should allow you plenty of time to prepare for the class. Please return this handout, with your name on it, along with the test and your note card at the end of the test period.

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.)

(1) Take a position with respect to world hunger/resource shortages, population, and famine relief. In particular, focus on what you think 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. 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?

(3) (a) 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.

(b) Please also explain how sections two and three together 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.) **Hint:** The answers to (2) and (3) together should give a justification for taking the actions or adopting the policies you advocate in (1).

(4) Defend the normative principle you use in your argument. Why should we accept it? Some ways you might try to support the principle are by showing that it makes sense what we should do in certain other examples on which you think your reader will agree with you, or by arguing that it fits well with some of the moral theories we have looked at in the class so far..

The point of this test is to help you get better at formulating good arguments for practical conclusions, and to help you identify the background assumptions leading to your conclusions. So what we will be 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 should imply the truth (or acceptability) of the overall conclusion for action stated in section (1). In addition, the empirical or conceptual claims in

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.

the third section must be plausible (in other words, they should not be **obviously** false, though we will not mark down an essay just because we think they are probably false so long as some evidence is offered on their behalf).

In the fourth section we will be looking for some justification of your normative premises as given in section 2.

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 or in a note.

Good luck!

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