

# PHI 2630-Ethical Issues and Life Choices (Honors)

## Fall 2013

### **Instructor:**

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### **Graduate Research Consultant:**

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### **Humanities Subject Research Librarian:**

Abby Scheel  
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850-645-2163  
Library guide for our course:  
<http://guides.lib.fsu.edu/phi2630>

### **Class Meets:**

Tuesdays/Thursdays 11:00am-12:15pm  
Bellamy Building 209

### **Course Philosophy:**

There are no quizzes or exams in this course—only papers and short presentations—and I hope this makes the learning environment more relaxed and gives us space to explore issues and ideas. You all are exceptionally bright and motivated students, and I will treat you as colleagues in the learning process. Robyn and I are here to help facilitate your learning and development as a scholar, citizen, and ethical actor.

### **Course Description:**

Many of the decisions we must make throughout our lives will involve issues of morality. In order to arrive at a clear, well-thought-out position on everyday ethical issues, and on issues such as drug use, animal rights, and capital punishment, it will prove helpful to develop one's understanding of moral theories and hone one's moral reasoning skills. In this course we will look at some of the different types of ethical theories.

We will also consider various contemporary moral issues in light of these theories, and attempt to arrive at well-considered judgments of our own concerning these issues. These issues will include capital punishment, animal rights, abortion, poverty/duty to aid, ethics of career choice, cognitive enhancing drugs, and others. Each of these issues affects our life choices either directly or indirectly. More importantly, our goal is to develop our ability to defend our opinions rationally and in a way that is consistent with our other beliefs and values. I hope this course will also help you develop your own moral voice: a better understanding of what you believe, why you believe it, and how to express these moral beliefs in action.

You will be asked to participate in discussions and debates about the issues and to write about them. Hence, your communication and writing skills should improve. You should also become better at formulating and criticizing arguments, as well as facilitation discussion on moral issues.

This course is also part of a new program at FSU, the Graduate Research Consultant (GRC) program, run with a partnership with the FSU Office of Undergraduate Research ([our.fsu.edu](http://our.fsu.edu)). The program aims to help students develop as scholars; therefore, much of this course will be structured around helping you develop and write a research paper with the assistance and consultation of the Graduate Research Mentor for the course, Robyn Waller.

Each student will write a paper of 2,500-3,750 words (about 10 to 15 pages, excluding bibliography) on the basis of her or his own research. This is the length of many undergraduate philosophy/research journal and conference papers. Your paper should be polished and ready for submission to research journals/conferences by the end of the course. Encouraging students to help each other in the process, some time will be devoted during class periods to the selection of paper topics and the development of research questions for each paper. To further assist students in the process of research and writing, three classes will be held in Strozier Library computer classrooms. Students will submit an early draft of their papers in the eighth week and do a short work-in-progress presentation for feedback from the class. Each student will then present his or her research to the class in Power Point presentations at the end of the semester. Finally, we will publish these research papers through the DigiNole Commons institutional repository. Publishing your papers will give you further insight into the world of academic research and give you a competitive line on your resume/CV for graduate school or other positions. We will submit the best papers for publication in the FSU Undergraduate Research Journal, the [Owl](#), or in other [undergraduate philosophy/ethics publications](#) or [conferences](#).

### **Course Objectives:**

- To be able to successfully identify and evaluate philosophical arguments.
- To gain an understanding of ethical theories that will lay the groundwork for understanding contemporary moral views.
- To develop an understanding of various contemporary moral issues and various responses that have been given to them.
- To assess such responses, and clearly and consistently articulate one's view concerning them.

### **Course Readings:**

1. The Elements of Moral Philosophy, 7<sup>th</sup> Edition, James Rachels and Stuart Rachels (Elements)  
<http://www.amazon.com/Elements-Moral-Philosophy-James-Rachels/dp/0078038243>

2. The Right Thing To Do: Basic Readings in Moral Philosophy 6<sup>th</sup> Edition, James Rachels and Stuart Rachels (TRTTD)  
[http://www.amazon.com/The-Right-Thing-To-Philosophy/dp/0078038235/ref=pd\\_bxgy\\_b\\_img\\_y](http://www.amazon.com/The-Right-Thing-To-Philosophy/dp/0078038235/ref=pd_bxgy_b_img_y)

Additional Course Readings will be assigned and available on Blackboard. It is your responsibility to access readings from Blackboard.

## **Course Requirements:**

**Participation:** This course will be run as a seminar. Your attendance and active participation are required both for the course to succeed and for you to succeed in the course. You will see below that you need to attend class and participate or you will lose available points.

- 1) All reading assignments on the syllabus must be completed before the class for which they are assigned. Given your careful reading and critical responses, you should have insightful questions and comments each class. We are dealing with sensitive and important topics, so you may have strong opinions and hence disagreements with what you read, with what I say, and with what your classmates say. You should express these.
- 2) Attendance of every class is mandatory. Students are expected to come to class prepared to engage with and discuss class material vigorously and critically. **Three points will be deducted from your attendance score for each absence other than those for documented emergencies or health reasons. This includes the supervised research class meetings in Strozier Library.**

## **Critical Responses:**

I will ask you to think about a question before you read the assignment for the next class. Then, as you read the assignment, you should try (1) to figure out the author's arguments (what is his or her conclusion? and what premises does he or she rely on to reach that conclusion?), (2) to think of at least one criticism of the argument (which of the premises are mistaken? or why does the conclusion have unacceptable implications?), (3) one response to your objection, and (4) to think of at least one question you would like to bring up in class discussion. You should do this for all the readings. I will ask you to turn in 7 of these Critical Responses (CRs). They will be a minimum of 250 words (typed, double-spaced—should be about a page or more) and worth 10 points each (70 total). **To receive any points, you must turn in the CR to Blackboard and in hard copy on or before the due date (unless you have an excused absence). CRs will not be accepted after class. You must bring a hard copy of your CR to class (I will select some of the best CRs and put them on the projector for discussion).**

**The CR outline and point assignment is below. You can write more, but these are the minimum requirements:**

**1st Paragraph: Author x argues that... (2 points)**

**2nd Paragraph: One objection is this... (2 points)**

**The author could respond to this objection by... (2 points)**

**Discussion Question... (2 points)**

**Quality of Writing, Transitions/Flow of Paper, Construction (2 points)**

## **Discussion Questions:**

On days where there is no critical response due, you must submit one written discussion question copy relevant to the day's reading/topic (as noted on course schedule) to Blackboard and in hard copy. We

will use these questions to guide the in-class discussion. These days will be noted in the course schedule. **Discussion questions will not be accepted after class. You must also bring a hard copy of your discussion question to class (I will select some of the best questions and put them on the projector for discussion).** These questions should be relevant to the reading, explicitly reference something in the reading, reveal your understanding of the material/argument, stimulate discussion, and be professionally written (grammar, structure, etc.).

### **Sample Discussion Questions:**

(1) Utilitarianism reduces good to happiness or pleasure. But this reduction still seems to span an array of pleasures. Are all forms of pleasure equal? For example, is the pleasure derived from sadism equal to the pleasure derived from art? Is the pleasure of medical treatment equal to that of video games?

I am also interested in the application of utilitarianism in the case of opposing pleasures. Consider, for example, a man diagnosed with late-stage cancer who wants to forgo painful medical treatment and die peacefully. His family, however, will be distraught to see him pass away. How does one weigh the patient's desire to die peacefully with his family's desire to prolong his life?

(2) In *The Right Thing to Do*, Peter Singer claims that affluent people are morally obligated to donate all of their money that would otherwise be spent on luxuries. How does one distinguish necessary spending versus unnecessary spending? Should one only spend money on the minimal necessities of life, spending as little as possible? Based on this principle, how does one make spending decisions regarding things like housing, education, transportation, and food?

***Missed/late CR papers:*** Missed papers will be excused and can be made up only if you have documented proof of illness, death in the family, or officially sanctioned university business. In addition, **it is the student's responsibility to email me prior to the deadline.**

### **Course Research Paper:**

- 1) Research and write an essay of 2,500-3,750 words (about 10 to 15 pages, excluding bibliography), due at the end of the course, assessing an ethical issue and presenting an argument in favor of a position.
- 2) During the first weeks each student will work in class toward identifying a topic, a thesis, and an initial bibliography for the research paper. This is a full class exercise: be prepared to seek advice as you formulate your paper and to make constructive comments to assist your classmates in formulating their own research papers. You should use the library guide for our course in developing and writing your paper: <http://guides.lib.fsu.edu/phi2630>
- 3) Submit a preliminary (but full length) draft of your research paper. This should establish a topic and your arguments (including objections and replies), all in good scholarly form, including proper citations and a working bibliography, in class during the eighth week. You will also present your draft to the class in a five-minute presentation for feedback from your classmates.
- 4) Make a half-hour appointment at one of the campus writing center offices for free-of-charge help in responding to the comments on your preliminary drafts (go to: <http://wr.english.fsu.edu/Reading-Writing-Center/How-to-Make-an-Appointment>.)
- 5) Make a draft Powerpoint presentation to the class of no more than 5 minutes, followed by 3 minutes class discussion.
- 6) Make a final PowerPoint presentation to the class of no more than 5 minutes in length, followed by 3 minutes of class discussion. Presentations will be judged by the following criteria: a) clear, succinct identification of your organizing argument (your thesis); b) clear, succinct, and convincing support for

your thesis; c) good use of time allotted; use your time fully, but do not exceed that allotment; d) stimulation of discussion. Students are expected to participate in the discussions and critique their classmates' presentations.

You have a number of options for locating sources for your papers. In addition to the assigned sources, including blackboard articles, you may cite any of the databases available through the Strozier website. Once you are on these databases it is best to use "advanced search" options to narrow your search (Strozier librarians are also glad to help if you are having trouble locating a source). You may use: You should not leave the course without learning how to search scholarly articles.

A grading rubric and additionally writing resources for the paper will be uploaded to Blackboard. Papers must be typed, double-spaced, in 12-point normal font (e.g., Times New Roman), and include a word count. I will not require you to follow any particular formatting (e.g., APA, MLA), but you must properly cite your sources (in text or footnotes) and provide a reference list. Failure to do so is plagiarism. Whichever formatting you do choose to use, you must use consistently throughout the paper. Students **must turn in two copies for the assignment**: 1) Hard copies of the papers are due **at the very beginning of class**. Please note that if you arrive late, your paper will be marked late. 2.) A copy of the same paper must be uploaded to Safeassign through Blackboard.

Additional writing resources will be available on Blackboard, and are here:

<http://guides.lib.fsu.edu/phi2630>

-If you have trouble uploading to Safeassign, you must at least bring a hard copy to class in order to avoid a late penalty.

-The research topic, first draft and final research paper are due at the beginning of class on the due date.

-For each additional day that a paper is turned in after the due date, the paper will be docked one letter grade. So, a paper turned in late one day after the due date will be docked one letter grade (e.g., assuming the paper is of A quality, A to B). No papers will be accepted five days after due date and will result in a zero for the assignment.

### **Facilitation of Class Discussion:**

#### **20 points (pairs of students)**

Since facilitating moral dialogue is important to civic and moral life, students will be assigned to facilitate a class discussion in pairs. This facilitation/discussion is expected to last 30 minutes. You will be graded on: 1) your ability to engage the class with probing discussion that reveals your understanding of the material and stimulates reflection, and 2) professional presentation style, communication, timing, lack of distractions, etc. You can decide how to best facilitate the session. You may use PowerPoint, videos or news articles, and/or other sources/mediums to articulate the author's arguments and post questions for discussion. If you feel the argument is particularly complex or want to review the author's argument, you can spend the first few minutes outlining/reviewing the author's argument for the class. If you have two readings for that day, you should cover both readings.

### Grade composition

Critical Responses (7 @ 10 points each--at least 250 words each)	70 points
Reflection Paper (at least 750 words)	20 points
Discussion Questions (10 @ 3 points each)	30 points
Class attendance and participation	40 points
Class Facilitation	20 points
Research Paper Topic	10 points
Research paper: First Draft	40 points
First Draft Research Presentation to the Class	10 points
Final Paper	80 points
Research Presentation to the Class	<u>20 points</u>
	<b>(340 points total)</b>

### Course Grading:

A = 93-100%	C = 73-76%
A- = 90-92%	C- = 70-72%
B+ = 87-89%	D+ = 67-69%
B = 83-86%	D = 63-66%
B- = 80-82%	D- = 60-62%
C+ = 77-79%	F = below 60%

**In order to fulfill FSU's Writing Requirement ("W" Designation) credit, the student must earn a "C-" or better in the course, and in order to receive a "C-" or better in the course, the student must earn at least a "C-" on the required writing assignments for the course. If the student does not earn a "C-" or better on the required writing assignments for the course, the student will not earn an overall grade of "C-" or better in the course, no matter how well the student performs in the remaining portion of the course.**

To make a half hour appointment at one of the campus writing center offices go to:

<http://wr.english.fsu.edu/Reading-Writing-Center/How-to-Make-an-Appointment>. Also, you may consult the Learning Services Department's term paper clinics (the learning Services librarians are always ready to help you with writing your paper). We also have a library guide for this

**University Attendance Policy:** Excused absences include documented illness, deaths in the family and other documented crises, call to active military duty or jury duty, religious holy days, and official University activities. These absences will be accommodated in a way that does not arbitrarily penalize students who have a valid excuse. Consideration will also be given to students whose dependent children experience serious illness.

**Academic Honor Policy:** The Florida State University Academic Honor Policy outlines the University's expectations for the integrity of students' academic work, the procedures for resolving alleged violations of those expectations, and the rights and responsibilities of students and faculty members throughout the process. Students are responsible for reading the Academic Honor Policy and for living up to their pledge to ". . . be honest and truthful and . . . [to] strive for personal and institutional integrity at Florida State University." (Florida State University Academic Honor Policy, found at [fda.fsu.edu/Academics/Academic-Honor-Policy](http://fda.fsu.edu/Academics/Academic-Honor-Policy))

**Americans With Disabilities Act:** Students with disabilities needing academic accommodation should: (1) register with and provide documentation to the Student Disability Resource Center; and (2) bring a

letter to the instructor indicating the need for accommodation and what type. This should be done during the first week of class.

This syllabus and other class materials are available in alternative format upon request.

For more information about services available to FSU students with disabilities, contact the:

Student Disability Resource Center, 874 Traditions Way, 108 Student Services Building, Florida State University, Tallahassee FL 32306-4167

(850) 644-9566 (voice) (850) 644-8504 (TDD)

[sdrc@admin.fsu.edu](mailto:sdrc@admin.fsu.edu)

[disabilitycenter.fsu.edu](http://disabilitycenter.fsu.edu)

**Syllabus Change Policy:** Except for changes that substantially affect implementation of the evaluation (grading) statement, this syllabus is a guide for the course and is subject to change with advance notice.

### **Course Schedule (subject to revision):**

#### **Week 1:**

Tues 8/27: Introductions to each other, philosophy, ethics, and course information

Thursday 8/29: Read: What is Morality? (Elements) & Famine, Affluence, and Morality (Singer, Blackboard)

For more recent cast of Singer's argument: The Singer Solution to World Poverty (Ch. 17, TRTTD)

#### **Discussion Question 1 Due**

Optional News Reports:

David Leonhardt, "What \$1.2 Trillion Can Buy," The New York Times, January 17, 2007.

<http://www.nytimes.com/2007/01/17/business/17leonhardt.html>

Nicholas D. Kristof, "Attack of the Worms," The New York Times, July 2, 2007.

<http://www.nytimes.com/2007/07/02/opinion/02kristof.html>

<http://www.thelifeyoucansave.org/>

#### **Week 2:**

Tues 9/3: Utilitarianism, Read: Ch. 7 & 8 (Elements)

#### **Discussion Question 2 Due**

Optional News Report:

Gardiner Harris: "British Balance Benefit vs. Cost of Latest Drugs," The New York Times 5-7-09

<http://www.nytimes.com/2008/12/03/health/03nice.html?pagewanted=all>

Seth Mydans, "Recalculating Happiness in a Himalayan Kingdom," The New York Times, December 3, 2008. <http://www.nytimes.com/2009/05/07/world/asia/07bhutan.html?pagewanted=all>

Thur 9/5: Read: "Ethics of Career Choice: Replaceability, Career Choice, and Making a Difference" (On BlackBoard)

#### **CR 1 DUE**

Suggested News/Opinion Pieces:

<http://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2013/04/why-the-rich-dont-give/309254/>

<http://www.nytimes.com/2012/05/25/opinion/brooks-the-service-patch.html>

<http://www.nytimes.com/2013/06/04/opinion/brooks-the-way-to-produce-a-person.html>

### **Week 3:**

Tues 9/10: Class discussion of individual choices of research papers and topics

Visit Course Library Guide for papers: <http://guides.lib.fsu.edu/phi2630>

Thur 9/12: **Meet in Strozier Classroom (107A) for supervised research**

### **Week 4:**

Tues 9/17: Kiss, E, and Euben, P. (eds.) (2010) *Debating Moral Education*. Durham, NC and London: Duke University Press. Read: Aim High: A Response to Stanelly Fish and I Know It When I See It: A Reply to Kiss and Ruben (Blackboard)

**Discussion Question 3 Due (assignments tab)**

**Also due before class: Submit research question to Blackboard (assignments tab)**

Thur 9/19: Virtue Ethics (Ch. 12, Elements), Educating for Character in About Campus (pg. 17-22, Berkowitz, Blackboard), and The Friendship Effect (pg. 13-18, Blackboard)

### **Reflection Essay**

**Instead of CR (Short Reflection Essay, minimum 3 full pages):**

Prompt: To what extent have issues of moral, character, or civic development been emphasized in your FSU experience? How was this visible? In what ways have your own and others' moral or civic development been promoted and/or hindered by your educational environment? Think deeply about this (think about culture, built environments, classrooms, dorms, clubs & organizations, sports, friends, etc.) Reference the readings for this week (esp. the About Campus readings) where appropriate. I will be looking for critical, in-depth engagement with your experiences and environment, as well as good paper construction, grammar, etc. You may also want to include recommendations for how to improve the university's moral and civic education efforts.

### **Week 5:**

Tues 9/24: Are there Absolute Moral Rules? (Ch. 9, Elements) & Kant & Respect for Persons (Ch. 10, Elements)

**Discussion Question 4 Due**

Thur 9/26: A Defense of the Death Penalty (Ch. 18, TRTTD) & Why the United States Will Join the Rest of the World in Abandoning Capital Punishment, Stephen B. Bright (Ch. 19, TRTTD)

**CR 2 DUE; Student Facilitation 1**

### **Week 6: Animals**

Thur 10/1: All Animals Are Equal, Peter Singer (Ch. 14, TRTTD) & Torturing Puppies and Eating Meat: It's All in Good Taste (Alastair Norcross, Ch. 15, TRTTD)

**Discussion Question 5 Due**

**Student Facilitation 2**

Optional News Reports:

Jonathan Kaiman, "Chinese city dogged by criticism over dog-meat festival," BBC, June 8, 2013

<http://www.theguardian.com/world/2013/jun/18/chinese-city-yulin-dog-meat-festival>

Donald G. McNeil Jr., "When Human Rights Extend to Nonhumans," New York Times, July 13, 2008.

<http://www.nytimes.com/2008/07/13/weekinreview/13mcneil.html?pagewanted=all>

Nicholas Kristof, "Humanity even for Nonhumans," The New York Times, April 9, 2009

<http://www.nytimes.com/2009/04/09/opinion/09kristof.html>

Nicholas Kristof, "A Farm Boy Reflects," The New York Times, July 31, 2008.

<http://www.nytimes.com/2008/07/31/opinion/31kristof.html>

Tues 10/3: Do Animals Have Rights? (Tibor R. Machan, Ch. 16, TRTTD)

**CR 3 DUE**

**Student Facilitation 3**

Optional News Reports:

Natalie Angier, "Save a Whale, Save a Soul, Goes the Cry," The New York Times, June 25, 2010

<http://www.nytimes.com/2010/06/27/weekinreview/27angier.html?pagewanted=all>

William Neuman, "New Way to Help Chickens Cross to the Other Side," The New York Times, October 21, 2010

<http://www.nytimes.com/2010/10/22/business/22chicken.html>

**Week 7:**

Tues 10/8: Cognitive Enhancement: Read: *Neuroethics, An Introduction with Readings*, Chapter 2:

Better Brains, pp. 11-41 (Blackboard)

**Discussion Question 6 Due**

Optional News:

<http://www.guardian.co.uk/society/2010/feb/21/smart-drugs-students-universities>

Thur 10/10: America's Unjust Drug Wars (Ch. 25, TRTTD)

**CR 4 DUE**

**Student Facilitation 4**

**Week 8:**

Tues 10/15: **Meet in Strozier Classroom (107A) for supervised research**

Consider making individual half hour appointments with the Writing Center to discuss your drafts

<http://wr.english.fsu.edu/Reading-Writing-Center/How-to-Make-an-Appointment>

Thur 10/17: Social Contract Theory (Ch. 6, Elements) & Letter From Birmingham Jail (Ch. 31, TRTTD)

**Discussion Question 7 Due**

**Student Facilitation 5**

## **Week 9:**

Tues 10/22: Selling Organs for Transplantation (Ch. 38, TRTTD); A Free Market Would Reduce Donations and Would Commodify the Human Body (Ch.39, TRTTD)

**CR 5 DUE**

**Student Facilitation 6**

Optional News Report:

<http://www.nytimes.com/roomfordebate/2013/04/25/should-prisoners-be-allowed-to-donate-their-organs/with-organ-donations-let-prisoners-give-life-to-others>

Thur 10/24: Draft Presentations, First Drafts Due (Robyn will give feedback)

## **Week 10:**

Tues 10/29: Draft Presentations

Thur 10/31: Draft Presentations

## **Week 11:**

Tues 11/5: Psychology & Ethics

Read: <http://www.nytimes.com/2008/01/13/magazine/13Psychology-t.html?pagewanted=all>

**Discussion Question 8 Due**

**Student Facilitation 7**

Optional News Report:

Martin A. Nowak, "Generosity: A Winner's Advice," Nature Vol. 456 (4 December 2008)

<http://www.nature.com/nature/journal/v456/n7222/full/456579a.html>

Paul Bloom, "Moral Life of Babies," The New York Times, May 3, 2010

[http://www.nytimes.com/2010/05/09/magazine/09babies-t.html?pagewanted=all&\\_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/2010/05/09/magazine/09babies-t.html?pagewanted=all&_r=0)

Thur 11/7: **Meet in Strozier Classroom (107A) for supervised research**

## **Week 12:**

Tues 11/12: Sexual Ethics, Monogomy: A critique (TRTDT, Ch. 27); Our Sexual Ethics: Bertand Russell (TRTDT, Ch. 26)

**CR 6 DUE**

**Student Facilitation 8**

Thur 11/14: Alcohol and Rape (TRTTD, Ch. 30)

**Discussion Question 9 Due**

**Student Facilitation 9**

**Week 13:** Abortion

Tues 11/19: Why Abortion is Immoral, Don Marquis (TRTTD, Ch. 11)

## **CR 7 DUE**

### **Student Facilitation 10 (group of 3 students)**

Optional News Reports:

Denise Grady, "Parents Torn Over Fate of Frozen Embryos," New York Times, December 4, 2008. 19  
<http://www.nytimes.com/2008/12/04/us/04embryo.html?pagewanted=all>

Kirk Johnson, "Proposed Colorado Measure on Rights for Human Eggs," The New York Times, November 18, 2007.

<http://www.nytimes.com/2007/11/18/us/politics/18ballot.html>

Thur 11/21: A Defense of Abortion, Judith Jarvis Thomson (TRTTD, Ch. 12) & On the Moral and Legal Status of Abortion and Postscript on Infanticide, Mary Ann Warren (TRTTD, Ch. 13)

### **Discussion Question 10 Due**

### **Student Facilitation 11 (group of 3 students)**

Optional News Reports:

Cornelia Dean, "Telling the Stories Behind the Abortions," The New York Times, November 6, 2007.  
<http://www.nytimes.com/2007/11/06/health/06abor.html>

Emily Bazelon, "The New Abortion Providers," The New York Times, July 7, 2010  
<http://www.nytimes.com/2010/07/18/magazine/18abortion-t.html>

## **Week 14:**

Tues 11/26: Final Presentations

Thur 11/28: No Class, Thanksgiving

## **Week 15:**

Tues 12/3: Final Presentations

Thur 12/5: **Final Research Papers Due in Class**, Final Presentations, course evaluations, wrap up.

## **Sample Research Paper Topics**

Traditional ethics topics:

Whether we have a moral obligation to give to humanitarian causes

Death penalty

Death row inmates and organ donation

Abortion

Sexual ethics

Ethics of recreational drug use (can also connect to experience machine)

Ethics of animal use:

In medical and biological research

In psychological research

For product testing

For food  
For goods (e.g., leather products)  
For entertainment (e.g., at theme parks and in movies)  
Ethical status of primates and their use in research  
Animal rights and ethical status of animals  
Are animal models analogous to human systems?

Bioethics (medical, nursing):

Designer babies: selecting and influencing the characteristics of your children via genetics  
Status quo bias and the use of genetic and medical breakthroughs  
Do not resuscitate orders  
Parental medical decision-making on behalf of children  
Ethical considerations for triage decisions  
Stem cell research  
Cloning  
Euthanasia  
Access to healthcare and availability of treatment  
Informed consent  
Organ donation  
Priority on organ list

Technology, computer science, social media:

Privacy  
Intellectual property  
Resource availability  
Permissible speech

College/higher education/student affairs:

Ethics of job or major choice  
Ethics for or against funding for humanities (e.g., intersection with virtue ethics or utilitarianism)  
Ethics within student life

Neuroscience topics:

Ethics of cognitive enhancement

Is it morally permissible for students without a prescription to take cognitive enhancement drugs such as Ritalin?

Analogy or disanalogy between legal versus illegal/drug-based versus non-drug based cognitive enhancers

How debates about performance-based enhancement in non-academic spheres informs the debate about performance-based enhancement in academic spheres

The experience machine and cognitive enhancement

Ethics of memory enhancers or erasers

For those with PTSD

For normal individuals

Ethics of brain-based lie detection and other near future or hypothetical “mind-reading” brain imaging technologies

For identification of traits, emotions, prejudice

For prediction of future behavior and future pathology  
Compare to other methods of lie-detection or behavioral analysis

Professional ethics in your discipline

Naturalized and descriptive ethics:

Chimpanzee behavior and morality

Situationism and threats to virtue ethics and moral responsibility

Moral judgments

Experimental philosophy paper on ethics topic

**If you wish to discuss topics more off the beaten path, Robyn is happy to work with you in formulating a question and thesis specific to your interests.**