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Essay questions

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These are essay questions for the [examinations](#).

Essay 1: Singer's solution to world poverty

Essay

Peter Singer argues that we have moral obligations to contribute money beyond that required for necessary expenses. Write an essay discussing the following points:

1. Discuss Singer's thought experiment involving Bob and the Bugatti. This will involve (1) describing the decision Bob faces, (2) describing what Singer thinks Bob is obligated to do, then (3) explaining what conclusions Singer thinks we should draw from the thought experiment regarding our obligations to reduce poverty and suffering.
2. Do you agree with Singer about this? What do you think Bob should do in this situation? What, if any, conclusions do you think we can draw from this case about our obligations toward those living in poverty? Defend your answer.

Rubric

Category	4-6 points	8-9 points	10 points
[A] Summary of Singer's thought experiment and Singer's conclusion about Bob's moral duties	Student attempts to summarize Singer's thought experiment and Singer's conclusion about Bob's moral duties in this situation, but fails to correctly describe one or both.	Student correctly summarizes Singer's thought experiment and Singer's conclusion about Bob's moral duties in this situation.	Student correctly summarizes Singer's thought experiment and Singer's conclusion about Bob's moral duties in this situation. Student also explains <i>why</i> Singer reaches this conclusion.
[B] Summary of Singer's application of thought experiment to obligations regarding poverty	Student attempts to apply Singer's conclusion concerning Bob's moral duties in the thought experiment to our obligations regarding poverty in a way that reveal a lack of understanding of Singer's argument.	Student applies correctly Singer's conclusion concerning Bob's moral duties in the thought experiment to our obligations regarding poverty.	Student applies correctly Singer's conclusion concerning Bob's moral duties in the thought experiment to our obligations regarding poverty. Student also considers one objection to the proposed analogy (and objection that tries to say that they are <i>disanalogous</i>) and gives Singer's response to this objection.

[C] Explanation of own view about Bob's moral duties in thought experiment	Student merely states whether Bob has any moral duties and what they might be.	Student states whether Bob has any moral duties and what they might be and provides some minimal explanation for their response.	Student states whether Bob has any moral duties and what they might be and provides some minimal explanation for their response, an explanation that considers how response might be affected by consideration of additional factors.
[D] Explanation of what conclusion can be drawn from Bob thought experiment to our obligations regarding poverty	Students merely states that we can or cannot draw any conclusions about our obligations regarding poverty from the thought experiment involving Bob.	Students states that we can or cannot draw any conclusions about our obligations regarding poverty from the thought experiment involving Bob, and student states <i>what</i> that conclusion is.	Students states that we can or cannot draw any conclusions about our obligations regarding poverty from the thought experiment involving Bob, and student states <i>what</i> that conclusion is. Student highlights some feature these two cases share or fail to share.
[E] Defense of answer given to relevance, if any, of thought experiment involving Bob to moral duties concerning poverty	Student attempts to give one reason for why the thought experiment involving Bob does or does not have relevance for any moral duties we do or don't have concerning poverty, but these reason indicates some lack of understanding of the basic issue.	Student gives one or more reasons why the thought experiment involving Bob does or does not have relevance for any moral duties we do or don't have concerning poverty.	Student gives one or more reasons why the thought experiment involving Bob does or does not have relevance for any moral duties we do or don't have concerning poverty. Student considers and responds to one objection to their defense.

Essay 2: Cultural relativism and *ala kachuu* Essay

Read the following news story:

- "[Abduction, Often Violent, a Kyrgyz Wedding Rite](#)," Craig S. Smith, *The New York Times* (April 30, 2005)

Write an essay considering the following questions:

1. What is your response to this practice? Why do you have that response? How would cultural relativism analyze *your* response? Be sure in answering this question to also define cultural relativism.
2. What seems to be the view of the people of Kyrgyzstan about this practice? How would cultural relativism analyze the morality of this practice *relative to* the people of Kyrgyzstan? According to cultural relativism, would it be morally permissible *for* Kyrgyz men to abduct the women in the hope of "persuading" them to marry? According to cultural relativism, would it be morally required *for* an abducted Kyrgyz woman to agree to marry once abducted? Why or why not?
3. Do you think cultural relativism is correct? That is, do you think the morality of *all* actions, behaviors, and practices is determined by the norms and expectations of most people in your own culture? Why or why not?

Rubric

Category	4-6 points	8-9 points	10 points
[A] Student	Student merely	Student states	Student states

response to practice	states response to this cultural practice	response to this cultural practice and provides some explanation for response.	response to this cultural practice and provides an explanation for the response.
[B] Cultural relativist analysis of student response	Student attempts to provide cultural relativist analysis in a way that, while indicating an awareness of the general subject matter, reveals lack of even a general grasp of the theory.	Student provides cultural relativist analysis in a way that reveals a general understanding of the theory but also reveals some confusion, including confusing possible psychological and sociological <i>explanations</i> of their response with metaethical cultural relativist <i>analysis</i> of their response.	Student provides cultural relativist analysis in a way that reveals a general understanding of the theory.
[C] Definition of cultural relativism	Student attempts to definition of cultural relativism in a way that, while indicating an awareness of the general subject matter, fails to indicate even a general grasp of the theory.	Student defines cultural relativism in a way that indicates a general understanding of the theory but makes one or two errors in detail, including confusing possible psychological and sociological <i>explanations</i> of moral beliefs and practices exhibited by cultures with metaethical cultural relativist <i>definition</i> of morality.	Student defines cultural relativism in a way that indicates a comprehensive understanding of the theory, including differentiating it from psychological and sociological explanations about the moral beliefs and practices exhibited in cultures.
[D] Cultural relativist analysis of morality of practice for Kyrgyz culture	Student attempts to provide cultural relativist analysis in a way that, while indicating an awareness of the general subject matter, reveals lack of even a general grasp of the theory.	Student provides cultural relativist analysis in a way that reveals a general understanding of the theory but also reveals some confusion, including confusing possible psychological and sociological <i>explanations</i> of their response with metaethical cultural relativist <i>analysis</i> of this practice.	Student provides cultural relativist analysis in a way that reveals a general understanding of the theory.
[E] States own conclusion about cultural relativism. Explains basis for conclusion.	States view, but offers no reason or irrelevant reason for view.	States view and offers reasons that are relevant	States view, offers one or more relevant reason and explains connection between reason and view. In other words, student tries to show that the reason (premise) actually does lead to their view.

Essay 3: Objectivism considers cultural differences

Essay

Read the following news story:

- "Controversial psychology professor to speak at the Chicago Cultural Center," by Erin G. Edwards, *Medill Reports* (January 21, 2008)

Consider the scenario described in the essay: "The day after a man dies his first born son gets a haircut and eats chicken". Recall Richard Shweder's explanation as to why this would be considered such a morally reprehensible action in "the small town of Bhubaneswar in Orissa, India." Obviously, in Western culture, we wouldn't have that reaction to the scenario. This looks like a case of moral difference between the local culture of this part of India and the culture we are most familiar with.

Write an essay discussing two ways that objectivists might respond to this disagreement. Provide a *general* explanation of each of these strategies, then provide a more specific application of each of these strategies to this particular issue. Be sure to define metaethical objectivism as well.

You may draw upon suggestions mentioned in class lecture, provided on lecture supplements, and found in the readings by Midgley and Bambrough.

Rubric

Category	4-6 points	8-9 points	10 points
[A] General description of first objectivist response	Student attempts to state an objectivist response, but it is has no relevance to the general topic.	Student provides a minimal description of a possible objectivist response.	Student provides a developed description of possible objectivist response.
[B] Application of first objectivist response to this cultural norm	Student attempts to relate possible objectivist response to this case of disagreement, but suggested response has no connection to this kind of disagreement.	Student relates suitable objectivist response to this case of disagreement.	Student relates suitable objectivist response to this case of disagreement, explaining in sufficient detail the way that this case of disagreement can be accommodated by metaethical objectivism.
[C] General description of second objectivist response	Student attempts to state an objectivist response, but it is has no relevance to the general topic.	Student provides a minimal description of a possible objectivist response.	Student provides a developed description of possible objectivist response.
[D] Application of second objectivist response to this cultural norm	Student attempts to relate possible objectivist response to this case of disagreement, but suggested response has no connection to this kind of disagreement.	Student relates suitable objectivist response to this case of disagreement.	Student relates suitable objectivist response to this case of disagreement, explaining in sufficient detail the way that this case of disagreement can be accommodated by metaethical objectivism.
[E] Definition of objectivism	Student attempts to define objectivism in a way that, while indicating an awareness of the general subject matter, fails to indicate even a general grasp of the theory.	Student defines objectivism in a way that indicates a general understanding of the theory but makes one or two errors in detail.	Student defines objectivism in a way that indicates a comprehensive understanding of the theory, including differentiating it from psychological and sociological claims about the moral beliefs people have.

Essay 4: Categorical reasons and its relevance to objectivism and subjectivism

Essay

Recall the scenario sketched in class: You're watching the sun set over the Pacific Ocean. 10 yards away, you see Jim, someone you barely know, taking pictures. He is walking toward the cliff but is oblivious to this fact. In fact, if he takes just a couple more steps, he will plunge to his death on the rocks below.

Answer the following questions:

1. Would you warn Jim? Why or why not?
2. Now, whatever you decide about whether or not you would warn Jim, do you have any *reasons* for warning him? If so, what are they? If not, why not?
3. Are *all* of the reasons you have for warning Jim linked to your own feelings, desires, preferences, or interests? Or are there any reasons you have that are completely *independent* of your own feelings, desires, preferences, and interests? In other words, if all of your feelings, desires, preferences, and interests were systematically *changed*, would you *still* have any remaining reason for warning him?
4. If you think you do have reasons that are completely independent of your own feelings, desires, preferences, and interests, what are they? If not, why not?
5. What is the relevance of this to the debate between objectivism and subjectivism? In answering this question, be sure to define objectivism and subjectivism.

Rubric

Category	4-6 points	8-9 points	10 points
[A] Student response to scenario	Merely states whether or not they would warn Jim.	States whether or not they would warn Jim and some minimal explanation for their response.	States whether or not they would warn Jim and an explanation for their response that considers how their motivation might be affected by consideration of additional factors.
[B] Reasons for warning Jim	Merely states whether or not they have any reasons for warning Jim and lists several reasons for or against warning Jim.	States whether or not they have any reasons, for warning Jim, lists several reasons they have for or against warning Jim, and provide some minimal explanation for answer.	States whether or not they have any reasons, for warning Jim, lists several reasons they have for or against warning Jim, and an explanation for their response that considers
[C] The possibility of categorical reasons for warning Jim	Student merely states whether or not any reasons they have for warning Jim are independent of their own interests and desires.	Student states whether or not any reasons they have for warning Jim are independent of their own interests and desires, and provides a minimal explanation for their answer.	Student states whether or not any reasons they have for warning Jim are independent of their own interests and desires and provides an explanation for their answer that <i>clearly</i> indicates a correct understanding of the concept of a categorical reason.
[D] Relevance of the possibility of categorical reasons to debate between subjectivism and objectivism	Student attempts to summarize the relevance in a way that reveals a comprehensive misunderstanding of the connection.	Students summarizes the relevance in a way that indicates a general grasp of the connection but makes one or two errors in detail.	Students summarizes the relevance in a way that indicates comprehensive understanding of the connection, including how the existence of categorical reasons would affect the <i>subjective reasons argument</i> for subjectivism.

[E] Definition of subjectivism and objectivism	Student attempts to define objectivism and subjectivism in a way that, while indicating an awareness of the general subject matter, fails to indicate even a general grasp of the two theories.	Student defines objectivism and subjectivism in a way that indicates a general understanding of the two theories but makes one or two errors in detail.	Student defines objectivism and subjectivism in a way that indicates a comprehensive understanding of the two theories, including differentiating them from psychological and sociological claims about the moral beliefs people have.
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Essay 5: What makes life go better?

Essay

1. Explain the difference between intrinsic good and instrumental good.
2. Consider pleasure. Do you think that *only* pleasure is intrinsically good? Why or why not? Do you think that *all* pleasure is intrinsically good? Why or why not? In answering your question, be sure to define Hedonism. What do your answers to the previous questions indicate about your acceptance or denial of Hedonism?
3. Consider some *other* supposed intrinsic good from Kazez's essay. Do you think that Kazez is correct that this state is *genuinely* intrinsically good? Why or why not? In discussing Kazez, be sure to define Objective List Theory.

Rubric

Category	4-6 points	8-9 points	10 points
[A] Explanation of difference between intrinsic and instrumental good	Student attempts to explain the difference in a way that, while indicating an awareness of the general subject matter, fails to indicate even a general grasp of the concepts.	Student explains difference in a way that indicates a general understanding of the two concepts but makes one or two errors in detail.	Student explains difference in a way that indicates a comprehensive understanding of the two concepts.
[B] Definition of hedonism	Student attempts to define hedonism in a way that, while indicating an awareness of the general subject matter, fails to indicate even a general grasp of the theory.	Student defines hedonism in a way that indicates a general understanding of the theory but makes one or two errors in detail.	Student defines hedonism in a way that indicates a comprehensive understanding of the theory, including differentiating it from desire satisfaction theory and objective list theory.
[C] Consideration of claims that pleasure is only good and that all pleasure is good. Relevance to hedonism.	Student states whether or not he or she thinks that all pleasure has intrinsic value and only pleasure has intrinsic value, but attempted explanations indicate significant misunderstandings of these claims.	States whether or not he or she thinks that all pleasure has intrinsic value and only pleasure has intrinsic value. Student explanations of position indicate general understanding of claims, though makes one or two errors in detail. Student states relevance of his or her claims to hedonism in a way that indicates general understanding.	States whether or not he or she thinks that all pleasure has intrinsic value and only pleasure has intrinsic value. Student explanations of position indicate comprehensive and accurate understanding of claims. Student states relevance of his or her claims to hedonism in a way that indicates comprehensive and accurate understanding.
[D] Definition of objective list theory	Student attempts to define objective list theory in a way that, while indicating an	Student defines objective list theory in a way that indicates a general	Student defines objective list theory in a way that indicates a comprehensive

	awareness of the general subject matter, fails to indicate even a general grasp of the theory.	understanding of the theory but makes one or two errors in detail.	understanding of the two theories, including differentiating it from hedonism and desire satisfaction theory.
[E] Consideration of supposed objective intrinsic good	Student states whether or not he or she thinks that Kazez's proposed good genuinely has intrinsic value, but attempted explanation indicate significant misunderstandings of the concept of an objective intrinsic good.	States whether or not he or she thinks that Kazez's proposed good genuinely has intrinsic value, and explanation indicates understanding of the concept of an objective intrinsic good, though makes one or two errors in detail.	States whether or not he or she thinks that Kazez's proposed good genuinely has intrinsic value, and explanation indicates comprehensive and accurate understanding of the concept of an objective intrinsic good

Essay 6: Rational egoism and deception in business

Essay

Recall the following excerpt from the [interview](#) in *Inc.* with [Philippe Kahn](#):

INC.: The story goes that Borland was launched by a single ad, without which we wouldn't be sitting here talking about the company. How much of that is apocryphal?

KAHN: It's true: one full-page ad in the November 1983 issue of Byte magazine got the company running. If it had failed, I would have had nowhere else to go.

INC.: If you were so broke, how did you pay for the ad?

KAHN: Let's put it that we convinced the salesman to give us terms. We wanted to appear only in Byte -- not any of the other microcomputer magazines -- because Byte is for programmers, and that's who we wanted to reach. But we couldn't afford it. We figured the only way was somehow to convince them to extend us credit terms.

INC.: And they did?

KAHN: Well, they didn't offer. What we did was, before the ad salesman came in -- we existed in two small rooms, but I had hired extra people so we would look like a busy, venture-backed company -- we prepared a chart with what we pretended was our media plan for the computer magazines. On the chart we had Byte crossed out. When the salesman arrived, we made sure the phones were ringing and the extras were scurrying around. Here was this chart he thought he wasn't supposed to see, so I pushed it out of the way. He said, "Hold on, can we get you in Byte?" I said, "We don't really want to be in your book, it's not the right audience for us." "You've got to try," he pleaded. I said, "Frankly, our media plan is done, and we can't afford it." So he offered good terms, if only we'd let him run it just once. We expected we'd sell maybe \$20,000 worth of software and at least pay for the ad. We sold \$150,000 worth. Looking back now, it's a funny story; then, it was a big risk.

Given the rational egoism definition of what makes any action a rational one, did Kahn act rationally in this situation? Explain. Be sure to define rational egoism first. In explaining your answer, be sure to do the following: (1) list at least two potentially bad consequences to Kahn's well-being; (2) list at least two potentially good consequences to Kahn's well-being; and (3) weigh both the likelihood and value of these consequences for Kahn's overall self-interest to arrive at a conclusion as to whether or not this was a rational action.

Rubric

Category	4-6 points	8-9 points	10 points
[A] Definition of rational egoism	Student attempts to define rational egoism in a way that, while indicating an awareness of the general subject matter, fails to indicate	Student defines rational egoism in a way that indicates a general understanding of the theory but makes one or two errors in detail.	Student defines rational egoism in a way that indicates a comprehensive understanding of the theory, including differentiating it from psychological egoism and ethical egoism.

	even a general grasp of the theory.		
[B] Bad consequences	Student lists only one possible bad outcome of Kahn's action.	Students lists two possible bad outcomes of Kahn's action, but at least one outcome is not relevant to Kahn's well-being	Student lists two possible bad outcomes, both of which may plausible be construed as relevant to Kahn's well-being, either as something intrinsically good or as a means to some intrinsic good.
[C] Good consequences	Student lists only one possible good outcome of Kahn's action.	Students lists two possible good outcomes of Kahn's action, but at least one outcome is not relevant to Kahn's well-being	Student lists two possible good outcomes, both of which may plausible be construed as relevant to Kahn's well-being, either as something intrinsically good or as a means to some intrinsic good.
[D] Weighs good and bad consequences for Kahn's well being	Student fails to consider either the approximate likelihood of each of the good and bad possible outcomes listed or the comparative value of these outcomes.	Student considers both the approximate likelihood of each of the good and bad possible outcomes listed and the comparative value of these outcomes, but the discussion fails to demonstrate a comprehensive grasp of rational egoistic thinking.	Student considers both the approximate likelihood of each of the good and bad possible outcomes listed and the comparative value of these outcomes in a way that demonstrate comprehensive grasp rational egoistic thinking.
[E] Conclusion as to whether Kahn's action was rational	Student fails to suggest any conclusion as to whether Kahn's action was rational.		Student suggests whether or not Kahn's action was rational.

Essay 7: Act utilitarianism and national policy

Essay

Consider the following issue using an Act Utilitarian approach to ethics: the legal drinking age in the United States.

Explore how Act Utilitarianism would assess the morality of lowering the legal drinking age to 18 years old. Be sure to define Act Utilitarianism first. Then do the following: (1) mention at least two possible positive consequences for society of lowering the drinking age to 18; (2) mention at least two possible negative consequences for society of lowering the drinking age to 18; (3) discuss both the *likelihood* and overall *value* of these good consequences and *disvalue* of these negative consequences; (4) make a determination (it can be very tentative and preliminary) of whether lowering the drinking age is morally required or prohibited *using just the Act Utilitarian criterion of right action*.

You may find helpful information at the following website:

<http://drinkingage.procon.org>. Note: you will *not* be able to link to this website while taking the examination.

Note: be sure that the possible and negative consequences for society that you cite are ones that Act Utilitarianism *would* consider. For example, the mere fact that it seems *unfair* that 18 year olds in the

United States cannot drink alcohol legally even though they can vote in elections in the United States is *not* something that Act Utilitarianism would take into account. Laws that you consider to be unfair may turn out to have positive utility. If in this case you think there is some negative utility *in the fact that this age disparity exists*, then explain why you think that.

Rubric

Category	4-6 points	8-9 points	10 points
[A] Definition of act utilitarianism	Student attempts to define act utilitarianism in a way that, while indicating an awareness of the general subject matter, fails to indicate even a general grasp of the theory.	Student defines act utilitarianism in a way that indicates a general understanding of the theory but makes one or two errors in detail.	Student defines act utilitarianism in a way that indicates a comprehensive understanding of the theory, including differentiating it from rule utilitarianism.
[B] Two positive societal consequences	Student lists only one possible positive societal consequence of lowering legal drinking age.	Students lists two possible positive societal consequence of lowering legal drinking age, but at least one is not relevant to act utilitarian considerations.	Student lists two positive societal consequence of lowering legal drinking age, both of which may plausible be construed as relevant to act utilitarian considerations, either as something intrinsically good or as a means to some intrinsic good.
[C] Two negative societal consequences	Student lists only one possible negative societal consequence of lowering legal drinking age.	Students lists two possible negative societal consequence of lowering legal drinking age, but at least one is not relevant to act utilitarian considerations.	Student lists two negative societal consequence of lowering legal drinking age, both of which may plausible be construed as relevant to act utilitarian considerations, either as something intrinsically bad or as a means to some intrinsic bad.
[D] Weighs value and likelihood of possible positive and negative consequences	Student fails to consider either the approximate likelihood of each of the possible positive and negative outcomes listed or the comparative value of these outcomes.	Student considers both the approximate likelihood of each of the possible positive and negative outcomes listed and the comparative value of these outcomes, but the discussion fails to demonstrate a comprehensive grasp of act utilitarian thinking.	Student considers both the approximate likelihood of each of the possible positive and negative outcomes listed and the comparative value of these outcomes in a way that demonstrate comprehensive grasp act utilitarian thinking.
[E] Determine of morality of policy change	Student fails to suggest any conclusion as to whether lowering the drinking age is morally required or prohibited <i>using just the Act Utilitarian criterion of right action</i> .		Student suggests whether lowering the drinking age is morally required or prohibited <i>using just the Act Utilitarian criterion of right action</i> .

Essay 8: Business ethics

Essay

Read these two news stories:

- "[Mali's children in chocolate slavery](#)," Humphrey Hawksley, *BBC News* website (April 12, 2001)
- "[Plight of African child slaves forced into mines - for our mobile phones](#)," by Charles Lavery, *Sunday Mail* (July 6, 2008)

Write an essay addressing the following questions.

Suppose that you are the executive of a corporation that imports and sells mobile phones and chocolate in the United States. There is a concern that the production of the chocolate and mobile phones provided by your suppliers involves forced child labor. You are considering whether or not to investigate these suppliers. There are other suppliers you could utilize that have been certified as not making use of forced child labor. But the chocolate and mobile phones they supply are more expensive. It is more profitable to continue using your current suppliers. But there is this worry about forced child labor being involved.

1. According to Milton Friedman, do you have any *moral* obligation to investigate the origins of the chocolate you sell or the coltan in the mobile phones you sell in order to determine whether forced child labor was involved in their production? That is, do you have any moral obligation to do so beyond looking out for what will maximize profits? Why or why not? In answering this question, be sure to define the Shareholder Only view about corporate social responsibility defended by Friedman.
2. According to the Stakeholder view defended by Evan and Freeman, do you have any moral obligation to do so? Why or why not? In answering this question, be sure to define the Stakeholder view, especially the way in which Evan and Freeman make use of the Humanity Formulation of the Kant's Categorical Imperative to defend the view.
3. According to Goodpaster, do you have any moral obligation to do so? Why or why not? In answering this question, be sure to describe Goodpaster's view, especially how it differs from both the Stockholder Only view and the Stakeholder view.

Suppose you are consider purchasing a mobile phone or regularly purchase a certain brand of chocolate.

1. Do you have any moral obligation to refrain from *purchasing* products you know or have ample reason to believe to have involved forced child labor? Why or why not?
2. Do you have any moral obligation to *investigate* the companies from which you are considering purchasing the mobile phone or already purchase chocolate on a regular basis in order to determine (as best you can) whether or not forced child labor was involved in its production. Why or why not? (In answering this question, assume that you have heard some news (from the websites you just read) that forced child labor is involved in the production of *some* chocolate and *some* mobile phones sold in the United States. You haven't heard anything specifically about this company yet. That's what you would be investigating.)