

Topics in Ethics and Political Philosophy
Professor Peter Unger

Spring Semester, 2010

Classes will be conducted mainly in the form of exploratory discussions: The professor will begin each session's discussion, trying to present ideas that will stimulate others to join in the proceedings. Mostly, course grades will be based on written work. But, class contribution will also be a determinant or, in place of that, discussion in the professor's office sessions.

Week 1 *Living High and Letting Die* (or LHL D), Peter Unger, Oxford University Press, 1996, Chapter 1, pages 3-14

Week 2 "Rich and Poor," Peter Singer From his *Practical Ethics*, Second Edition, Cambridge University Press, 1993, Chapter 8, pages 218-246. COURSEPACK
Optional but Classic: Peter Singer, "Famine, Affluence and Morality," *Philosophy and Public Affairs*, Vol. 1, No. 3 (Spring, 1972) pages 229-243. JSTOR
LHL D, Chapter 2, pages 24-54

Week 3 LHL D Chapter 2, pages 55- 61 and Chapter 3

Week 4 LHL D, Chapter 6, sections 6 - 8 (pages 146-152) and section 10 (pages 156-57).
"The Demands of Beneficence" Liam Murphy, *Philosophy and Public Affairs*, Vol. 22, No. 4. (Autumn, 1993), pp. 267-292. JSTOR

Week 5 "Our Duties to Animals and the Poor" Colin McGinn COURSEPACK
"Reply to McGinn" Peter Singer COURSEPACK
"Rescue" Liam Murphy COURSEPACK

Week 6 "Should the Numbers Count?" John Taurek, *Philosophy and Public Affairs*, Vol. 6, No. 4. (Summer, 1977), pp. 293-316. JSTOR
"Innumerate Ethics" Derek Parfit, *Philosophy and Public Affairs*, Vol. 7, No. 4. (Summer, 1978), pp. 285-301. JSTOR

Week 7 "The Trolley Problem" Judith Thomson, *The Yale Law Journal*, Vol. 94, No. 6 (April, 1985): 1395-1415. JSTOR
LHL D Chapter 4

Week 8 "The Survival Lottery" John Harris, *Philosophy*, Vol. 50, No. 191 (January, 1975), pages 81-87. JSTOR
LHL D Chapter 5

Week 9 LHL D Chapter 6
"Killing the Innocent in Self-Defense," Michael Otsuka, *Philosophy and Public Affairs*, Vol. 23, No. 1 (Winter 1994), pages 74-94. JSTOR

Week 10 “A Defense of Abortion,” Judith Thomson, *Philosophy and Public Affairs*, Vol. 1, No. 1 (Autumn, 1971) pages 47-66. JSTOR

Book Symposium on LHL

“Précis of Living High and Letting Die” Peter Unger, *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research*, Vol. 59, No. 1. (Mar., 1999), pp. 173-175. JSTOR

“Sacrificing for the Good of Strangers-Repeatedly” Brad Hooker, *PPR* 177-181. JSTOR

“Living High and Letting Die” Peter Singer, *PPR* 183-187. JSTOR

“Take and Give” Thomas W. Pogge, *PPR* 189-193. JSTOR

“Comments on Living High and Letting Die” Fred Feldman, *PPR* 195-201. JSTOR

“Replies” Peter Unger, *PPR* 203-216. JSTOR

Two Reviews of LHL

“Living High and Letting Die: Our Illusion of Innocence” F. M. Kamm, *The Philosophical Review*, Vol. 108, No. 2. (Apr., 1999), pp. 300-305. JSTOR

“Illusory Innocence?” David Lewis COURSEPACK

Week 11 In the First meeting of Week 11, submit a 3-4 page paper, typed double space, on what *you* think are, for typical well-off well-educated Americans, the costs of leading a morally decent life. Present the strongest argument you can for your clearly stated view. For the week read:

“Overpopulation and the Quality of Life,” Derek Parfit from Peter Singer (ed.) *Applied Ethics*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986, pp. 145-164.

Download from: <http://users.ox.ac.uk/~ball2568/parfit/bibliography.htm>

Week 12 “Equality and Priority” Derek Parfit, *Ratio*, vol. 10, no. 3 (December, 1997), pp. 202-221. Download from NYU Libraries e-journals *or* from:

<http://users.ox.ac.uk/~ball2568/parfit/bibliography.htm>

Week 13 “What Should Egalitarians Believe?” Martin O’Neill, *Philosophy and Public Affairs*, Vol. 36, No. 2. (2008) 119-56.

Download from NYU Libraries e-journals *or* from the Articles section at O’Neill’s

Website: <http://personalpages.manchester.ac.uk/staff/martin.oneill/>

Week 14 In the Final meeting of this Week, submit a 3-4 page paper, typed double space, on a topic both *covered in the course* and *very different from* the topic of your first paper.

For discussion this week read:

“Different Attitudes to Time,” Derek Parfit, from his *Reasons and Persons*, Oxford University Press, 1984. COURSEPACK