

Topics in Ethics and Political Philosophy
Professor Peter Unger

Spring Semester, 2011

Classes will be conducted mainly in the form of exploratory discussions: The professor will begin each session's discussion, trying to stimulate others to participate. Mostly, grades will be based on written work. 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 .

Week 2 LHL D, Chapter 2.

Week 3 LHL D Chapter 3

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 4 "Our Duties to Animals and the Poor" Colin McGinn COURSEPACK

"Reply to McGinn" Peter Singer COURSEPACK

"Rescue" Liam Murphy COURSEPACK

Week 5 "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 6 "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

The Life You Can Save, Peter Singer, Random House, 2009, Chapter 6 COURSEPACK

Week 10 For discussion of a topic new to the course read:

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

For furthering understanding of LHL D’s first 6 chapters, read:

Book Symposium on LHL D

“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

“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 typically well-off people, the costs of leading a morally decent life. Present the strongest argument you can for your clearly stated view.

For discussion this 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>

And also read this interdisciplinary material:

“What Can Economists Learn from Happiness Research?” Bruno Frey and Alois Stutzer, *Journal of Economic Literature*, Vol. XL, (June 2002), pp. 401-416.

Download from NYU Libraries e-journals

Week 12 For discussion this week, read these two items:

“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>

The rest of “What Can Economists Learn from Happiness Research?” pp. 416-431.

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

“The happiness-income paradox revisited”, Richard A. Easterlin, et. al., *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*, vol. 107, no. 52, December 28, 2010, pp22463-22468. Download from NYU Libraries e-journals

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