

MORAL FOUNDATIONS OF POLITICS 2010
PLSC 118b- Prof. Ian Shapiro
WRITING INTENSIVE PAPER I TOPICS

Instructions:

Please choose *one* of the following four topics. Papers should be 6-8 pages in length, double spaced. Rough drafts are due Feb 24. Final drafts are due March 22. You must hand in both drafts to your TF on the final date unless you work out alternate arrangements with your TF. If you do turn in your paper by e-mail, you assume the risk of any email difficulties.

Please note in your responses that you must consider the strongest possible critiques to your position.

Topic 1:

Suppose the government is debating whether to institute a national kidney lottery, whereby a certain number of healthy citizens would be randomly selected to have one kidney removed and transferred to someone who is sure to die without a kidney transplant. Assume that although this procedure would be unpleasant for the donors, they could lead a normal life thereafter and that the transplanted kidney would save the life of the recipient. Based on what you have learned in this course, what would Locke, Bentham, and Mill advise should be done? Whose argument would be most persuasive?

Topic 2:

Was President Truman's action of using atomic weapons against Hiroshima and Nagasaki justifiable? In your response assume the following two claims are true: First, fewer US lives would have been lost in a ground invasion of Japan than the number of Japanese lives lost in nuclear attacks on Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Second, use of atomic weapons would significantly increase the likelihood of an unconditional Japanese surrender. In your response please focus on the philosophical issues raised by your readings of Bentham, Locke, and Mill. You should not do historical research to answer the question.

Topic 3:

In 2005, cartoons which appeared in a Danish newspaper depicting the prophet Mohammad wearing a missile in his turban sparked controversy around the world. Many Muslims argued that the images were blasphemous. At least 200 people are estimated to have died in the violent protests that followed. Recently, Yale University Press made the decision not to re-publish these cartoons in a book about the Danish cartoon controversy, citing, among other things, their concern for further violence. Critics charged the press with curtailing the freedom of expression. How would Jeremy Bentham, John Locke and John Stuart Mill evaluate the YUP's decision? Who has the best argument and why?

Topic 4:

Economist Joan Robinson once said that "the one thing worse than being exploited is not being exploited." Discuss with reference to Marxism and utilitarianism.

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