

PHIL 1200: Philosophy and Society  
Spring 2007, Section 010  
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**Second Paper**  
**Due Monday, April 16 in your recitation section**

**Instructions:** Write a 3-4 page (800-1200 word) paper on one of the topics below. Your paper must:

- be typewritten, double-spaced, 12-point font, with one-inch margins
- be printed out and handed in at the beginning of recitation on Monday, April 16. Do not submit your paper by email.
- contain your name *on each page*
- contain page numbers on each page
- be stapled together.

Failure to conform to these rules will hurt your grade.

We will grade your answers on both content and style. As regards style, aim for clarity, precision, succinctness, and directness. Avoid flowery language, polysyllabic words, and long, winding sentences. Instead, just make it completely clear to us exactly what you are trying to say. Also, we have a very low tolerance for spelling and grammatical mistakes. Use a spell checker and get a good style manual.

As regards content, be sure you address each part of the question you choose, but do not include any content not relevant to your answer. Especially avoid padding your answers with “fluff” and other BS. This will only hurt your grade. Do not assume in your writing that we already know about the issues you discuss. Pretend you are writing for a reader who is ignorant of the topic.

The paper is worth 20 points (which is 20% of your grade for the course).

**Cheating:** You are encouraged to discuss the material with others in the class; however, the paper you turn in must be your own work. Students turning in duplicate or near-duplicate papers will receive an F for the entire course and may be subject to expulsion from the university. We take cheating very seriously.

Do not quote much or at all in your papers. We want to hear these ideas *in your own words*. But if you must use the words of others, put them in quotation marks and cite the source. Otherwise, you are plagiarizing. Plagiarism will earn you an F for the whole course and possible expulsion from the university.

**Late Paper Policy:** Your score will go down one point for every day your paper is late. Late papers may be submitted (to your TA) by email. Be sure to save and/or print a copy of any such emails, so you can prove you sent it if your TA never gets it.

**Extra Assistance:** We are more than happy to provide assistance to you as you work on your paper. Feel free to email us with questions or to meet with us to discuss your

paper. Feel free to show us a draft of your paper some time before it is due. But if you want to show us a draft, you cannot wait until the weekend before the paper is due. If you wait that long, we won't be able to look at your paper.

## The Topics

### BLACKMAIL

**1. Block.** Write an essay in which you do the following things:

(a) Explain, in your own words, Block's main argument for the claim that blackmail ought to be legal (the one having to do with the combination of two independently legal actions).

(b) Explain, in your own words, two objections to Block's argument that Block himself addresses. For each objection, explain how Block responds, and evaluate his response. Is it a successful response? Why or why not?

(c) Finally, consider the argument for the legality of blackmail that is based on the following claim: it is morally better than gossip, which, itself, is legal. How might an opponent of the legality of blackmail respond to this argument? What is your own view about this argument and/or this response?

### PARENT LICENSING

**2. LaFollette.** Write an essay in which you do the following things:

(a) Identify the conditions under which LaFollette thinks a license should be required to partake in a certain activity. Explain each condition and why it seems plausible as a condition for licensure.

(b) Explain, in your own words, LaFollette's argument for the claim that a license should be required to have children that is based on these conditions. Be sure to explain exactly why having children seems to fit the conditions listed in (a).

(c) Explain, in your own words, an objection to this argument that LaFollette's himself addresses. Explain how he responds to it, and then evaluate his response. Is it a successful response? Why or why not? Then explain, in your own words, an objection to this argument that one of LaFollette's critics raises. Evaluate this objection. If you think LaFollette has an adequate reply, explain this.

(d) Finally, what is your own view on LaFollette's proposal? Defend your answer.

### SAME-SEX MARRIAGE

**3. Jordan.** Write an essay in which you do the following things:

(a) Consider this argument:

1. Homosexual acts are unnatural.
2. Unnatural acts are wrong.
3. Therefore, homosexual acts are wrong.

Think of two different ways to interpret what 'natural' might mean in this argument. For each way, explain what the upshot is for the argument. Does one of the premises become implausible? If so, which one, and why?

(b) Jordan defends a general principle concerning how a government should resolve what he calls a public dilemma. Explain this principle, and why Jordan thinks it is plausible. Then apply it to the case of same-sex marriage.

(c) Explain one of Boonin's objections to Jordan. Then evaluate it. Does it successfully undermine Jordan's position? Why or why not?

(d) Finally, state and briefly defend your own view on same-sex marriage.

## **AFFIRMATIVE ACTION**

**4. Thomson.** Write an essay in which you do the following things:

(a) Explain Thomson's thesis, making sure to distinguish from a stronger one with which it might be confused.

(b) State four conditions under which, according to Thomson, a right can be overridden. Give an example for each condition. Then explain how Thomson would apply one of these conditions to affirmative action.

(c) Explain, in your own words, an objection to Thomson's argument either that Thomson herself addresses or that Simon raises. Then explain how Thomson would, or could, respond. Then evaluate this response. Is it a successful response? Why or why not?

(d) What is your own view on affirmative action? Defend your answer, bringing in issues from our readings if possible.

## **SURROGATE MOTHERHOOD**

**5. Anderson.** Write an essay in which you do the following things:

(a) Explain, in your own words, one of Anderson's two arguments against commercial surrogacy.

(b) What is a 'mode of valuation' according to Anderson? How does this notion relate to norms or standards for the way in which we should treat things?

(c) What is a commodity according to Anderson? Explain when it would be acceptable or unacceptable to commodify something on Anderson's view. Give an example of something that could properly be seen as a commodity and something that is not properly seen as a commodity on this view. (Note, you should not use motherhood and children for these examples.) Why does Anderson think children and women are commodified in commercial surrogacy? Why is this unacceptable?

(d) Explain, in your own words, one of the objections raised by Arneson or Wertheimer. Do you think this is a good objection? Explain.