

Philosophy 163

Spring 2008

GENETIC SCREENING

Paper Topic:

First, consider the following dialogue:

Eduardo: I am in favor of allowing *pre-conception* genetic screening for conditions like EB, [spina bifida](#) and even for conditions like mild dyslexia, but not for enhancements, including greater mathematical ability, social skill, and increased empathetic capacity.

Joelle: You are being inconsistent, Eduardo. If you are going to allow screening for some things, you might as well allow them for everything! And I think that means you should not allow them for *anything*.

Lucy: I disagree with both of you. You can allow screening for some things but not others. But I would draw the line in a way that is different from the way Eduardo does. He is relying on the treatment/enhancement distinction and I think that is a mistake.

In an essay, explain how Lucy might go on to elaborate her position, explaining how she would draw the line in question. Next, explain how she could defend her position in the strongest way possible. Then evaluate it in light of what you see as the strongest objections that might be made. Do you agree with Lucy, or instead with Joelle or Eduardo, or with none of them? Defend your answer. Your essay should include (but not be limited to) a substantial discussion of at least two of the following authors that explains their positions and reasoning: Buchanan et. al., Kaplan, Glover, and Sandel.

General Instructions and Format:

- (1) Your paper should be less than 2400 words in length. Please write the word count on the first page of your paper.
- (2) Your paper should have a cover sheet. Your name should appear on the cover sheet, and not elsewhere on the paper.
- (3) Please type your papers, using a 12-point font and 1-inch margins on all sides. Please include page numbers.
- (4) You are encouraged to discuss the ideas of your paper with me, your TA, and with your fellow students. At the same time, the *writing* of your paper must be entirely your own.
- (5) Papers are due on May 29 at 11 am. Late papers will not be accepted unless you have a valid excuse provided in advance if at all possible.
- (6) Hard copies should be turned in in class, and electronic copies must be uploaded to turnitin.com. Please follow the instructions for doing so given in lecture and in a class e-mail.

Specific Instructions to Improve the Quality of Your Essay:

- (1) Organize your paper, and make sure that each part of each question has been answered clearly. (Starting with an outline can be invaluable here.)
- (2) If you use terms that have been defined in a special way in class or in the readings (e.g., “impersonal reason”, “critical interest”), then be sure to explain how you are using those terms in your paper.
- (3) Using examples can be very helpful in writing a philosophical essay. The only danger is that you rely exclusively on examples to make your points. So if you use an example, be sure to explain what the example is meant to show or illustrate.
- (4) Your task is to set out fully the most important arguments and ideas that are relevant within the word limit. This means that you will be making critical decisions about what the most important points are, and expressing them in as clear and concise a matter as you can.
- (5) Given the previous suggestion, it follows that you should not waste precious space by writing lengthy introductions and conclusions.
- (6) Since you have a limited amount of space, it is not helpful to quote at length. You receive credit for showing that you have understood the material, so if you do use a quotation, be sure to go on to explain its meaning and significance.
- (7) In general, the more depth and detail you can provide in explaining the reasoning found in the readings, lecture and sections, the better. For example, in defending your view, rather than simply mentioning that, say, Sandel would agree *or* disagree with it, it is far better for you to explain and evaluate the reasons he uses to justify his position.
- (8) Whenever you use the words or ideas of others, you must cite the source. If you quote, you must use quotation marks, and cite the article or book and page number from which you quote. If you paraphrase a passage, you should also cite the work and page number on which the passage appears.
- (9) Proof-read your paper for spelling mistakes, grammatical mistakes, and any other kinds of errors. Also, make sure that your paper reads well. A good way to do this is to read over your paper and imagine that you are reading it for the first time. Ask yourself, “does this make sense?” “Have I clearly set out all the points I want to make?”