

This writing assignment is due in class on Tuesday, October 28. Late submissions will be subject to grade penalty.

Write essays responding to TWO of the following numbered topics, one A topic and one B topic. Please indicate clearly which two questions you are addressing. Also, please indicate which of your essay responses is to be counted as your MAJOR response (counting for 60 per cent of your exam grade) and which as your MINOR response (counting for 40 per cent of your exam grade). Your exam should be the equivalent of seven to eight typed double-spaced pages. Your answers may be hand-written if you prefer, but should be legible.

A1. A critic of utilitarianism might say, "It is unfair and morally wrong to tell a lie or break a promise one has made merely on the ground that telling the lie or breaking the promise would increase the aggregate sum of utility compared to the sum that telling the truth or keeping the promise would produce." In *Utilitarianism*, and especially in chapters 2 and 5, J. S. Mill defends utilitarian morality against the objection that utilitarianism permits wrongful violations of moral rules that establish people's valid entitlements and against the closely related objection that justice trumps utility. State his position on this matter and attack or defend that position.

A2. Suppose Smith organizes his life around the satisfaction of an unusual desire. He desires above all to count the number of blades of grass in courthouse lawns. He spends his life traveling around the country from one courthouse to another, and succeeds in satisfying this desire to a high degree. Has he lived a life that is good in the sense of good for the very one who is living the life? Why or why not? In chapter 2 of *Utilitarianism* J. S. Mill in effect discusses the question, what constitutes a good life (good for the one whose life it is). Does the example of Smith show that there is something wrong with Mill's answer to the question, or that there is something wrong with Smith's life, or both, or neither? Why so? (It would be appropriate, but not required, to include in your discussion some consideration of relevant arguments advanced by Robert Adams in his "Well-Being and Excellence.")

B1. If favoring the interests of one's friends or close family members over the comparable interests of outsiders is morally acceptable, is favoring the interests of fellow members of one's nation, or ethnic community, or race over the comparable interests of outsiders also morally acceptable? If so, how so? If not, why not? Your discussion should include some consideration of the discussion of this issue in Thomas Hurka's "The Justification of National Partiality." You might also consider what utilitarianism implies regarding the acceptability of partiality (favoring the interests of insiders over those of outsiders when they conflict).

B2. In "Selflessness and the Loss of Self" Jean Hampton argues that sacrificing one's own interests to gain benefits for others is not always morally commendable and may not even be morally permissible. Carefully state her position on the morality of self-sacrifice, and defend or attack her position on this issue. Comparison of her views on this matter with those of J.S. Mill or Peter Singer is appropriate, but optional.

Your answers will be graded according to the cogency of your arguments, the clarity of your prose, and the soundness of the understanding of course materials that you display. Your answers should avoid lengthy quoting of course texts. To show that a course author holds the view you are attributing to him, provide precise footnote references that support your interpretations. University rules and moral norms of honesty forbidding plagiarism apply to this assignment.