

## Second Paper Topics

Write an 1800 word (about 5–6 pages) paper on one of the following topics. Turn the paper in to one of our boxes before 11am on Tuesday, November 13. Enjoy!

1. Empirical evidence suggests that happiness is evaluated as something other than the average moment-to-moment surfeit of pleasure over pain. Other empirical work finds that preferences do not appear to be stable and well defined without reference to social context. Such findings are likely to have implications for those branches of economics and philosophy that concern themselves with human well-being. For example, the former of these assertions invites the interpretation that perhaps human happiness depends on reflectively endorsed values, such as liberty, that are not captured by momentary comfort. The latter suggests that liberty may not be of as much instrumental value in the pursuit of happiness as economists and some philosophers might expect.

Looking back over the works we've read this semester, what arguments (conclusions, etc.) might need to be re-examined in light of the empirical work on happiness and the stability of human preferences?

2. How much should people's subjective assessments of the quality of their lives matter in the design and assessment of social policy? Give what you regard as a compelling reason for giving them little weight. What are the disadvantages to making policy in this way? What do you think?

