

## First paper topics

Write a paper answering one of the sets of questions below. Your paper should be no longer than 1800 words which is about five or six pages. Please turn it in to my box in 208 Pearsons by 10 am on Thursday, October 15. Good luck!

1. Cohen agrees with Singer that we are required to give aid to relieve famine but he disagrees with Singer about the extent of our responsibility for famine victims. Explain what Cohen believes about our responsibility to provide famine aid. Give what you regard as his best argument for his position. What do you consider the best argument that Singer could make in reply? Give your assessment: how are we required to respond when famines or similar calamities strike others?
2. Thomson's violinist example is supposed to refute an argument against abortion. What is that argument and how does Thomson use the violinist example to reply to it? What, in your opinion, is the best reply that an opponent of abortion might make? How might Thomson respond? Explain what you think: does the reply undermine Thomson's argument or not?
3. I was talking with my friends Joe and Sara the other day. Joe was telling me that nothing has value unless God made it so. Without God, things just are the way they are and there's nothing good or bad or right or wrong about them. Sara said that values are human constructions. Without us, things are just the way they are and there's nothing good or bad or right or wrong about them. I described Plato's *Euthyphro* to them and how Socrates shows that Euthyphro's definition of piety runs into trouble. They humored me, as my friends frequently have to do. Then they both asked me how any of this was relevant to what we had been talking about, as my friends frequently have to do. How should I have responded to that question? That is, explain how the argument in Plato's *Euthyphro* is

relevant to *either* Joe's or Sara's view (you only have to discuss one, not both). Then, give what you regard as the strongest reply? What do you think: does Socrates's argument raise a genuine problem for the position you're discussing or not?

4. Suppose we were to become convinced of the truth of moral relativism. Would it make sense to change our beliefs about what is morally permitted, forbidden, or required as a result? What is the best reason for thinking that accepting the truth of moral relativism would mean that we should change our beliefs? What is the best reason for thinking that we should not? What do you think?