

Final Exam Preview

The Final Exam is scheduled for Tuesday, 8 May at 9 am. It will have two parts.

The exam is two hours long. I think that each part should take about forty minutes to complete. That said, there is a wide range of variation in writing styles and speeds. So you might take more or less time with no cause for concern.

The first part is like the Short Test that you took in January. You will be asked to choose *two* out of four passages. For these two passages, you will be asked to identify the author of the passage (the names will not be given), describe what the author is saying, and evaluate the passage's significance by showing how it is related to the broader theory or argument that the author advanced. The passages will be drawn from the readings we have done since the Short Test.

In the second part, you will be asked to write an essay on one of the following topics. Please do not use notes.

1. John Stuart Mill described *On Liberty* as defending "one very simple principle", that "the only purpose for which power can be rightfully exercised over any member of a civilized community, against his will, is to prevent harm to others." If so, any law that limits individual liberty for some other purpose is improper. Present what you regard as a compelling exception to Mill's principle. How might Mill defend his principle? What do you think, should the law comply with Mill's principle or not?
2. Suppose someone said this. "Punishment makes no sense. It happens only after some harm has been done but it doesn't repair anything. It just hurts the offender. We would be far better off if we regarded crime more like

a public health problem, as something to be prevented or contained.” Give what you regard as a compelling response to this point of view. How might someone opposed to punishment respond? What do you think? Does punishment make any sense?

3. We have encountered a kind of argument at many points during this term. This argument maintains that moral opinions are too vague or too much a matter of dispute to serve as a basis either for the law itself or for criticisms of the law. Choose an example where this kind of argument seems relevant. Give what you regard as a compelling case for the relevance of moral opinions in the example. What is your own opinion? Should we use moral opinions in the example under discussion?