

## Second Paper Topics

Write a paper no longer than 1800 words, about 5-6 pages, on one of the topics below. Please turn your paper in by 1 pm on Friday, April 6. If your paper is late, please write down the date when you turn it in. Thanks.

1. Describe Henry Shue's argument against the permissibility of torture. Give what you regard as a compelling objection against his argument. How might Shue respond? What do you think: does the objection defeat Shue's argument?
2. Both Alan Gewirth and Thomas Nagel are absolutists. But while Nagel concedes that failing to violate absolute prohibitions could be wrong, in some cases, whereas Gewirth does not. Explain what you regard as the most important advantages and disadvantages of each author's position. Which one has the more compelling defense of absolutism?
3. Nagel describes a situation that he calls a "moral blind alley". The options available to someone in a moral blind alley are all wrong. Because this is so, Nagel claims, someone stuck in one will do wrong no matter what. But why isn't the opposite true? Why not say that a person in a moral blind alley would do nothing wrong, no matter what? Give the most compelling advantages and disadvantages of each description. Then explain what you think is the best way to describe these cases.
4. Samuel Scheffler argues that natural rights can have the form of side constraints despite including welfare rights.

If there really are such rights, it seems that I could violate them simply by watching TV while someone falls into poverty. But, someone may say, it's unreasonable to say that I have a duty to avoid situations like that: what behavior on my part do the putative rights constrain? Explain Scheffler's conception of natural rights and why someone might raise this objection against it. How might Scheffler respond? What do you think: is the objection successful or can Scheffler defend his alternative conception of natural rights?

5. Maurice Cranston argues that there is an important difference between the so-called civil-political rights and the social-economic rights in the UDHR. He claims that only the former are genuine human rights. Describe what you regard as Cranston's strongest argument for this conclusion. Give what you regard as a compelling objection to this argument. How might Cranston respond? Give your own way of resolving the dispute.