

ETHICAL REASONING: AN INTRODUCTION

HOMEWORK: INSTRUCTIONS

1. Look at the picture at right for a few minutes. What is happening? What is your reaction? Jot down a few initial reactions in your journal.
2. Read “The Life and Death of Kevin Carter,” available [here](#). Focus on the sections about the photograph. Write a short, imaginary letter to the Pulitzer Prize committee. Should Carter have been awarded the Pulitzer Prize? Why?
3. What ethical questions does this photograph raise? (For example, “Should *The New York Times* have printed this photograph?”) Come to class prepared to ask those questions, and share your views.



MONDAY MORNING: OPENING SESSION

1. In groups of four, read and discuss your letters to the Pulitzer Prize committee. Did anyone think of anything you hadn't considered? Write down your group's strongest argument for and the strongest argument against awarding the Pulitzer to Carter. We will share these arguments with the entire class.
2. Take out your notes! Noah will give a brief overview of Western ethical theory. (We will tackle Eastern ethical theory next week.) At the end of the lecture/discussion, you should have a basic understanding of four ethical philosophers and their theories:
 - A. Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics*
(Discussion: What would Aristotle do?)
 - B. Immanuel Kant's *Groundwork for the Metaphysics of Morals*
(Discussion: What would Kant do?)
 - C. John Stuart Mill's *Utilitarianism*
(Discussion: What would Mill do?)
 - D. Friedrich Nietzsche's *Beyond Good and Evil*
(Discussion: What would Nietzsche do?)
3. After a final discussion of Carter's photograph, we will break down into eight groups of four. Each group will be given its own real-life ethical dilemma to research, along with three suggested site visits (speak with your faculty partner for more information and to suggest additional visits). For example:

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GROUP A

The case:

For the 2008 Olympics, Beijing is taking half its cars off the roads, shutting down an enormous number of factories, and “seeding clouds” with silver iodide in order to create rain to “scrub” the sky. Evaluate the ethics of this decision by the Chinese government.

Site visits:

Chinese Embassy (discussion with Minister Counselor for Education Affairs)

Council on Foreign Relations (discussion with Senior Fellow/author of “China’s Olympic Nightmare”)

Woodrow Wilson Center (event: “China’s Green Olympics: A Lasting Impact”)

SITE VISITS: YOUR CHALLENGE

The purpose of each site visit is to broaden and deepen your understanding of your group’s ethical dilemma. As you visit each site, consider the four philosophical theories we discussed on Monday. What would each philosopher say? How do those beliefs inform your own understanding of the issue in question? Is it “fair” to apply these theories in these situations? Be sure to discuss these issues as you travel to and from these events—don’t wait until Friday to learn what your teammates think!

After your site visits, your group should prepare **FOUR** five minute presentations (be concise!) **to be delivered before a panel of ethics professors from Georgetown, American, and George Washington Universities.** Each presentation should explain, to the best of your ability, how one of the four philosophers (Aristotle, Kant, Mill, and Nietzsche) would respond to your group’s dilemma. Spend the first minute of your presentation summarizing key details from your site visits, and the rest explaining the philosopher’s probable views.

FRIDAY: CULMINATING SESSION

On Friday, your group will present **ONE** of your presentations before the panel of philosophy professors. **You will not know which presentation to give until moments before your group presents.** Following your presentation, each philosopher will respond to your group’s analysis and conclusion.

Following the presentations, we will discuss all four ethical theories. Which do you prefer? Why? Do you have a different view of Carter’s photograph?