

## **Euthanasia Debate Prompt**

*Riddles of Existence, Winter 2015*

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The class debate on euthanasia will be held in class on Wednesday, March 4th.

Topic: Suppose a patient with no close family members and no living will arrives at a hospital in an irreversible coma. The patient's body is able to remain alive indefinitely if fed through a feeding tube, but we can assume that it is known with certainty that the patient is permanently unconscious. Setting questions of legality to one side, would it be morally permissible for the patient's doctors to decide inject the patient with a lethal drug, in order to free up resources for other patients.

The 'pro-euthanasia' team must argue for an affirmative answer to the question—that is, they must argue that it is morally permissible for the doctors to kill the patient.

The 'anti-euthanasia' team must argue for a negative answer to this question—that is, they must argue that it is morally wrong for the doctors to kill the patient.

Though the main topic of debate is whether it is morally permissible for the doctors to actively kill the patient, it may be useful to consider two further questions as well: (1) Would it be morally permissible for the doctors to remove the patient's feeding tube, and thus allow the patient to starve to death? (2) If the patient's condition took a turn for the worse, and a quick and simple surgery was necessary to prevent the patient from dying, would it be permissible for the doctors to decline to have the surgery performed in order to allow the patient to die? It is up to the teams to decide where they stand on these questions, and whether they wish to address them directly. But each team should be sure to have a coherent overall view.

You can divide speaking time between team members as you see fit, but everyone should play an equal role. The plan is for grades to be assigned to the team as a whole, although an exception might be made if there is an extreme imbalance in the contributions made by different team members. Grading will depend on the strength and clarity of the arguments, and not on whose conclusions I or others agree with.

Schedule:

1. opening statement by pro-euthanasia team (5 minutes), laying out the case for their view
2. opening statement by anti-euthanasia team (8 minutes), laying out their case and offering objections to the pro-euthanasia team's case
3. response by the pro-euthanasia team (5 minutes), replying to the objections from the anti-euthanasia team and offering objections to the anti-euthanasia team's case
4. response by anti-euthanasia team (5 minutes), replying to objections to the pro-euthanasia team, and to the pro-euthanasia team's replies to previous objections
5. questions from the audience (remainder of class)

Each team will have a minute or two to confer in between segments of the debate. This means that you should prepare in advance for objections that you think the other team might make to your view.

Pro-euthanasia: Caleb, Jordy, Dan, Jimmy

Anti-euthanasia: Garrett, Ryan, John, Corey