Sample Essay Questions for Exam 1

1. Do you think that an action ought to be judged morally in terms of its motive, its consequences, something about the nature of the action, or some combination of these? Explain.
2. Do you believe that the fact that people disagree about what is good or right is a good reason to support ethical relativism? Explain why you think so.
3. If there is an objective good, do you think that it is likely to be unitary or plural? For example, is it likely that all morality will be a function of the promotion of one good, such as happiness? Or is it more likely that there are many irreducible moral values, such as happiness, autonomy, privacy, fidelity, etc? If you think there is only one good, what is it? If many, what would you include in your list?
4. What do you think of the argument that universal ethical egoism is inconsistent or incoherent?
5. What do you think of the argument that happiness or pleasure is the only intrinsic good because it is the only thing that we desire for its own sake?
6. What do you think of the use of cost-benefit analysis for determining whether some social policy ought to be supported? In particular, do you think that in comparing costs and benefits, we can legitimately place a monetary value on so-called "intangibles"?
7. Do you think that moral obligation is categorical in the sense given this term by Kant? Why or why not?
8. Which form of the categorical imperative do you like best? Why?
9. Do you think that there can be a reasonable Natural Law Theory without a theistic basis? Do you think that "nature" provides any basis for knowing what we ought to do?
10. Do you believe that there are some good traits or virtues that are more typical of female and others of males? If so is this learned behavior or in some way natural to each sex?
11. Do you think that someone who robs a bank knowing the risks can be said to be courageous or possess the virtue of courage?