Sample Essay Questions for Exam 2

1) MacKenzie argues that women’s autonomy lies at the heart of the abortion debate, and she is critical of rights-conflict approaches and rights-based models of autonomy. Briefly sketch her analysis of the debate, the argument she forwards, and then state whether you agree or disagree with her. Please give reasons for why you agree/disagree with her.

2) Thomson’s argument relies on several imaginary cases to make her point? Does her use of these imaginary cases make her argument irrelevant to real life cases? Explain.

3) Should the father have a right to participate in an abortion decision? Should his wishes count? Should he be able to terminate any responsibility he has in relation to his child during the time frame in which the mother of the child is allowed to make a decision regarding terminating the pregnancy? Why or why not?

4) Which perspective on how to decide matters of sexual morality is most convincing to you, Utilitarian, Kantian, or Natural Law? Why? If you believe that more than one of the three ought to be used to judge sexual behavior, which do you consider most important? Why?

5) What do you think of Goldman’s definition of sexual desire? His rejection of a “means-end” analysis of sex? His claim that sex acts have no intrinsic moral character? Explain.

6) Which of the comments made by Mohr seem most persuasive to you? Which least persuasive?

7) Considering the analysis given by Garry, do you think that pornography harms women? That her account of the notion of “respect” as it applies to both men and women is accurate? Do you agree with her examination of sexual vernacular and does it support her position? Explain.

8) Do you believe that any of the forms of affirmative action are morally justifiable? If any are, which ones and why? If none are, why not?

9) What do you believe is the most persuasive argument for affirmative action? Which the most persuasive against affirmative action. Explain.

10) Do you think that the people in Rawls’ "original position" would choose the particular principles that he thinks they would? Explain.

11) Do you think that there should be equal opportunity in a just society? What would you mean by this phrase? Do you think that it is a realizable ideal?

12) What do you think is the strongest argument for the death penalty? Against it?
Short Answer questions

(Most of these are for the non-textbook readings which do not have questions already)

1) Briefly explain the distinction MacKenzie makes between causal responsibility and moral responsibility.
2) What factors does MacKenzie think make pregnancy “morally unique?”
3) What question does MacKenzie think is central to the abortion debate?
4) What does Goldman think is central to the definition of sexual desire that he forwards?
5) Given Goldman's account of sexual desire, how does he characterize perversion?
6) How does Garry characterize the “respect” that men have traditionally believed they have for women?
7) What does Garry say about our culture's perception of the female role in sex? And how is this perception reinforced by vernacular sexual terminology?
8) What is meant by legal paternalism and legal moralism?