• Abortion: when does life start and who should decide?
• What qualifies as right to life?

  • Mental capacity
    • Consciousness
    • Self-consciousness
    • Sentience
    • Communication capacity
    • Moral behavior capacity
• What qualifies as right to life?

• Biological traits
  • Capacity for respiration and cardiac function

• Fixed genetic code

• Species limitation
• What qualifies as right to life?

• Mental & biological combined
  • Potential to develop a mental capacity
  • Species membership in a species normally capable of reasoning
• What makes a moral creature?

• Conservative position--begins at conception
  • Probability reasoning
  • Potentiality reasoning
• What makes a moral creature?

• Moderate position--after conception, but prior to birth

  • Continuum of moral standing

  • Greater protection to higher vertebrates
• What makes a moral creature?

• Liberal position--personhood at birth

  • A being lacking mental capacity is not a person
  • A fetus does not possess mental capacities of personhood
  • A fetus cannot be a person at conception
• **When rights conflict: mother and fetus**

  - Fetus vs. mother’s right to life
  - Fetus vs. mother’s physical or emotional health
  - Fetus vs. mother’s important life objectives
  - Fetus vs. mother’s right to decide
  - Are we ever required to make sacrifices to sustain the life of another?
• The fetus, the mother, and the family

• Carol Gilligan: women tend to resolve abortion decisions by considering relationships and connections.

• Not rights, but how to care for and avoid hurting others.
• The fetus, the mother, and the family… the father’s role
  • Informing the father
  • Discovering the father’s preferences
  • Father with equal voice
  • Father with veto power
• Abortion and the law

• Roe v. Wade (1973)--abortion is decriminalized, ruled a right of privacy, and the trimester formula is applied
• Abortion and the law
  
  • Webster v. Reproductive Health Services (1989)--states can favor childbirth over abortion and impose regulations on physicians for fetus viability
• Abortion and the law

• Planned Parenthood v. Casey (1992)—state restrictions on abortion law upheld
  • 24 hour waiting period
  • Parental consent for minor
  • Mandatory reporting of abortion to health department
• Choosing one’s children

  • Fetuses with genetic defects, diseases, and other risk factors
    • Some classify serious, painful, or life-threatening illnesses as warranting abortion
    • Others broaden categories to include issues that parents may not be equipped to deal with
• Choosing one’s children

• Sex selection
  • Preference for sons in cultures where girls are devalued
  • Higher income potential
  • Intrinsic valuing of gender for conscious or unconscious reasons
  • Desire for gender mix or balance
• Choosing one’s children

• Arguments for choosing
  • Increase of parental happiness
  • Freedom of conscience and action
  • Reproduction as fundamental liberty
• Choosing one’s children

• Arguments against choosing
  • Viewing children as products might devalue them
  • Slippery slope argument
  • Is gender selection sex discrimination?