Lecture 5  Reading Questions

“The Harm Principle”

Reading:

“Introductory.” Chapter 1 in “On Liberty” by John Stuart Mill.

(1) Mill says that the object of *On Liberty* is to defend “one very simple principle.” What is that principle?

(2) To whom does Mill’s principle apply? Whose actions does it restrict? Actions toward whom?

(3) Mill’s principle entails that there is a sphere of human actions that should not be subjected to coercive interference:

   (i) How is that sphere defined?

   (ii) Which liberties does the sphere comprise?

(4) Use Mill’s principle as a test for the permissibility of coercion. Does this principle allow or condemn

   (i) laws requiring motorcyclists to wear helmets

   (ii) laws forbidding recreational drug use

   (iii) blackmailing your older brother into quitting smoking by threatening to expose something truly embarrassing about him on Facebook?