Recitation 05: The Morality and Legality of Abortion

1. Some advice regarding papers
   - Focus and elaborate: do less rather than more, and do it more thoroughly.
   - Avoid *Predator*-style philosophy [see video clip]; rather, be like a sniper.
   - Aim to persuade: think of your reader as a neutral but stubborn individual.

2. An abortion case
   - Pregnancy is unintended, the result of failed contraception during voluntary intercourse.
   - The fetus is at 10 weeks of development and developing normally.
   - The pregnancy poses no health risks to the mother.
   - It is not in the mother’s interest to have a child (financially, emotionally, etc.).

   Question: is it wrong to abort the fetus?

3. Abortion is morally wrong—an argument inspired by Marquis
   P1. It is wrong to deprive something of a valuable future.
   P2. Aborting the fetus deprives it of a valuable future.
   C. Therefore, it is wrong to abort the fetus.

4. Abortion is not morally wrong—an argument inspired by Tooley
   P1. It is wrong to deprive an individual A of some thing X only if (i) A has a right to X and (ii) A wants X.
   P2. In order to want to live, you must conceive of yourself as something that persists.
   P3. The fetus does not conceive of itself as something that persists.
   C. Therefore, it is not wrong to deprive the fetus of life—*i.e.*, to abort the fetus.

5. Abortion ought to be legal—an argument inspired by Reagan
   P1. Making abortion illegal will lead to terrible consequences (*e.g.*, unsafe abortions, the various situations described in Reagan’s paper).
   P2. If Φ-ing leads to terrible consequences, then one ought not Φ.
   C. Therefore, one ought not make abortion illegal—*i.e.*, abortion ought to be legal.

6. Abortion ought to be illegal—an argument you sometimes hear
   P1. Making abortion legal will lead to terrible consequences (*e.g.*, irresponsible sexual practices, desensitization to death, eugenics).
   P2. If Φ-ing leads to terrible consequences, then one ought not Φ.
   C. Therefore, one ought not make abortion legal—*i.e.*, abortion ought to be illegal.