Reproductive Health
Outline

- Conservative Arguments: Drawing the Line
- Marquis: You Got Potential, Kid
- Warren: Guppies and Haircuts
- Jarvis Thomson: Violinists and Samaritans
- Sherwin: Bringing Women to the Centre
- Mahowald: The Exception to the Rule?
- Case Studies
Conservative Arguments: Drawing the Line

- Human Being
- Personhood

Standards of Personhood in Utero:
  - Conception
  - Quickening
  - Fetal Pain
  - Viability
“The overwhelming majority of deliberate abortions are seriously immoral.”

“The loss of one’s life deprives one of all the experience, activities, projects, and enjoyments that would otherwise have constituted one’s future.”

“This value of a future-like-ours argument, if sound, shows...that abortion is prima facie wrong.”

QUESTION: Does it matter when the woman’s life is at risk?
Warren: Guppies and Haircuts

- Consciousness, Reasoning, Self-Motivated Activity, Capacity to Communicate, Presence of Self-Concepts and Self-Awareness
- “A rational person must conclude that if the right to life of a fetus is to be based upon its resemblance to a person, then it cannot be said to have any more right to life, than let us say, a newborn guppy.”
- QUESTION: How do you feel about comparing the moral significance of a fetus to a guppy, of an abortion to a haircut?
Jarvis Thomson: Violinists and Samaritans

- “The prospects for ‘drawing a line’ in the development of a fetus look dim.”
- “You wake up in the morning and find yourself back to back in bed with an unconscious violinist.”
- “Having the right to life does not guarantee having either a right to be given the use of or a right to be allowed continued use of another person’s body.”
- “Minimally Decent Samaritan laws would be one thing, Good Samaritan laws quite another.”
- QUESTION: Under which conditions would a pregnancy be voluntary?
Sherwin: Bringing Women to the Centre

- “Non-feminist discussions of abortion consider the questions of the moral or legal permissibility of abortion, ignoring relevant connections to other social practices that oppress women.”
- “Whatever the reason, a pregnant woman is in the best position to judge whether abortion is the appropriate response to her circumstances.”
- QUESTION: Is the right to abortion in Canada a negative or positive right?
“In the spring of 1982, an infant afflicted with Down syndrome...was born in Indiana.”

“Baby Jane Doe was born with conditions predictive of paralysis in her lower extremities, incontinence, and retardation.”

“Even those who claim ‘quality of life’ factors are irrelevant agree that the life of an anencephalic infant need not be prolonged.”

QUESTION: What is the quality of life in the case of Down Syndrome? Spina Bifida? Anencephaly?
A young Aboriginal woman called D.F.G. continued sniffing glue even while pregnant, though doing so can potentially damage the fetal nervous system.

The organization Winnipeg Child and Family Services had the Manitoba Court of Queen’s Bench order G. be placed in custody and forcibly treated until the birth of her child.

The case was appealed, and the Supreme Court upheld the appeal.
Was the Supreme Court right to rule in favour of D.F.G.?

How would the following theorists answer this question?

- Warren
- Jarvis Thomson
On Oct. 13, 2011, the Republican-led American House of Representatives, with the blessings and encouragement of the Conference of Catholic Bishops, passed a bill that would allow doctors and hospitals to “exercise their conscience” by letting pregnant women facing emergency medical conditions die.

The bill still has to pass in Senate before it would become law, and President Obama has already sworn he would veto the bill if it arrived at his desk.

Under current American law, hospitals, healthcare facilities, and insurance plans can refuse to provide, pay for, or refer for abortions. H.R. 358 would further allow for nonmedical personnel to refuse to process bills or set up examination rooms for patients seeking abortion care.
H.R. 358 Protect Life Act

- To what extent should we respect people’s positions on abortion?
- How would the following theorists interpret this bill?
  - Marquis
  - Sherwin