**2019 – 2020 NHSEB Regionals Case Pool Summary Matrix – *Go Chiefs!***

*Study this and the actual case pool now, for you won’t be able to use any notes once a round begins – see three key tips on the last page - Coach Matt*

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| **Title** | **Basic Details** | **Key Considerations** | **Team’s View** | **Possible Objection & Reply (O & R)** | **Extra Stuff to Consider** |
| Case 1: Bearing Witness, Bringing Change… | In 2019 the New York Times published an article with graphic prison images (prisoners bloodied and mangled, beaten and murdered). The case introduces the broader question of whether, when and how it’s permissible for journalists to publish shocking, graphic photos. | Some may view graphic pictures of injustices as mere shock entertainment. Some may believe that seeing the pictures and simply feeling pity or outrage (rather than actually acting) satisfies any obligations they might have to address injustices. (Additional thoughts at YouTube [here](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jtNJu1v-Gms).) | It’s not only permissible but in some cases obligatory for journalists to expose injustices because citizens need full information to make informed voting decisions. However, graphic content should be published in adult forums, with warnings to avoid scarring children. People who see injustices have an obligation to act according to their power and relationship with the harmed (so prison warden would definitely need to directly intervene, but regular citizen might simply vote for leaders most likely to address the issue). | O: Your position that normal citizens have no strong obligation to directly address injustices is too apathetic and lax. R: We’re all balancing a range of obligations, plus legitimately pursuing our own interests, living our own lives. Trying to cure every social ill we’re exposed to would be both ineffective and unnecessarily frustrating. | Remember that the team’s “obligation to act” standard is based on a person’s power and relationship. If you can actually correct an injustice, please do. But if you can’t, no use fretting too much over things you can’t change. At the same time, work to increase your influence and power so you can be more impactful. And be more proactive in this regard when victims are loved ones (obligation generated by mutual love – from Feminist Care Ethics). |
| Case 2: Plantation Wedding | Mallory and Ross have been invited to hold their wedding at a former plantation once owned by an ancestor. If they agree, their parents will be pleased, and will pay for everything. However, the couple worries celebrating their big day there may suggest they’re OK with slavery, or at least that they don’t abhor it as much as they actually do. | It’s likely that Ross’s ancestor owned slaves, but uncertain. But regardless, the connection between plantations and slavery “is significant enough to potentially put a damper on their wedding day.” (See additional considerations at YouTube [here](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QTJVsYq9_FA).) | For a plantation wedding to be permissible, it would have to be done in good taste, respectfully, and in no way making light of slavery. (Team was actually a torn on this one, but this seems to be the common ground.) | O: Slavery was so terrible that no celebration of any kind could ever be held on any plantation. R: This sweeping view neglects the possibility of a respectful ceremony held at a location where slaves were treated (relatively) well. | A team member’s family actually has personal experience with this – consider disclosing with key details, but don’t rely too heavily on this connection (irrelevant to the objective morality of the issue), and avoid interpreting challenges as personal attacks. |
| Case 3: A Grave Dilemma | Jade enjoys and wants to continue walking her dog in a nearby cemetery, even though it is illegal to do so. (Additional details at EthicsBowl.org [here](https://www.ethicsbowl.org/2019/12/06/a-grave-dilemma-nhseb-2019-2020-regional-case-3/).) | No new burials have occurred in decades (meaning visitors are infrequent – Jade has never seen a family member of a resident there). Jade is especially respectful (picks up). And the cemetery is “the only green space within walking distance of her house.” However, her continued presence might encourage less respectful pet owners to also break the law. | Jade shouldn’t walk her dog in the cemetery because doing so is disrespectful – maybe people buried there chose that cemetery because they hated pets. Plus, if she does it (even if as respectfully as possible), others probably will, too – risk that it would become crowded, rowdy – more of a dog park than a cemetery. | O: The graveyard might not become more crowded if Jade uses it since she rarely sees anyone else there. R: The stakes are too high to risk it – her presence would tempt others to join, and she can’t know for sure who is or isn’t watching. | Reflect on what moral obligations we owe the dead, if any, and why. We assume they can’t be directly harmed, and so might give the dead respect out of respect for living relatives who want their loved ones’ wishes, reputation and memory honored. If that’s true, reflect on how it would impact the team’s views on this case. |
| Case 4: Forced Chemotherapy | 17-year-old lymphoma patient Cassandra refuses chemotherapy to avoid toxins (despite an 85% survivability prognosis with treatment, and likely death without it). Her parents respected her decision, but the Connecticut Supreme Court intervened, forced her to accept chemotherapy. | 17 is very close to 18; the court denied the “mature minor” doctrine appeal based on the grave stakes, not Cassandra’s rationality; respect for autonomy usually means letting adults make poor decisions (for example, a 35-year-old could easily reject chemo, even if it meant they would surely die); we could consider her forced treatment a form of assault (she was strapped to bed, sedated, chest port installed). | Forcing Cassandra was justified due to the strong likelihood that the treatment would be successful, and out of respect for Cassandra’s life (and human life generally) – though her caregivers should have been more diplomatic, rationally persuasive, and less physically forceful. (Note that one team member did object to this position – argued that respecting Cassandra’s freedom of choice overrode valuing her life, especially since she was 17 and apparently rational enough to make a mature, informed decision.) | O: Since Cassandra was 17 and judged rational and mature enough to make an informed decision, her rejection of the treatment should have been respected. We wouldn’t force an older person to receive an unwanted, invasive treatment, and if she was just as capable of making an autonomous decision, her age shouldn’t have mattered. R: The fact that Cassandra was worried about chemotherapy’s toxins suggests she wasn’t rationally assessing her options – should have realized that toxins are inconsequential if you’re dead, and accepted the treatments. Therefore, it was OK to decide for her. | Consider the documentary “Dax’s Case” – on an adult burn victim who was forced to accept painful life-saving treatments despite constant protest; now married and an attorney, he still insists he should have been allowed to die (consider watching [this news piece on the case](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WAQHuaua4W0) on YouTube). |
| Case 5: Old-Fashioned Grandparents | Sam’s grandfather makes racist and anti-LGBTQ comments, neither of her grandparents seem serious about the environment, and Sam’s low-key attempts to change their attitude and behavior (re-usable grocery bags, water bottles) are being ignored. Her parents argue that Sam should simply accept them and avoid confrontation out of respect, but Sam believes engaging them would be more respectful. | Confrontation could sour their relationship, but it could also strengthen and deepen it. The actual harm Sam’s grandparents are causing may be minimal (small environmental footprint, comments are in private). Age morally relevant (easier to avoid if will be dead soon… might also want them to live out final days peacefully). | To the extent that Sam and her grandparents aren’t close, she should engage, because the weaker the relationship, the less is at stake should the discussions turn confrontational. Primary obligation driven out of respect for Sam’s conscience, peace of mind – doubtful their behavior, one way or the other, will have much impact. | O: Confrontation could be detrimental to grandparents’ lives; R: Note qualifier that only recommending engagement to extent they don’t have a strong relationship; therefore, confronting when ties already weak likely wouldn’t threaten grandparents’ wellbeing. | Should Sam base her assessment of her grandparents based on whether their moral and political views align, or instead based on their direct treatment of her? Does it make a difference to what extent her grandparents may be causing actual harm (as opposed to simply stewing in private)? |
| Case 6: To Forgive or Not to Forgive | Elizabeth Warren has proposed cancelling up to $50k of debt for anyone making less than $100k annually (and some % for those making more), and paying for it with a 2% annual tax on families with more than $50 mil in net worth. Bernie Sanders has proposed funding a similar plan with a tax on financial transactions (0.5% fee on all stock trades, 0.1% on bond trades, 0.005% on derivatives trades). | 44 million Americans owe a collective $1.5 trillion in student debt, which is burdening them and the economy – 10% are delinquent. Forgiving the debt might be unfair to those who sacrificed to repay their loans. Forgiveness might encourage future financial irresponsibility. Forgiveness might substantially strengthen the overall economy. | Preferred option – just make college less expensive (taxes remain the same, but the burden on the student is lower). Perhaps this could be done with laws restricting college staff and faculty salaries, placing caps on tuition, and supplementing tuition with lottery-based scholarships, which would be funded by voluntary purchases rather than direct taxation. | O: Adult education isn’t a Constitutional right, and therefore the state ought not intervene to make it any more accessible in any way – allow the market to dictate how much college costs, and make students pay for it out of their own pockets. R: Referencing the Constitution confuses *moral* argument with *legal* argument (the two are related, but distinct), and further, an educated citizenry is likely to be more prosperous and happy, elevating the quality of life of everyone, and therefore subsidizing and making adult education more accessible is a legitimate interest of the state. | Should any loan forgiveness be contingent on public service? (Currently, teachers and government workers can have a portion of their debt cancelled after 10 years of consistent public service; some military bonuses include loan forgiveness.) |
| Case 7: Companionship or Commodification? | Allison has volunteered in college to train service dogs (for the blind, crippled, etc.). But she’s not sure what to think about Emotional Support Animals (ESAs), which are intended to support patients with psychological needs (PTSD, depression, panic attacks), certifications for which are sometimes purchased online in an unscrupulous fashion (in other words, people abusing the system so they can take their pets places they usually couldn’t). | Key quote from case: “Given that these dogs rarely have thorough training, they sometimes behave poorly… barking, defecating, or being destructive… giving a bad name to well-trained working dogs.” So not only are the untrained dogs disruptive, they diminish the reputation of trained service dogs, and probably the perceived legitimacy of patients using them. | The standards for qualifying ESAs should be raised such that a) the animals would be professionally trained, and b) those licensed to bring them into otherwise banned spaces (on planes, shopping) would have been professionally verified as in need. This would decrease abuse of the permission, redeem the reputation of service animals generally, and prevent the misbehavior of untrained animals. | O: This position would make acquiring and using an ESA unnecessarily burdensome for people in need. It should remain largely unregulated. R: Given the current abuses and problems caused by untrained dogs, the licensing is warranted. Further, anyone could still purchase an untrained pet without the additional bureaucratic burden. They just couldn’t take it on a plane without proper training and confirmation from a medical professional that the animal is needed. | For this case you’ll need to balance the desire to allow people in need to use pets to soothe mental problems against the need to prevent abuses (people without true clinical issues who just want to take their dog to Walmart) and protect the reputation of legitimate service animals and their owners. |
| Case 8: Extra! Extra! Don’t Read All About It! | Retired Nike exec has refused to watch any political news since Trump election; “I’m emotionally healthier than I’ve ever felt.” | Felt guilty for abandoning obligations of democratic citizenship at first, but decided “being a news consumer does little to enhance society” and that he “could make genuinely worthwhile civic contributions by other means.” | No need to understand every intricacy, but should keep abreast of big picture details, necessary to make informed voting decisions. Should appreciate biggest, most impactful issues (national security, programs that impact thousands) – obligation less strong when it comes to minor issues with low impact. | O: Enough citizens are engaged enough already, so this guy should be able to drop out completely – inconsequential whether he’s involved or not. R: Kant’s universalizability test: if everyone opted out, democracy would fail, therefore not OK for this guy to opt out (at least completely). | Question from Case Set: Do others have an obligation to respect Hagerman’s news blockade? If so, who, how and why? |
| Case 9: Teacher Strikes | Teachers in several states have went on strike to negotiate higher wages and better benefits. | Strikes harm students’ education, and are especially hard on low-income families that rely on schools for childcare while they’re at work. However, they may be necessary to ensure teachers are compensated enough to attract top talent. | The case for teachers striking is stronger to the extent that their grievances are legitimate (underpaid or underinsured or lacking some key protection or benefit in comparison to surrounding counties and/or states) and weaker to the extent that they appear to be demanding things teachers in comparable school districts don’t have; could lessen drawbacks (and moral complaint) of striking by providing structured tutoring while school is out to a) continue kids’ education and b) care for kids for families without childcare options. | O: As public servants entrusted with the care and education of our children, teachers shouldn’t be allowed to strike under any circumstance. R: While teachers do have a great responsibility, they are still citizens and persons with their own interests and obligations, and therefore may strike when doing so is necessary to receive more equitable compensation, benefits, etc., especially when their goals aren’t greedy but simply demanding treatment to teachers in comparable districts. | Question from Case Set: Are laws forbidding teacher strikes unjust? |
| Case 10: Belief vs. Action | Schoolteacher Kayla preaches environmentalism, and has been asked to serve as her school’s Environmental Club advisor. But she and her family don’t live an especially sustainable lifestyle (two minivans, large energy inefficient home, lots of waste. | “Disclosing how she actually lives feels more honest, but it might undermine her work, making people take her arguments less seriously.” She still brings about much good by advocating for environmental responsibility. | No, she shouldn’t disclose her actions because this would undermine her credibility, and negate the positive impact she’s currently able to make (similar to egregiously immoral and unrepentant church pastor). However, she definitely shouldn’t directly pretend that she’s more committed than she actually is – should cast obligations as what “we” should do (as a club). On personal integrity, has some obligation to bring her actions into alignment with her proclamations – would allow her to be even more effective. | O: She’s being deceptive, misleading. R: Yes, but this is overridden by the good she’s bringing about. Plus, we’ve argued that she should minimize her deception – shouldn’t directly suggest that she lives an extraordinarily environmentally conscientious life. | Question from Case Set: How does Kayla compare with Angela who does no advocacy work but lives an environmentally friendly life? |
| Case 11: Billionaire Backfire | After the Notre Dame Cathedral in Paris caught fire in 2019, more than $1 billion was quickly donated to repair it. However, donors were criticized by “Effective Altruists” who argued that the money should have instead been donated to starving children, curing disease, or other more pressing issues – issues that a) impact many lives, b) extra $ will help, and c) are otherwise neglected/in need of attention and resources. | Core Question: Are we blameworthy if we donate to comparatively trivial charities or pet charities rather than charities that will demonstrably reduce suffering, better humanity, etc.? | Charitable giving would seem more morally praiseworthy to the extent that it does more objective moral good. However, since donations are voluntary, it’s inappropriate to be overly critical of how others donate. Any giving is better than no giving, but giving can be more or less beneficial, more or less morally praiseworthy. | O: Donating millions of dollars to rebuild ceremonial structures is a ridiculous waste and properly criticized as irresponsible and indulgent. R: The billionaires’ giving to rebuild the cathedral confirmed that they possessed disposable wealth, and might spark a new giving habit. It also freed others who might have donated to rebuild the cathedral (which would have been rebuilt one way or the others), to donate to less controversial (and more objectively helpful) causes. | Do people have a general obligation to donate a portion of their income to charity? Why or why not? (The case kind of assumes they do, or at the very least asks us to consider how donations should be made if they are made. But reflect a bit on whether there’s an obligation at all, and if so, why.) |
| Case 12: Flying High | Air travel contributes significantly to greenhouse emissions. “According to one estimate, one passenger’s share of emissions on a 2,500-mile flight melts 32 square feet of Arctic summer sea ice cover” and a round-trip flight from NY to CA “generates about 20 percent of the greenhouse gases that one’s car emits over an entire year.” | While one person’s direct impact may be marginal, flying or refusing might influence others, possibly leading to measurable harm (or avoidance). On the other hand, travel can enlighten your perspective and enrich your life, possibly enough to offset environmental impacts. | Given the personal and social benefits of travel (visiting foreign lands humanizes both the visited to the visitor and the visitor to the visited, teaches all parties to appreciate, respect and care for the global community), and given that a single person’s environmental impact is insignificant, air travel is generally morally permissible, especially when done in moderation, or for charitable or benevolent purposes (a mission trip or cultural exchange or business venture that will improve many parties’ quality of life, for example). | O: Climate change is too big of an issue and air travel too serious a contributor to greenhouse gasses to allow. R: Climate change is but one serious issue amongst many – war, poverty, global inequalities. Our position justifies air travel in the name of enlightening and building friendships between travelers and peoples hosting visitors, which we argue would do more than enough good to offset the impact to our climate. | Notice how the draft position rests on the assumption that air travel will lead to some eventual moral good. Notice, then, that air travel would be less defensible to the extent that the trip couldn’t be shown to eventually lead to some moral good (so a long trip to see the Super Bowl wouldn’t be as defensible as a mission trip to bring water to an African village). That the position is qualified in this way is a good thing, so resist the temptation to declare all air travel equally moral or immoral – it depends. |
| Case 13: Is It O.K. to Punch a Nazi? | In 2017, Richard Spencer, an outspoken white nationalist, who’d advocated for “the establishment of the U.S as a white ethnostate” was punched on camera. A debate followed as to whether it’s OK to confront racists with violence rather than reason. | Central question seems to be whether and when it’s OK to confront ideas with violence. Spencer was advocating for political changes through persuasion. In evaluating whether it was OK for him to be attacked, ask yourself when the line between rational deliberation and usage of the democratic process can justifiably cross over into force. Then ask what sort of force (non-violent protest and sit-ins, as used by civil rights activists in the 60s, vs. direct assault as used and supported by some here). | Answering rational persuasion with assault is difficult to justify. It’s not only disproportionate (an overreaction), but likely to trigger violent backlash and entrenchment, and therefore counterproductive. However, it might be justified in very extreme cases – example, the assassinating Hitler to prevent the Holocaust. | O: Condoning political assassination is inconsistent with your general prohibition on meeting rational persuasion with assault. R: Our exception is for leaders who are causing great actual harm, with a high threshold for turning to violence (Hitler was leading aggressive wars and committing genocide, not simply advocating for an ethnostate – wouldn’t be OK to kill him until those grave harms were imminent). | A rapper mentioned in the case wants to “make racists afraid again.” Is suppression of political views through physical intimidation ever justifiable? Please explain. |
| Case 14: Project Prevention | Project Prevention, a nonprofit in North Carolina, pays drug addicts $300 to either be sterilized or accept long-term birth control implants (5-year IUDs). Their aim: prevent children from being born into families unprepared to care for them, and to decrease the number of babies born with addiction-related medical issues. | The group has been criticized on grounds that 1) addicts can’t rationally choose sterilization (can’t make a free choice when under the sway of a crack addiction), 2) the group’s rhetoric is demeaning and perpetuating stigmas concerning addicts (“Don’t let pregnancy get in the way of your crack habit,” we want to prevent addicted women from “having litters of children”), and 3) it ignores the root problem – the addiction. | It would be permissible to administer short-to-medium term contraceptives, but not permanent sterilization because addicts can’t make clear decisions about their long-term future, and therefore can’t rationally consent to irreversible procedures. So maybe a 1-year IUD implant, or similar treatment for men, to support the legitimate aim of helping addicts avoid procreation until they can provide a more stable family life (and a healthy womb for gestation). | O: What constitutes a “good” family life is a subjective matter. Who are we to say that drug addicts would be worse parents than anyone else? R: While parenting specifics (such as whether to enroll kids in preschool, the ideal bedtime, whether to steer kids towards football or chess) may be debatable, we can agree that all children need loving, emotionally stable role models able and willing to prioritize their children’s best interests, which severe drug addicts cannot do due to the character-warping influence of drug addiction. | Could the nonprofit group modify its approach to be less morally problematic? How and why? |
| Case 15: Involuntary Commitment | In many states, drug addicts can be involuntarily admitted. | Addicts’ families sometimes (understandably) support involuntary commitment – a way to force them to accept help they can’t (or at least won’t) voluntarily accept. However, adults are usually entrusted to make their own decisions, even when those decisions are clearly bad. Extra wrinkle: some states, like Massachusetts, will admit addicts to prisons, where the prisoners convicted of crimes “are resentful of the addicts as they receive special treatment like private cells and extensive therapy).” | Out of respect for individual autonomy, involuntary commitment of drug addicts is unethical. However, if in a moment of sobriety an addict agrees to enter a rehab facility, and if their decision is well-informed and voluntary, requiring that they stay for the duration of the treatment is legitimate. But they must first volunteer, and in light of the gravity of the problem (both for individual citizens and society at large) the state should definitely offer such programs. | O: Since addicts lack the ability to make a rational decision (due to the influence of their addiction), they no longer exercise autonomy, and therefore, similar to how children may legitimately have decisions made for them that are in their best interests, the state may also make decisions for addicts, including decisions to be committed for drug rehabilitation purposes. R: While addicts’ autonomy is undermined, choosing to abuse drugs with knowledge that one could become an addict is an autonomous act. Therefore, intervening without the addict’s consent (consent an addict could only give if temporarily sober and relatively free from the influence of their addiction), would run contrary to respect for autonomy.  *Typical Ethics Bowl Seating (visualize)* | Study question: can we distinguish between involuntary commitment to prevent suicide vs. involuntary commitment to stop drug abuse? If so, how, and what are the implications for which might be permissible and in which cases? |

**Tips:**

1. As you rehearse, visualize sitting around a rectangular table with your teammates **(see above)**, a moderator at a lectern beside you, the other team on the other side of the moderator, then three judges and a small audience (maybe a dozen people, made up of the teams’ coaches and a few parents) in front of you – see visual below. Reflecting on this now and imagining it as you rehearse will make the actual competition easier and more relaxed.
2. Remember that the team will not be able to use any notes (including this summary matrix) during the rounds. **So review this and rehearse** discussing the cases well enough that you won’t need notes (because you won’t have any…).
3. Either in the initial question or during the judges’ Q&A, the cases’ details will be tweaked and the team will be asked to adjust and explain their reasoning on the fly. For example, “What if in Case #4 Cassandra was 6-years old rather than 17? Would you still judge the case similarly, and why?” Or “What if in Case #2 we had strong evidence that a particular plantation owner actually worked to end slavery, regularly freed slaves, and treated his slaves exceptionally well? How would these differences change your reasoning and why?” The judges will be testing how well the team appreciates, can balance and respond to changes in the morally-relevant factors. ***Anticipate this now during preparation and the team will do much better at the event.*** And remember that you’ll have one another to confer with before responding, but that your coaches won’t be able to assist in any way once each round begins. **Take responsibility for understanding the cases well enough to deliver overwhelmingly impressive answers now.** A phrase that helps me: ***“If it’s to be, it’s up to me.”***