

Reading Questions for February 18

These questions cover two readings. One is by Peter A. Clark and is called “The Ethics of Medical Marijuana: Government Restrictions vs. Medical Necessity.” The other is by Nayna Philipsen, Robin D. Butler, Christie Simon-Waterman, and Jylla Artis and is called: ”Medical Marijuana: A Primer on Ethics, Evidence, and Politics.” The answers do not have to be turned in. You will probably have to read more than once to get the answers.

*Background:*

We are now in the section of the course devoted to the question of whether medical marijuana should be legalized. We’ve looked at some pieces on drug decriminalization/legalization in general and are now focusing in on medical marijuana. The first article we will read today is a little dated, but it does a nice job presenting an important argument in favor of the use of medical marijuana. The second is a little more up-to-date and nicely lays out some of the relevant ethical considerations that inform the two sides of the debate.

*Questions:*

1. On pages 48-52, Clark defends the claim that it is ethical for a physician to prescribe medical marijuana. He does so by means of the principle of double effect. What is this principle? What is his argument? Is his argument plausible, why or why not?
2. Can the principle of double effect be used to help settle to the other debates we’ve considered so far, namely euthanasia, abortion, and health care? If so, is what it would say about them plausible?
3. On pages 635-6, Philipsen, Butler, Simon-Waterman and Artis lay out some of the relevant ethical considerations that inform the two sides of the medical marijuana debate. What considerations do they think favor each side? Which side do you think is better supported?