

Reading Questions for February 20

These questions cover two readings. One, which we started last time, 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 other is by Ferris Jabr and is called "How the Brain Gets Addicted to Gambling." The answers do not have to be turned in. You will probably have to read more than once to get the answers.

*Background:*

In today's class, we are going to look at some empirical work and some case studies. Hopefully looking at this empirical work and case studies will allow us to have more nuanced views about the various debates regarding medical marijuana and other drugs.

*Questions:*

1. On pages 636-7, Philipsen, Butler, Simon-Waterman and Artis lay out some of the scientific evidence about the benefits and risks of medical marijuana. How does the scientific evidence affect what you think about medical marijuana and marijuana in general? Do you think it helps or harms the case that medical marijuana should be legal? That all marijuana should be legal?
2. On pages 638-9, Philipsen, Butler, Simon-Waterman and Artis describe two scenarios, one involving a character named Eva and another involving a character named John. What are your thoughts about the scenarios? Do you think what happened to Eva after she was arrested was right? Do you think John makes good points, or is what he has to say problematic? One issue raised by these scenarios is the following: sometimes people will break a law that they think is morally wrong. What do you think – is it ever acceptable to break a law that you think is morally wrong? And if so, in what circumstances?

3. One issue we've talked about in class is the issue of competence and whether addiction keeps you from being fully competent. The article by Jabr compares drug addiction and addiction to gambling, and also contains some information about how addiction works. What do you think – do you think addiction keeps you from competently making your own decisions? The article suggests that addiction lies along a spectrum. If you do think addiction keeps you from competently making your own medical decisions, where do you draw the line between competence and incompetence?
4. Do you have your own stories from people in your life who have used medical marijuana, or other drugs? How do these stories inform your own views about the morality of drug use?