

**Ethics Case Paper© 2003-2009**

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**Introduction**

This document is a detailed guide to writing the paper. The paper is a four part paper consisting of an introduction, a body and a conclusion. Be sure to read this guide completely and carefully. This guide has the following sections:

- **The Draft & Rewrite:** This explains the difference between the draft and the final rewrite. It also details how to turn the paper in.
- **Writing the Paper:** This explains how to write the paper. Each of the four sections of the paper are presented in great detail. This section also includes the text you will be summarizing, provides detailed guides to the arguments needed for the paper, and also includes the standards by which the paper is graded.
- **Checklist & Comment Sheet:** This section explains and then provides the Checklist & Comment Sheet for this paper. Be sure to have a copy of this sheet on hand-you will need it in order to make sense of the comment marks on your paper.
- **Sample Paper:** A complete sample paper.

**The Draft & the Rewrite**

The paper is intended to be written in two stages: a draft (or drafts) and the rewritten final version. The following details the draft and the rewrite of the paper.

**The Draft**

The draft version of the paper is due on the date specified on the syllabus. Drafts can be turned in prior to this date and additional drafts can be done after this date as well. Drafts will be commented on, graded and returned to you. You will need the comment & checklist sheet (included in this document) to make sense of the marks on the paper. **If you do not revise the paper, the grade you received on your draft will be your grade on the paper.**

**The Rewrite**

You have the opportunity to revise the paper and turn it in again. While you can do as many drafts as you would like, the rewrite must be turned in by the deadline. The following are the rules pertaining to the rewrite.

1. The rewrite must be turned in no later than the deadline date set on the syllabus. You can (and should) turn in the revised paper before this date. This is the last day a rewrite will be accepted. **Aside from using the mercy (see the syllabus) there are no exceptions to this.** Failure to turn in the rewrite by that time will result in a grade of zero (0) on the rewrite.
2. You must turn in the original paper draft with the rewrite. If you did additional drafts, turn in only the most recent graded draft with the rewrite. If you did not do a draft, then just turn in your final paper.
3. You must highlight the changes you made in the **revised** paper (**highlight the revised paper, not the original**). The best way to do this is to use the ability of most current word processing programs (like Word) to highlight text. A low tech way to do this is to use a highlighter marker. Be sure to select a color that leaves the text readable. If you made no changes from the original, you do not need to turn in the paper again. If you turn it in anyway, please write "unchanged" on the first or cover page.
4. If the revised paper receives a better grade than the original paper, the grade for the revised paper will replace the original grade. If the revised paper receives a grade that is worse than the draft, then the draft

grade will be the grade that counts. An exception to this is plagiarism. If the revised paper is plagiarized, then the paper grade will be a zero.

5. If you did not turn in the paper the first time, you can still turn in the 'revision.' Be sure to clearly indicate this by writing or typing "First Time" on the first page or cover sheet of the paper.

### **Turning the Paper In (Draft or Rewrite)**

The paper should be turned in during class. There is also a drop envelope by my office that you can use (entirely at your own risk). A paper is considered turned in when I actually receive (or find) it. Do not ask administrators, faculty or staff members to time stamp your paper-that is not their job. It is your responsibility to make sure that I receive your paper.

Because of viruses, Trojan horses and worms, I do not accept papers via email except when prior arrangements have been made and the circumstances warrant the risk. Such circumstances include such things as documented overseas military service and documented physical incapacitation such as that resulting from a broken back or legs. If arrangements have not been made in advance, emailed papers will be deleted.

Because of viruses, Trojan horses, worms and various hardware problems (such as bits of metal falling into my computer's floppy disk drive), I do not accept papers on disks. This also includes CDs, DVDs, USB/Firewire drives, etc.

### **Additional Information**

Additional information is provided in the class notes, class lecture, on the FAQs web page, as well as in the *Paper Rules & Policies*. The *Paper Rules & Policies* document is especially important as it spells out the general rules and policies governing the paper. You are required to read the *Paper Rules & Policies* document.

I have a separate *Paper Rules & Policies* document because while the papers vary from class to class, the rules and policies remain the same.

## **Writing the Paper**

This is a step-by-step guide to the content of the paper. This guide spells out, in detail, everything that should be done in the paper.

**The Goal and Picking Your Case:** The goal of the paper is to take and defend a position on one of the ethical issues provided in the Ethics Cases document. This document is available as a download from the class website or you can bring a disk to my office hours to get a copy. You need to pick one (and only one) case from the Ethics Cases. Your paper must be on one of the cases in the Ethics Cases document. A paper that is not on one of the specified cases (or an approved alternative case) will receive a grade of 0 (zero).

When picking a case, you should read through the various cases and find one that appeals to you the most. Some cases include a variety of issues-be sure to pick one (and only one) of them to focus on.

**Creating Your Own Case:** If you do not wish to write on any of the existing cases, then you have the option of creating your own case. If you take this option, then you must have your new case approved or you will receive a zero (0) on the paper for writing off topic. You will need to submit your case idea to me using the (short) DIY Case form provided below (and also available as separate download). If you are writing on a case from the Ethics Cases, then you DO NOT need to use this form.

**Important:** The paper has only four sections (introduction, argument, objection & reply, and conclusion) but this guide has broken the sections into various parts. **Be sure to label each of these sections in your paper** (see the sample paper for how this should look). Each section is graded based on specific criteria and hence it is important for you to indicate to me which section is which in your paper.

**Writing the Introduction**

The Introduction is worth five (5) points. It should be no more than 125 words in length. The purpose of the introduction is to inform the readers about the purpose and content of the paper. The introduction should be written out as text rather than presented as an outline (see the sample paper, below). The introduction should contain the following five things:

- 1. Thesis Statement:** Restate the specific thesis for the paper.
  - a. Example: “The purpose of this essay is to discuss and assess the morality of charging larger airline passengers extra for their flights.”
- 2. Case Statement:** Briefly identify the case you addressed
  - a. Example: “I will be addressing case X, the ethics of flying fat.”
- 3. Position Statement:** Clearly restate your position on the issue.
  - a. Example: “It is my considered opinion that it is morally acceptable to charge larger passengers for a second seat or an upgrade.”
- 4. Argument Statement:** Briefly state what arguments of your own you presented.
  - a. Example: “I will defend my position by making use of analogies, making an appeal to rights and considering objections against my view.”
- 5. Minimal Relevant Background:** Provide some minimal background to set the stage for the reader.
  - a. Example: “While some airlines have been discussing implementing such a policy, some of them have actually put it into practice, thus leading to a controversy in the air.”

**Writing the Argument and the Objection & Reply**

The argument is worth fifty (50) points. It must be at least four pages (1,000 words) in length. The Objection & Reply is worth forty (40) points and must be at least two pages (500 words) in length.

The following describes how to write these two parts of the paper. The paper is graded based on the quality of the work rather than the length of the paper-so there is no need to make the paper look long by adjusting spacing, fonts and such.

You will need to reach two overall goals in the argument section. The goals are not weighted equally in terms of the grade (see below). The first goal is to clearly, concisely, and accurately present the key details of the case in your own words. The second goal is to clearly state your position on the issue and then support your position with argumentation.

*Contents of the Argument*

The argument contains two main components. The first component consists of the case information; the second consists of your argument in defense of your position. The first component, the case information, is worth approximately 10 points out of the 50 points of the body. In this component, you will provide a brief summary of the case you have selected. You can also provide additional background information that is relevant to the paper. The main objective is to provide enough information so that an intelligent reader will have a basic understanding of the case and the issue you will address. The amount of information you need to provide will depend on the case you select. Some cases require very little information because they are easy to understand or well known situations. Some cases will require more information because they are complex or involve matters that are not well known. If you are unsure how much you should write when presenting the case information, then ask about your specific case and the approach you are taking.

Be sure to keep in mind that the case paper is an argumentative paper and not a report. Because of this you need to keep the information about the case to a minimum-just what the reader would need to understand the paper. The sample paper, below, provides an example of how to do this. Argumentative essays, such as well-written editorials, also provide excellent examples about how to present background information before progressing to an argument. Professional news magazines, professional newspapers and professional blogs often provide excellent examples of how to present the minimal information needed by the reader.

The second component, the argument, is worth approximately 40 of the 50 points of the body. Because of this, the argument component is your main focus.

In this component you will begin by stating your position on the issue you have selected. Be sure to take a definite position on the issue. While it is generally better to argue for what you actually believe, this is not required and it can be educational to argue for a position you disagree with.

After you have stated your position, then the challenging work begins—you must argue in defense of your view. The objective is to present arguments that establish the truth (or at least the plausibility) of your position. Since this is a short paper, it is better to have a few well developed arguments instead of many underdeveloped arguments.

The argument component will vary significantly from case to case. In some cases, you might need to address one or more factual issues and resolve them as part of your argument. In some cases, you might need to address one or more conceptual issues (arguments about definitions) and resolve them as part of your argument. In all of the cases you will need to address the overall value issue as part of your argument.

### *Writing an Effective Argument*

The first step in writing an effective body is picking the case and issue that you want to write about. It is generally a good idea to pick the case that you find to be the most interesting (or the least boring). It is also a good idea to pick a case about which you have at least some initial opinion—although it can be enlightening to work towards an opinion on an issue.

Once you have selected the case, the next step is to decide your position on the issue. This is usually done by thinking about what you believe in regards to the issue. It can, however, be interesting to argue for a position that you do not accept. In any case, you need to take a clear and definite position on the issue.

After you have chosen your position you will need to back up this position. This process can begin with brainstorming. This is done by thinking of many reasons as to why your position is correct. The basic idea is that you are coming up with numerous answers to the question “why should anyone logically believe that you are right?”

Depending on the case you select and how you approach the issue you might need to argue over facts or concepts in addition to presenting a normative argument. These matters will be discussed in class.

If there are factual issues in dispute that are relevant to your case, then you might need to resolve these as part of supporting your position. For example, one factual issue is whether or not violent media affects peoples’ behavior in the real world. The resolution of this issue could be relevant to addressing the censorship of violent media.

If there are conceptual issues that are relevant to your case, then you might need to resolve these as part of supporting your position. For example, arguing about racist or sexist media might involve presenting and defending a definition about what counts as sexist or racist.

In any case, you will need to address the normative issue—each case is a normative case and has at least one normative issue associated with it.

Once you have thought up a variety of reasons, go through them and find the ones you consider to be the most plausible, the strongest and those that you think can be developed the most. Select the best of these and work up an outline for each that presents the argument’s premises and conclusion. Once you find the ones you consider to be your best arguments develop these fully into complete arguments and write them out in a form suitable for the paper.

Since the paper is a short one, it is generally best to focus on developing a few effective arguments rather than presenting many underdeveloped arguments. To use an analogy, it is usually more satisfying to have a balanced meal with a few complete portions rather than snacking on a variety of unhealthy junk foods.

Given that the goal of the arguments is to support your position you need to make sure that each argument you present is connected to the issue. In short, each argument needs to be aimed at directly or indirectly showing that your position on the issue is correct—or at least plausible.

The first part of the course is devoted to discussing the methods of addressing these types of issues and how to create effective normative arguments.

The third part of the paper contains two main components. The first is an objection (or objections) that you raise against your position on the issue. Ideally, this objection (or objections) should be arguments designed to counter or expose alleged flaws in your initial arguments. Be sure to present a serious objection/counter argument rather than a straw man sort of “attack” that can be easily brushed aside. The second component is your reply (or replies) to the objection(s) you raised. This reply is done by creating an argument or arguments that effectively refute the objection(s) you raised. This section of the paper is worth 40 points and should be at least 500 words.

### *Writing an Effective Objection & Reply*

When creating an objection/counter argument against your view, you will be doing the same sort of thing you did in coming up with arguments for your position. However, you will be thinking of reasons as to why your position is wrong. When countering the objection/counter argument, you will be showing that the objection/counter argument is flawed.

Argumentation, normative issues and normative reasoning will be discussed extensively during the first part of the course. Hence, much of how to do the paper will be presented and discussed in class.

### *Assessment of the Argument/Objection & Reply*

While assessing papers is not as exact as grading a true/false or multiple choice exam, there are clear standards used to assess the work. The following provides a general guide to the assessment of the body.

#### An excellent Argument/Objection & Reply (A)

- Clearly and concisely presents the case information, the issue and your position on the issue.
- Presents effective and well-developed arguments.
- Presents the arguments as a coherent whole.
- Clearly presents how the arguments impact on the overall issue.
- Presents and effectively replies to an extremely challenging objection/counter argument.
- Is extremely well organized.

#### A good Argument/Objection & Reply (B):

- Does most of what an excellent summary does, but has some flaws that prevent it from being excellent.

#### An adequate or average Argument/Objection & Reply (C)

- Adequately presents the case information, the issue and your position on the issue.
- Presents basic arguments that are relevant and connect to the issue.
- Presents and adequately responds to a reasonable objection/counter argument.
- Does not achieve the quality of a good body but does not have any major flaws.

#### A poor Argument/Objection & Reply (D)

- Does not adequately present the case information, the issue or your position on the issue.
- Presents weak or poor arguments.
- Contains some fallacies.
- Poorly presents and replies inadequately to an objection/counter argument.
- Is poorly organized.
- Is incomplete.
- Has some other major flaws.

#### A failing Argument/Objection & Reply (F)

- Contains very poor arguments.
- Contains fallacies.
- Does not include an objection/counterargument or includes an exceptionally bad one.
- Is very poorly organized.
- Is incomplete.
- Has other major flaws.

***Common Mistakes in the Argument and Objection & Reply***

The following presents various common mistakes made in writing the body of the paper. Be sure to avoid these mistakes-they would have a negative impact on your grade.

- **Writing a Report:** merely presenting a report on the subject. While you do need to provide the reader with information, the main goal is to argue for your position and not to write a report.
- **Writing a “Compare & Contrast” paper:** This involves merely comparing and contrasting various views on the issue. While it is acceptable to consider objections to your view the goal in the paper is to defend your position-not compare and contrast various views.
- **Assertions without Arguments:** It is common for people to make a claim (assertion) but not back it up with any reasons. Be sure that your claims are adequately supported.
- **Argument, but not a moral argument:** It is common for people to argue in support of their position using arguments that are not of the right sort. For example, a person might argue for censorship of a certain type of work and cite the bible. While this is a religious argument it is not automatically a moral argument. It is possible to use arguments from other normative areas (law, religion, etc) by properly using the mixing norms method (see the notes). As another example, a person might argue against cheating in a relationship by listing the health risks. This would be a medical argument-but not a moral one unless a link is made between the medical harms and the morality of the action.
- **A Non-Approved Topic:** It is not uncommon for a person to turn in a paper that is not on one of the cases. In most instances people are attempting to recycle papers written for other classes. Be sure that you only write on one of the cases or get your own case approved-a paper that is not on a proper topic will receive a grade of zero.
- **Plagiarizing:** The internet has made plagiarizing very easy-but has also made it **extremely** easy to catch people who plagiarize. I easily catch most people by typing in a few key words into Google-it is as simple as that. It is far better to type up something crappy at the last minute rather than plagiarize. A person who plagiarizes will receive a grade of zero on the paper and this also raises the possibility of charges of academic misconduct. Plagiarism is discussed in detail in the *Paper Rules & Policies* document.

**Writing the Conclusion**

The conclusion is worth five (5) points and needs to contain the following five points. It should be no more than 125 words in length. The conclusion should be written out as text rather than presented as an outline. See the sample paper, below. The purpose of the conclusion is to remind the reader what was done in the paper.

1. **Thesis Statement:** Restate the specific thesis for the paper.
  - a. Example: “The purpose of this essay was to discuss and assess the morality of charging larger airline passengers extra for their flights.”
2. **Case Statement:** Briefly identify the case you addressed
  - a. Example: “I addressed case X, the ethics of flying fat.”
3. **Position Statement:** Clearly restate your position on the issue.
  - a. Example: “It is my considered opinion that it is morally acceptable to charge larger passengers for a second seat or an upgrade.”
4. **Argument Statement:** Briefly state what arguments of your own you presented.
  - a. Example: “I defended my position by making use of analogies, making an appeal to rights and considering objections against my view.”

**5. Final Relevant Remark:** Provide some relevant remark to close the paper.

- a. Example: “While airlines should really provide larger seats, the practical and ethical solution for now is to charge the large.”

## Checklist & Comment Sheet

The Checklist & Comment Sheet is provided below. It is also available as a separate file, for easy printing. Be sure to print a copy of the sheet and attach it to your paper. The sheet is divided into four parts. The first part is the Checklist for the draft (and final version). It is a list of things that could cost you points if they were not done. The main purpose of the checklist is to give you a quick way to check that you haven't missed any points needlessly. The second part is the Rewrite Checklist. This has the same purpose as the Checklist, but includes the additional requirements for the rewrite (final version) of the paper.

The third part is the signature section. Signing this indicates that the paper is your own work, that you are aware of the requirements of the paper, and so on-as spelled out on the sheet. Please be sure to sign this before turning the paper in.

The fourth part consists of the codes for the comments. When grading papers I found that I tended to write the same comments over and over. That fact, combined with my horrific handwriting, inspired me to develop the comment sheet.

When you get your draft(s) and final rewrite back, it will have various comments codes on it (such as S2, A14, and so on). To figure out what those marks mean, consult the sheet on the next page. The comments are divided into five categories. The first is Organization/Style/Presentation. These comments, amazingly enough, relate to the organization, style and presentation of the paper. The second is Introduction/Conclusion and these are comments specific to the Introduction and Conclusion sections of the paper. The third category consists of the comments on the Argument and Objection & Reply sections of the paper.

Important: You must print this sheet, check the boxes, print your name, sign it, and then staple it to each paper.

**Final Checklist**

- Paper is typed/computer printed (-10 penalty for handwritten papers).
- All sections are labeled (-1 per section that is not labeled).
- All direct quotes/paraphrases are properly cited (-1 per failure to cite, possibility of plagiarism).
- Pages are stapled together (-1 for failing to staple pages).
- An extra copy has been made and put in a safe place.
- Your name and the name of the course (Modern Philosophy) are on the paper.
- All requirements for the paper have been met and the paper is on the proper topic.
- All pages are present and the paper is the correct paper for the course.
- You have signed and attached this Checklist & Comments sheet to the paper (the paper is not officially turned in until this is done).

**Rewrite Checklist**

- The rewrite has been completed before the deadline.
- The original paper has been turned in with the rewrite.
- Changes from the original have been highlighted in the **revised** version (the revised version is the one to highlight).
- If the paper is being turned in for the first time on the rewrite deadline, it has been marked "First Time."
- If the original paper is being turned in unchanged, it has been marked "Unchanged."

I, \_\_\_\_\_ (print your name), assert that this paper is my own work and that all sources have been properly cited and documented. I further assert that I understand the concept of plagiarism and I am aware of the penalties associated with plagiarism. Finally, I assert that I have completed the checklist above and that I am aware of the requirements for the papers in general and this specific paper in particular.

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**Paper Comments**

Information: The letters and numbers in the paper correspond to the letters and numbers on this comment sheet—simply match what is marked on your paper to this list of comments. These are general comments so your paper might not contain all of them.

|   |   |
|---|---|
| <p><b>Organization/Style/Presentation</b></p> <p>O1. This needed to be better organized.<br/>                 O2. This needed to be better presented.<br/>                 O3. This needed to be clearer.<br/>                 O4. This is too vague.<br/>                 O5. This is ambiguous.<br/>                 O6. This needed to be more concise.<br/>                 O7. You need to start a new paragraph here.</p> <p><b>Introduction/Conclusion</b></p> <p>I1. Not all five required points are present.<br/>                 I2. This is needlessly long.</p> <p><b>Argument/Objection</b></p> <p>A1 This is not accurate.<br/>                 A2. This should be in your own words.<br/>                 A3. Too many direct quotes are being used. .<br/>                 A4. Delete this—this does not need to be in the paper.<br/>                 A5. You needed to state what case you are addressing.<br/>                 A6. You needed to provide more information about the case.<br/>                 A7. You needed to clearly state your position on the issue.<br/>                 A8. This is not the issue/you are not addressing the issue.<br/>                 A9. This is not relevant/you needed to show relevance.</p> | <p>A10. There is no argument here.<br/>                 A11. You needed to support this.<br/>                 A12. You needed to develop this argument more.<br/>                 A13. You might try using method X (name of method) in developing your argument.<br/>                 A14. This is a fallacy.<br/>                 A15. While this is an argument, it is not a moral argument.<br/>                 A16. You need to modify this so it is a moral argument.<br/>                 A17. You need to define this concept.<br/>                 A18. You need to support this factual claim.<br/>                 A19. You needed to show how this impacts the issue.<br/>                 A20. You need to raise at least one objection/counter argument.<br/>                 A21. You need to reply to the objection/counter argument.</p> <p><b>Penalties</b></p> <p>P1. You needed to properly cite this. -1 point/incident.<br/>                 P2. This is plagiarism.<br/>                 P3. All sections are not labeled. -1 point per unlabeled section.<br/>                 P4. The paper not stapled. -1 point.<br/>                 P5. The paper not typed/computer printed -10.</p> |
|---|---|

**Do It Yourself Case Form**

**Directions:** If you cannot find a case that you like, you have the option of creating your own case. To do so, complete this form and provide it to me at least one week before the draft is due. If you are writing on one of the provided cases, you DO NOT need to complete this form.

|               |  |
|---------------|--|
| <b>Name:</b>  |  |
| <b>Class:</b> |  |
| <b>Email:</b> |  |

|                    |  |
|--------------------|--|
| <b>Case Title:</b> |  |
|--------------------|--|

|                          |  |
|--------------------------|--|
| <b>Case Description:</b> |  |
|--------------------------|--|

|                    |  |
|--------------------|--|
| <b>Case Issue:</b> |  |
|--------------------|--|

## Sample Case Form

This is an example of how to complete the DIY Case form.

|               |                              |
|---------------|------------------------------|
| <b>Name:</b>  | Michael LaBossiere           |
| <b>Class:</b> | Ethics MWF                   |
| <b>Email:</b> | Michael.labossiere@famuc.edu |

|                    |            |
|--------------------|------------|
| <b>Case Title:</b> | Flying Fat |
|--------------------|------------|

|                          |   |
|--------------------------|---|
| <b>Case Description:</b> | <p>In a somewhat controversial move, some US airlines have implemented a policy of charging large passengers extra. The gist of the policy is that if someone cannot fit comfortably in a normal seat, they will be required to purchase a second seat or upgrade to business class. This policy mainly targets obese people, although it would presumably also apply to other large folks.</p> <p>While some have accused the airlines of simply trying a new scheme to make money, the airlines have defended this policy by asserting that large passengers "infringe" on the comfort of other passengers and point to various complaints made by passengers about this problem.</p> <p>As of now, this practice is legal in the United States. Her neighbor to the north has a different policy: Canada considers being morbidly obese to be a disability and hence large passengers are entitled to an extra seat at no extra charge. Since this is to be the subject of an essay on ethics, the key issue here is whether or not this practice is morally acceptable.</p> |
|--------------------------|---|

|                    |   |
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| <b>Case Issue:</b> | Is it morally acceptable for airlines to require larger passengers to buy an extra seat or upgrade to business/first class? |
|--------------------|---|

## Sample Case Paper: The Ethics of Flying Fat

This paper is intended to serve as an example of the sort of paper you should write. Copying or paraphrasing from it would be plagiarism.

### I Introduction

The purpose of this essay is to discuss and assess the morality of charging larger airline passengers extra for their flights. I will be addressing case X, the ethics of flying fat. It is my considered opinion that it is morally acceptable to charge larger passengers for a second seat or an upgrade. I will defend my position by making use of analogies, making an appeal to rights and considering objections against my view.

While some airlines have been discussing implementing such a policy, some of them have actually put it into practice, thus leading to a controversy in the air.

### II Argument

In a somewhat controversial move, some US airlines have implemented a policy of charging large passengers extra. The gist of the policy is that if someone cannot fit comfortably in a normal seat, they will be required to purchase a second seat or upgrade to business class. This policy mainly targets obese people, although it would presumably also apply to other large folks.

While some have accused the airlines of simply trying a new scheme to make money, the airlines have defended this policy by asserting that large passengers "infringe" on the comfort of other passengers and point to various complaints made by passengers about this problem.

As of now, this practice is legal in the United States. Her neighbor to the north has a different policy: Canada considers being morbidly obese to be a disability and hence large passengers are entitled to an extra seat at no extra charge. Since this is an essay on ethics, the key issue here is whether or not this practice is morally acceptable. I contend that it is and will defend my view with the arguments that follow.

When assessing the morality of this action, one relevant point to consider here is what the airline is selling when it sells a ticket. If the airline is selling a single seat, then it is selling (or rather renting out) a specifically sized area. If someone exceeds that area, then they would need to buy more space. To use an analogy with time, if I rent a car for a day, but use it for two days, then I would obviously owe more for that extra day. If I refused to pay for that extra day, then I would be, in effect, stealing the car for a day. Intuitively, stealing is morally unacceptable. If the analogy with time holds, then the airlines are in the right to charge more and passengers who infringe on others would be stealing space. As such, it should be concluded that it is morally acceptable for the airlines to require larger passengers to purchase the extra space that they use rather than allowing them to steal it from other passengers.

My point is also supported by the fact that the airlines sell their business/first class seats at a higher price than the economy/coach class seats. Obviously, the first class passengers are getting transported to the same destination as everyone else on the flight. As such, they are not paying more for the actual transportation from one airport to (hopefully) another. What they are paying extra for is more space (plus perhaps a few extra amenities). So, if more space costs more, then large people should have to pay more if they need the extra space. Returning to the analogy about time, larger passengers who infringe into the space of other passengers would be like people who want to pay for one day's rental of a car, yet keep it for two days. Obviously, if they need the car for two days, then they should rent the car for two days rather than one. Likewise, if someone cannot fit into one seat, then they would need to purchase enough space for their needs.

The point can be made even stronger by changing the analogy slightly. Since the larger passenger is infringing into the space of his/her fellow passengers, then the analogy would be to a person who needs to rent a car for two days but rather than paying for a second day s/he decides to take someone else's rented car to use on the second day. This would clearly be a case of theft (unless the other person consents, of course) and hence would be morally unacceptable.

Such an intrusion can also be seen as a violation of the other passengers' rights. After all, the passengers around the large person have paid for their seats and hence have a moral and legal right to that space. While property rights can be endlessly debated, if a person pays for something and there is no reason to think that the person has acted wrongly, then it seems reasonable to conclude that the person has a moral right to that

purchase. Given that property rights are well established, the burden of proof would be on those who would contend that such a purchase does not provide a property right, albeit a temporary one.

So, if someone else intrudes into that purchased space without permission or compensation, then that would be a violation of the owner's property right. Since such a violation would be, as argued above, on par with theft it is evident that such an intrusion would be immoral. To protect the rights of the other passengers the airlines would thus be in the right to require larger passengers to purchase more space so as to allow the other passengers to fully exercise their property rights.

To use another analogy, to allow large passengers to intrude into the space of other passengers would be like a property manager allowing a person to park his boat partially across someone else's driveway because he did not have enough room to park it in on his own property. While it would be nice of the neighbor to share her driveway space, it is her driveway and the neighbor has no right to make such an intrusion. As such, if he wants to have his big boat, then he will need to find a place large enough to park it. Likewise, a large passenger who cannot fit into one seat would need to park himself in a space large enough to allow the other passengers to exercise their property rights to the space they have purchased. Since the airlines are selling the space it is acceptable and perhaps even obligatory for them to ensure that this takes place. Since the way to ensure that this happens is by requiring larger folks to purchase more space, this practice is morally acceptable.

While the above analogies are quite reasonable, there are some objections that are well worth considering. It is to these that I now turn.

### **III Objection & Reply**

The above arguments rest on the assumption that the airlines are selling space. However, if the airlines are only selling passage to a destination, then charging extra for a large person would be unfair. After all, they are receiving no more than anyone else on the plane, namely a trip to the specified destination. The fact that they take up more space would not, it might be argued, be relevant. To use an analogy, consider an "all you can eat" buffet. If I go to the buffet with a friend and I eat twice as much as she does, I would not be charged extra. After all, I am purchasing the right to eat all I can and not purchasing a set amount of food. Obviously, if I was paying by the item, then the more I ate, the more I should pay. Likewise, if passengers are paying for transportation, then the fact that one passenger uses more space would not be relevant. They need to be provided with the space they need in order to be transported to the destination in question. After all, that is what they paid for.

The obvious reply to this objection is that airlines are not just selling passage to a destination. As pointed out above, airlines charge more for the larger business/first class seats. As such, they are selling space in addition to passage. To use an analogy, think of shipping a package. While the service is to send a package from one location to another, the price of shipping varies with the weight of the package and not just the destination. This is because it costs the shipper more to ship heavier packages. Likewise, the price of a ticket varies with both the destination and the space. Thus, it would be morally acceptable for airlines to charge more for larger passengers because they are using more space. This is a relevant difference, as shown by the analogy, and hence it justifies a difference in treatment.

Another point to consider is the fact that being obese is considered by some to be a disability. From a moral standpoint, it is generally expected that people with disabilities should receive the same services and access without being compelled to pay more. For example, if a business put a toll gate on the handicap ramps that allowed access to the store, then that would be regarded as outrageous. Likewise, to charge obese people more because they have the need for more space could also be seen as outrageous and immoral.

Of course, one important distinction is that being obese is generally seen as the result of decisions on part of the obese person rather than a true disability. While some people are genetically predisposed to being obese, how much a person eats and how much they exercise is a matter of choice. Since they could reduce their weight, the rest of us are under no obligation to provide special accommodations for them. This is because they could take reasonable steps to remove the need for such accommodations. To use analogy, imagine someone who insisted that they be provided with a Seeing Eye dog because she wants to wear really dark sunglasses all the time, even at night. Obviously, since she does not need to wear such glasses, there is no obligation to provide her with the dog. If she wants to pay to have a dog trained so she can wear her glasses, then that would be

another matter. Likewise, if someone wants to live in a way that results in a size that infringes into the space of others, then they must expect to pay for their own special accommodations.

A final point worth considering is the fact that some large people are not obese. A person might simply be larger than the very cramped seats that most airlines provide. For example, I am fairly thin but I can barely fit into the typical coach seat. Since such people cannot be expected to be smaller than they are, it would seem unfair to charge them more simply because of their unavoidable size.

One reply is that if the airlines are going to charge large people extra, then they are obligated to provide adequate space based on the size of average adult humans. If they do this, then charging larger people more would be acceptable. To use an analogy, clothing companies often charge extra for extra large (and larger) t-shirts and other clothing. This is because the larger clothing uses more material. Likewise, if the airlines provide adequate basic seating, then they can charge more for larger folks based on the same logic. Naturally, the large folks cannot help being large, but this is a relevant difference that justifies their paying more. Using another shipping analogy, it is not the fault of a box of metal cups that it is heavier than a comparable box of Styrofoam cups. However, the weight difference is relevant: it costs more to transport heavier items and hence a shipping company may justly charge more. The same would, it seems, apply to large people.

Another analogy that can be used is a meal at a restaurant. Presumably, a meal is designed so that it will satisfy the hunger of an average person. If a person who is very hungry purchases such a meal and it does not fill him up, then he would need to buy more food. He cannot expect that being able to eat more than average entitles him to additional food at no extra cost. Likewise, a larger person who cannot fit in an average seat would need to buy more space.

Thus it can be safely concluded that charging a larger passenger for an extra seat or an upgrade is morally acceptable if s/he cannot fit properly in one seat.

#### **IV Conclusion**

The purpose of this essay was to discuss and assess the morality of charging larger airline passengers extra for their flights. I addressed case X, the ethics of flying fat. It is my considered opinion that it is morally acceptable to charge larger passengers for a second seat or an upgrade. I defended my position by making use of analogies, making an appeal to rights and considering objections against my view.

While airlines should really provide larger seats, the practical and ethical solution for now is to charge the large.