

Explore More · Abortion

We've organized some further materials by topic, so you can easily follow up on particular issues or events of interest from this unit.

BACKGROUND

- The **United Nations** tracks [statistics and laws about abortion](#) across the world.
 - The [World Abortion Laws map](#), from the Center for Reproductive Rights[**note**: a pro-choice organization], is a wonderful interactive map.
 - Read the [U.S. Supreme Court Decision in Roe v. Wade](#), the **1971 decision** that made abortion legal in the U.S. until the 3rd trimester (when states were allowed to regulate the procedure).
 - The **PEW Forum** provides [a terrific review of US legal context for abortion](#), including a history of US Supreme Court's key abortion rulings, and summaries of legislative trends.
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GETTING PAST THE LABELS

- Watch [videos from the conference mentioned in the week's overview](#): the conference convened at Princeton University, called **Open Hearts, Open Minds, and Fair Minded Words**, attempted to bring about civil discussion and understanding among persons on all sides of the abortion issue.
 - *Slate*'s Will Saletan commented on the conference, and wrote **two thoughtful essays** on his own take-away about how [pro-choice](#) and [pro-life](#) persons might each move toward common ground on the abortion issue.
 - For a completely different angle, check out Citizen Ruth, a smartly written—and very witty—[movie that skewers both the left and the right](#) on abortion in the U.S. It's a great way to start discussions about abortion.
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PHILOSOPHICALLY SPEAKING

More to read, outlined here in order of presentation from the unit:

» The Concept of Moral Status

- Read a **philosophical overview** of the concept—and its application not only to early human life, but also to non-human animals—in [this article](#) from the *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*.

» Natural Law & Inviolability

- Prof. Robert George, at Princeton, is arguably the leading scholar of the **Natural Law** position on abortion. A [particularly accessible essay](#) is one he co-authored with Patrick Lee for *The New Atlantis*. (This article is used by permission of *The New Atlantis*.)
- Cathleen Kaveny is a fascinating and extremely thoughtful law professor who explores, from a pro-life position, the nuances one might nonetheless endorse on the law's relation to abortion in [this TV interview](#) and her book, *Laws Virtues* (Georgetown University Press, 2012).

» A Future Like Ours

- Read [Don Marquis's article on the Future Like Ours argument](#) for yourself.

» Sentience-Based Views

- A [classic essay defending the sentience view](#) of moral status is Joel Feinberg's, "Abortion," in *Matters of Life and Death* (edited by Tom Beauchamp & Tom Regan; McGraw-Hill, 1993).
- A [highly sophisticated version](#) is developed by Jeff McMahan in his book *The Ethics of Killing* (Oxford University Press, 2002).

» Gradualism & Partial Moral Status

- A philosophical defense of gradualism, and discussion about the legal regulation of abortion, can be found in Margaret Little's, "[Abortion & the Margins of Personhood](#)" (used with permission).
- A different kind of theory defending the partial moral status view of the pre-sentient fetus can be found in David DeGrazia's excellent book *Creation Ethics: Reproduction, Genetics, and Quality of Life* (Oxford University Press, 2012).

» Bodily Assistance & the Right to Life

- The most famous article raising questions about whether the right to life entails the impermissibility of abortion is Judith Jarvis Thomson's "[A Defense of Abortion](#)," (*Philosophy & Public Affairs* 1 (1), Fall 1971). Provocative and creative, it is well worth reading and discussing.

