

Justification for Price Gouging

Instructions

When doing the reading for this class, there are the two basic kinds of information you need to understand:

1. What are the main points or conclusions that an author accepts with respect to a particular issue?
2. What are the reasons, important considerations, and evidence that lead the author to accept that conclusion?

For our purposes, it is *information of the second sort that will be our primary concern* since our most basic task is to *evaluate the reasons and evidence* that are offered to support accepting one possible position on an issue, rather than another.

Reading

Zwolinski, M. (2008, July). The Ethics of Price Gouging. *Business Ethics Quarterly*, 18(3), 347-378.

Optional: Evans, L. (2013, December 16). Uber's Snow Storm Surge Pricing Gouged New Yorkers Big Time. *Gothamist*. Retrieved August 16, 2016, from http://gothamist.com/2013/12/16/uber_surge_pricing.php.

Questions

As you read, keep these questions in mind:

1. Uber is a tech company whose mobile app allows users to submit a trip request which is then fulfilled by an Uber driver. During snow storms and other instances of extreme weather, Uber is known to raise its prices dramatically (For more details, see the optional reading by Lauren Evans.)
Why might people believe this is an instance of price gouging? Why is price gouging commonly thought to be immoral?
2. In sections 4A and 4B, Matt Zwolinski attempts to refute two major criticisms of price gouging.
How does he respond to these arguments?
(Hint: You might review Ian Maitland's defense of sweatshops, since Zwolinski's strategy is very similar.)
3. In sections 4C, 4D, and 4E, Zwolinski attempts to show that price gouging is actually morally permissible.
What are his arguments for this?
4. Can Zwolinski's arguments be used to defend, and perhaps even justify, Uber's surge pricing?

To answer these questions you will have to reflect critically on what you have read and possibly re-read important passages.

Although I strongly suggest that you write out brief answers to these questions, you do not have to turn in written responses. You do, however, need to be prepared to speak intelligently about these issues at our next class meeting.