

## Ethics & Medical Research

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### The Tuskegee Syphilis Experiment

As you read the material for the next class, keep the questions below in mind. To answer these questions you will have to reflect critically on what you have read and possibly re-read important passages. Keep in mind that there are two basic kinds of information that you need to look for in the readings:

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 conclusion about an issue, rather than another.

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 to these issues in the next class meeting.

#### Readings

- James Jones, “The Tuskegee Syphilis Experiment”, pp. 86–96.
- David Rothman, “Were Tuskegee & Willowbrook ‘Studies in Nature’?”, (PDF on webpage).

#### Questions

1. What were the central moral failings of the Tuskegee Study? Was racism a determinate one? Are these failings captured by the Nuremberg Code?
2. What reasons did the researchers provide to justify their decisions during the study in Tuskegee? Does this rationale share any similarities with the one made by Dr. Krugman at the Willowbrook State School? Or do you believe the two cases are sufficiently different?
3. What is a “study in nature”? What is Rothman’s argument offered in support of the claim that Tuskegee and Willowbrook were studies in nature? What are the moral presuppositions of this argument?