

Health, Development & Human Rights

Capabilities and Human Rights

As you read the material for our 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 about these issues at our next class meeting.

Reading

- Martha Nussbaum, "Women and Equality: The Capabilities Approach".

Questions

1. In her article, Martha Nussbaum is concerned about the treatment of women across all cultures. What three arguments purport to challenge universal or cross-cultural norms such as women's rights? Why does Nussbaum reject these three arguments?
2. What are the two traditional economic approaches in measuring quality of life Nussbaum mentions? Why does she reject them both, especially as assessments of the quality of women's lives?
3. How is the capabilities approach different from these two traditional economic approaches? What capabilities do people have that exert a moral claim on being developed? What justifies such a claim? How is this approach connected to the idea of human rights?