

Biological Sciences First Year Seminar on Research Ethics

Fetal, Embryonic & Stem Cell Research

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.

Remember that your **Reading Response #5** is due by Wednesday, February 19th at 12:00PM (noon) via TurnItIn. This write up should contain brief answers to these questions, totalling 500–600 words in length and conforming to the to the course's "General Technical Requirements for Formatting Assignments". Be sure to also print out a copy of your response for your own reference. This will help prepare you to speak intelligently about these issues during our next class meeting.

Readings

- Ronald M. Green, "Research With Fetuses, Embryos, and Stem Cells".

Questions

1. Based on the lengthy discussion of definitions by Ronald M. Green, why do you think it seems so difficult to definitely determine what is meant by calling something an "embryo" versus calling it a "fetus"? Why not simply use an English dictionary to resolve the issue? (Suggestion: consult a dictionary and see what you find.)
2. Why is there no such robust consensus concerning the ethics of research involving fetal tissue transplantation, embryos, stem cells, and cloning? In other words, what does each side of the debate believe and why is agreement between them allusive? Where does all this leave research in these areas?
3. What does it mean in these controversial areas of research to "benefit from evil"? Do you believe it is permissible for a researcher (or a society funding that research) to knowingly benefit from evil?