

Notes to Guide Reading

Week 4, Section 5: Individual Moral Responsibility for Climate Change

Maniates, “Individualization: Plant a Tree, Ride a Bike, Save the World?” (2001)

- Skip this reading.
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Sinnott-Armstrong, “It’s Not *My* Fault: Global Warming and Individual Moral Obligations” (2005)

- Only read sections 1, 2, and 3 (only the part on the harm principle (pp.297-9)), as well as 6 and 7.
- Be prepared to explain *in detail* Sinnott-Armstrong’s wasteful driving example and the lesson that we are supposed to learn from this example.
 - Also, be able to explain what type of rhetorical appeal(s) this is and whether—and why—you think that Sinnott-Armstrong’s appeal is successful. Think this through.
- Sinnott-Armstrong begins his article with eight explicit starting assumptions (293-4).
 - Be able to explain in detail one of these assumptions, and be prepared to explain whether or not you think this assumption is problematic.
 - This will require you to think about why Sinnott-Armstrong would make this assumption, and who his likely target audience is.
- With regard to Sinnott-Armstrong’s discussion on the harm principle in section 3, be prepared to answer the following:
 - Why does the harm principle fail to demonstrate why wasteful driving is immoral?
 - How does Sinnott-Armstrong’s discussion of the harm principle relate to his central claim? (What *is* his central claim?)
 - If Sinnott-Armstrong is correct that there is no defensible reason to believe wasteful driving is immoral, then does that mean that we have no obligations to mitigate climate change?