

Ethics

Professor Heather Widdows discusses her work in the field of ethics.

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I work on all areas of ethics from very practical to very theoretical areas and I have phd students who also work across practical and theoretical issues. For instance I have a student working on female suicide bombers and theories of female violence. I have students working on consent, confidentiality and capacity in medical ethics. On research ethics in the developing world. On NGO's, health and development NGOs. On theories of justice, global theories of justice and national theories of justice. As well as on issues of environment and climate change. In fact, in all areas of global ethics.

Global ethics is a discipline that looks at the challenges of ethics in an era of globalisation. We look at issues from climate change to war on terror to poverty to global injustice to women rights to violence. In fact, all of those areas that you think about when you think about what is challenging in the global context. That is global ethics.

Everything that can't be resolved in a national, single area of jurisdiction, is what we look at. For that reason it's a very multidisciplinary field. Even though I'm a moral philosopher by training, by expertise and by background, I spend a lot of my time working with policy makers, with politics theories and with activists.

For instance, I've brought people like Clare Short to speak about her political work and her concerns about global development and people like Phil Shiner who have taken the government to court on issues of nuclear weapons and are currently defending Iraqi civilians who have been tortured, who also work in Birmingham.

It's a big mix the kind of things I do in global ethics.

I also work a lot in bioethics. Again, from theory to practice. I work on genetic ethics, reproductive ethics and research ethics. But also, policy and practice works. So, for instance, I'm on the UK ethics and governance council for UK biobank. Again, a very practical element to my theoretical work.

Other areas that I work on are virtual ethics and health and happiness. For instance, I have a book on Iris Murdoch's philosophy and here I work with my colleagues on the health and happiness team on masters projects and phd projects on health, happiness, wellbeing, all those kinds of issues.

The final area I work on is women's rights and feminist activism. For instance, I have a book on reproductive rights and I do quite a lot of work, still, on things like prostitution, egg-sharing, all those kinds of women's rights issues as well as the global, virtual, bioethics issues. So, kind of all ethics things are welcome here.