

Professor Heather Widdows BD(Hons), PhD

John Ferguson Professor of Global Ethics

[Department of Philosophy \(/schools/ptr/departments/philosophy/index.aspx\)](/schools/ptr/departments/philosophy/index.aspx)

Contact details

Telephone [+44 \(0\)121 414 8399](tel:+441214148399) (tel: [+44 121 414 8399](tel:+441214148399))

Email h.widdows@bham.ac.uk (mailto: h.widdows@bham.ac.uk)

ERI Building
University of Birmingham
Edgbaston
Birmingham
B15 2TT
UK



About

Heather is on study leave until October 2016.

Heather works on Global Ethics, Bioethics, Virtue Ethics and Feminist Theory. She is particularly interested in the ethical issues which arise in the context of globalization, including those of technological development, war and terrorism, poverty and development as well as bioethical issues; particularly, those of reproductive, research and genetic ethics. Her current focus is on beauty from the perspective of moral philosophy and justice. Her current focus is on beauty from the perspective of moral philosophy and justice. To download her talk on this at the *Hay Festival* visit: www.hayfestival.com/p-8004-heather-widdows.aspx (<http://www.hayfestival.com/p-8004-heather-widdows.aspx>)

Biography

Heather Widdows is a leading international researcher across applied ethics. In 2005 she was awarded a visiting fellowship at Harvard University, where she worked on issues of moral neo-colonialism. She has led a number of funded projects on issues of property in the body; reproductive rights; human tissue; war on terror and ownership and governance of the genome. Her current primary project is on the moral philosophy of beauty and she holds a [Leverhulme Major Research Fellowship](http://www.leverhulme.ac.uk) (<http://www.leverhulme.ac.uk>) for the next two years to complete her book *Perfect Me!* (under contract with Princeton University Press).

Currently Heather serves as a member of the [Nuffield Council on Bioethics](http://www.nuffieldbioethics.org/) (<http://www.nuffieldbioethics.org/>) and is also on the REF Philosophy Sub-Panel. Previously she was a member of UK Biobank Ethics and Governance Council (2007 to 2013) and co-lead [Saving Humans](http://www.leverhulme.ac.uk) ([research/activity/ias/saving-humans/index.aspx](http://www.leverhulme.ac.uk)), one of the two inaugural themes of the [University's Institute of Advanced Studies](http://www.leverhulme.ac.uk) ([research/activity/ias/index.aspx](http://www.leverhulme.ac.uk)).

Teaching

- Module convener for Global Bioethics (UG and PG)
- Module convener for Virtue Ethics (with Iain Law)
- Module convener for Health and Happiness
- Clore Leadership Programme supervisor

Postgraduate supervision

- Moral theory, particularly virtue ethics
- Iris Murdoch
- Bioethics and public health; especially issues of global bioethics and health policy and including issues of genetics, reproduction, commodification and international research and governance
- Global ethics, global justice and duties beyond borders
- Communication across value-frameworks and belief systems; including issues about the possibility and desirability of global ethics and issues of moral neo-colonialism and multiculturalism
- Women's rights and reproductive rights
- Ethics and war, terrorism and torture
- The application of moral theory to policy and practice

Research

Leverhulme Major Research Fellowship (Oct 2014 to Sept 2016)

This fellowship supports the completion of a monograph *Perfect Me!*. 'Perfect me!' can be read in a number of ways: as an individual's aspiration to perfect themselves ('I want to be perfect'), as assertion of what being perfect is ('this is what I would be if I were perfect'), and as a command which a woman feels she should obey ('you should be perfect').

Perfect Me! explores all of these meanings, with particular focus on the moral element that each reading implies: the first, that being perfect is worth having; the second, a judgement that this is what perfection is; and the third, a moral imperative to attain it.

In addition to analysing the ideal of perfection as it is manifested in the dominant beauty ideal as a moral ideal, Professor Widdows will critique the current reliance on

individual choice and consent in determining the ethics of beauty practices. She will also focus on the picture of the moral self which underlies this ideal and suggest that there is a shift from identification of the self with the physical/observed body to the imagined body.

Ethics and the War on Terror. ESRC-funded seminar series (Oct 06-Oct 08).

Co-organiser with Dr Gillian Youngs (University of Leicester) and Professor Simon Caney (University of Oxford).

www.globalethics.bham.ac.uk/projects/war_on_terror.shtml (http://www.globalethics.bham.ac.uk/projects/war_on_terror.shtml)

Faiths and Development project. DIFD funded (March 2005-2010).

Co-applicant, Project Leader is Professor Carole Rakodi, International Development Department. A large scale programme consisting of a number of connected projects involving departments from across the University (including those of International Development, Theology and Education) and with UK and international partners from across Asia and Africa. Leader of the concept project cross-cutting theme of the programme. www.rad.bham.ac.uk (<http://www.rad.bham.ac.uk>)

TISS.EU (Evaluation of Legislation and Related Guidelines on the Procurement, Storage and Transfer of Human Tissues and Cells in the European Union an Evidence-Based Impact Analysis)

Co-applicant, EC-funded, 3 years, starting 2008. Lead applicant from the Department for Ethics and History of Medicine, University of Goettingen, Germany. Other co-applicants are the Medical Law and Bioethics Group, Institute for German and European Private and Commercial Law, University of Hanover, Germany; Stockholm Bioethics Centre, Stockholm University, Sweden; Center for Ethics and Law in Biomedicine, Central European University, Budapest, Hungary; Fondazione Lanza, Padova, Italy; Forensic & Legal Medicine, School of Medicine and Medical Science, National University of Ireland, Dublin; Centre de Recherche Droit, Sciences et Techniques, Université Paris 1, France; Institute of Bio-Law Legal Pathways, Aerdenhout, Netherlands; and Dept. of Medical History and Ethics, Vilnius University, Lithuania

Adobe Flash Player or QuickTime is required for video playback. [Get the latest Flash Player](#) [Get the latest version of QuickTime](#)

- [Video transcript \(/accessibility/transcripts/artsandlaw/ptr/heather-widdows-research.aspx\)](#)

[Watch a sample lecture \(http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZS8htbnCof0&feature=player_embedded\)](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZS8htbnCof0&feature=player_embedded) by Heather Widdows

[Watch Heather Widdows's talk "Perfect Me!" from Hay Festival, 2014 \(http://www.hayfestival.com/p-8004-heather-widdows.aspx\)](http://www.hayfestival.com/p-8004-heather-widdows.aspx)

Other activities

Professional service

- Member of the REF Philosophy Sub Panel.
- UK Biobank Ethics and Governance Council (until 2011) This is a high profile national committee to monitor the work of UK Biobank which will be the largest database of physical samples and lifestyle information in the world (www.ukbiobank.ac.uk) (<http://www.ukbiobank.ac.uk/>). Given the ambitious nature of the UK Biobank it is setting global precedents for the storage, management and use of genetic material and information. The Council is made up of twelve members competitively selected via an application process and interview (the interview panel included representatives from the DoH, the Chair of the MRC and the Chair of the Wellcome Trust). The other members are Professor Graeme Laurie (Chair), Ms Andrea Cook OBE (Vice Chair), Professor Erica Haimes, Professor Roger Higgs MBE (Vice Chair), Professor Ian Hughes, Dr Anneke Lucassen, Dr Roger Moore, Ms Hilary Newiss, Professor Martin Richards and Ms Sally Smith QC.
- Member of the Scientific Committee of the 10th World Congress of Bioethics; to be held in Singapore 28-31st July, 2010
- Co-organizer with Dr Christien van den Anker of the Third Biennial Conference of the International Global Ethics Association; to be held in UWE, Bristol 1-2 July 2010
- Chair of Global Studies Association, Sept 2005 - Sept 2007
- Lead Editor of Journal of Global Ethics
- Editorial Board of Asian Bioethics Review
- Editorial Board of Globalizations
- Editorial Board of Health Care Analysis
- External Examiner, Roehampton University, BSc in Human Rights (first multi-disciplinary UG degree in Human Rights in the UK) Oct 2004 - Oct 2007
- Invited expert on European Commission scientific advisors group Round Table on issues in Third World research, October 2002.

Publications

Books

- [The Connected Self: The Ethics and Governance of the Genetic Individual \(http://www.cambridge.org/9780521509916\)](http://www.cambridge.org/9780521509916) (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013).
- [Global Ethics: An Introduction \(http://www.acumenpublishing.co.uk/display.asp?K=e2010112411262375&dtspan=180:420&sort=sort_date/d&m=3&dc=30\)](http://www.acumenpublishing.co.uk/display.asp?K=e2010112411262375&dtspan=180:420&sort=sort_date/d&m=3&dc=30) (Durham: Acumen, 2011).
- [Global Social Justice \(http://www.routledge.com/books/details/9780415579414/\)](http://www.routledge.com/books/details/9780415579414/), edited with Nicola Smith (London: Routledge, 2011).
- [The Governance of Genetic Information : Who Decides? \(http://www.cambridge.org/catalogue/catalogue.asp?isbn=9780521509916\)](http://www.cambridge.org/catalogue/catalogue.asp?isbn=9780521509916), edited with Caroline Mullen (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008).
- [The Moral Vision of Iris Murdoch \(http://www.ashgate.com/default.aspx?page=637&calcTitle=1&title_id=6226&edition_id=7214\)](http://www.ashgate.com/default.aspx?page=637&calcTitle=1&title_id=6226&edition_id=7214) (Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing Ltd., 2006).

- **Women's Reproductive Rights** (<http://www.palgrave.com/products/title.aspx?PID=270987>), edited with Itziar Alkorta Idiakez and Aitziber Emaldi Ciri3n (London: Palgrave, 2006).

Peer reviewed journal articles

- **'The Ethics of Biobanking: Key Issues and Controversies'** (<http://www.springerlink.com/content/1065-3058/19/3/>) with Sean Cordell in *Health Care Analysis*, Vol. 19, No. 3, September 2011, pp 207-219.
- **'Lost property? Legal compensation for destroyed sperm: A reflection and comparison drawing on UK and French perspectives'** (<http://jme.bmj.com/content/37/12/147.full>), with Sean Cordell, Florence Bellivier and Christine Noiville *Journal of Medical Ethics*, June 2011.
- **'The right not to know: The case of psychiatric disorders'** (<http://eprints.bham.ac.uk/951/>), with Lisa Bortolotti *Journal of Medical Ethics*, 2011, 37, pp 673-676.
- **'Why communities and their goods matter: Illustrated with the example of biobanks'** (<http://phe.oxfordjournals.org/content/4/1/14.abstract>), with Sean Cordell, *Public Health Ethics*, 2011, 4 (1), pp 14-25.
- 'Western and Eastern Principles and Globalised Bioethics' **Asian Bioethics Review, Volume 3, Issue 1, 2011** (https://muse.jhu.edu/journals/asian_bioethics_review/toc/asb.3.1.html), pp 14-22
- 'Localised past, globalised future: Towards an effective bioethical framework using examples from population genetics and medical tourism' *Bioethics* (January 2011)
- 'Constructing Effective Ethical Frameworks for Biobanking', in *Dilemata: International Journal of Applied Ethics*, 2010, 4, pp. 15-31
- 'The Janus-Face of New Reproductive Technologies: Escaping the Polarised Debate' *International Journal of Public Theology*, 2010, 4, pp. 76-99
- 'Persons and their parts: New reproductive technologies and risks of commodification' *Health Care Analysis*, 2009, 17, pp. 36-46
- 'Between the individual and the community: The impact of genetics on ethical models' for *SI of New Genetics and Society*, 2009, 28, 2, pp.173-188
- 'Border disputes across bodies: Exploitation in Trafficking for Prostitution and Egg Sale for Stem Cell Research', *International Journal of the Feminist Association of Bioethics*, 2009, 2, 1, pp. 5-24
- 'Globalization, Ethics and the War on Terror', with Gillian Youngs, *Globalizations*, 2009, 6, 1, pp. 1-6
- Conceptualising Health: Insights from the Capability Approach, with Iain Law, *Health Care Analysis* (2008)
- The Self in the Genetic Era, *Health Care Analysis*, 2007, 15, pp. 5-12
- Moral Neocolonialism and Global Ethics, *Bioethics*, Volume 21, Number 6, 2007 pp. 305-315
- Interview with Noam Chomsky: Global ethics, American foreign policy and the academic as activist, *Journal of Global Ethics Volume 1*, Issue 2, 2005, pp. 197-205
- Religion as a Source of Moral Authority, *Heythrop Journal*, 2004, April, XLV, pp. 197-208
- Global Bioethics (with Donna Dickenson and Sirkku Hellsten) in *New Review in Bioethics*, Vol. 1, No.1, November 2003, pp. 101-116
- Disparities in Parenting Criteria: An Exploration of the Issues, focusing on Adoption and Embryo Donation (with Fiona McCallum) *Journal of Medical Ethics*, 2002, Vol. 28, pp. 139-142.
- Iris Murdoch's Good, *New Blackfriars*, Vol. 82, Issue 960, 2001, pp. 56-75

Chapters in books

- 'Rejecting the Choice Paradigm: Rethinking the ethical framework in prostitution and egg sale debates' in *Gender, Agency and Coercion* eds Anne Phillips, Sumi Madhok and Kalpana Wilson (Palgrave, forthcoming 2011)
- 'Iris Murdoch: A visionary?' in *Iris Murdoch: Texts and Contexts* eds. Anne Rowe and Avril Horner (Palgrave, forthcoming 2011)
- 'Ethics of Embryo Donation' with Fiona MacCallum in *Ethics of Reproductive Donation* eds Martin Richards and Giddo Pennings (CUP, forthcoming 2011)
- 'Reconsidering Consent and Biobanking', with Emma Bullock, in *Biobanks and Tissue Research. The Public, the Patient and the Regulation* eds. Christain Lenk and Nils Hoppe (Springer, forthcoming 2011)
- 'Global Ethics: An Overview' in *The Encyclopaedia of Applied Ethics* edited by Ruth Chadwick (forthcoming 2011)
- 'Rediscovering the Individual in the War on Terror: A virtue and liberal approach' in *Interrogating Terror* edited by Bob Brecher, Mark Devenney and Aaron Winter, London: Routledge, 2010, p. 5-20
- 'A Murdochian Evil' in *The Positive Function of Evil* edited by Pedro Tabensky, London: Plagrave, pp. 81-97
- 'Persons and their parts: New reproductive technologies and risks of commodification' in *Transformation and Transgression: The Legal, Medical and Cultural Regulation of the Body* edited by Ronan Deazely and Stephen Smith, Aldershot: Ashgate, 2009, pp.77-87
- 'Introduction' with Caroline Mullen in *The Governance of Genetic Information: Who Decides?* edited by Heather Widdows and Caroline Mullen, Cambridge University Press, 2009, pp1-12
- 'Constructing communal models of governance' in *The Governance of Genetic Information: Who Decides?* edited by Heather Widdows and Caroline Mullen, Cambridge University Press, 2009, pp75-98
- 'An Investigation of the Conception, Management and Regulation of Tangible and Intangible Property in Human Tissue: the PropEur Project' with Caroline Mullen in *Altruism reconsidered: Exploring new approaches to property in human tissue* edited by and Michael Stienmann, Peter Sykora, Urban Wiesing Aldershot: Ashgate, 2009, pp169-179
- Why and what global ethics? in *Ethics in an Era of Globalisation* Continuum Books edited Wim M.S. Ronald Commers, Wim Vandekerckhove & An Verlinden (2008)
- Reconceptualising Ethics: Challenges to Traditional Medical Ethics in *Ethics and Law of Intellectual Property: Current Problems in Politics, Science and Technology*, edited by Christian Lenk, Nils Hoppe and Roberto Andorno (2008)
- Christian approaches to Bioethics in *Principles of Health Care Ethics* (2nd edition), edited by Richard Ashcroft, Angus Dawson, Heather Draper, John McMillan (Wiley Press, 2007, pp. 99-107)
- Introduction to Women's Reproductive Rights, edited by Heather Widdows, Itziar Alkorta Idiakez and Aitziber Emaldi Ciri3n Palgrave: London, 2006. pp. 1-13.
- The impact of New Reproductive Technologies on Concepts of Genetic Relatedness and Non-relatedness in *Women's Reproductive Rights*, edited by Heather Widdows, Itziar Alkorta Idiakez and Aitziber Emaldi Ciri3n London: Palgrave 2006. pp. 151-164
- Why Global Ethics? in *Global Ethics and Civil Society*, edited by John Eade and Darren O'Byrne Aldershot: Ashgate, 2005. pp. 74-88
- The right to life; Abortion in *Essential Guide to Human Rights*, edited by R. Smith, and C. L. van den Anker, New York: Hodder Arnold, 2005. pp. 233-236
- The Ethics Of Secrecy in Donor Insemination in *Ethical Issues in Maternal-Fetal Medicine*, edited by Donna Dickenson, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002. pp. 167-180
- Secrecy in Donor Insemination in *The Ethics of New Reproductive Technologies*, edited by Dolores Dooley, Joan McCarthy, Tina Garanis-Papadatos and Panagiota Dalla Vorgia, Oxford: Berghman Books, 2002. pp. 36-50

Special Issues:

- Special Issue on 'The ethics of biobanking'. with Sean Cordell in *Health Care Analysis*. Available at: <http://www.springerlink.com/content/1065-3058/19/3/> (<http://www.springerlink.com/content/1065-3058/19/3/>)
- 'Ethics and the War on Terror' in *Globalizations*. With Gillian Youngs from the ESRC-funded series 'Ethics and the War on Terror'. 2009, 6, 1.

CD ROM

- **Cases in Medical Ethics and Law: An Interactive Tutorial** (<http://www.cambridge.org/catalogue/catalogue.asp?isbn=9780521537285>) (with David Lloyd and Donna Dickenson) Cambridge: Cambridge University Press (August, 2005) (with David Lloyd and Donna Dickenson) Cambridge: Cambridge University Press (August, 2005)
- Property Regulation in European Science, Ethics and Law: Conference DVD and Survey (with Caroline Mullen and Dita Wickins-Drazilova) EU Project Publication (December 2006). Available on request and free of charge, please email h.widdows@bham.ac.uk (<mailto:H.Widdows@bham.ac.uk>)

Expertise

Ethics, policy and governance issues, in particular global ethics, bioethics, reproductive technologies, medical tourism, genetic ethics and governance; war on terror; global justice; feminist theory; women's rights; moral theory

Expertise

Ethics, policy and governance issues, in particular global ethics, bioethics, reproductive technologies, medical tourism, genetic ethics and governance; war on terror; global justice; feminist theory; women's rights; moral theory

[Privacy](#) | [Legal](#) | [Cookies and cookie policy](#) | [Accessibility](#) | [Site map](#) | [Website feedback](#) | [Charitable information](#)

© University of Birmingham 2015

