

# GLOBAL ETHICS



Birmingham is emerging as a global leader in the study of the biggest moral and ethical issues facing humanity today, including extreme poverty, global warming, global health, global developments in science and technology, war and humanitarian interventions, global governance, global trade and consumption, and gender justice. Our Centre for the Study of Global Ethics is the first centre of its kind in the UK.



## Key messages

- Birmingham attracts some of the world's top academics to a dynamic and fast-growing department.
- Global ethics looks at some of the most important issues affecting our planet, and Birmingham – as the first university to set up a dedicated centre – is at the forefront of this area.
- Birmingham academics are making a hugely positive impact in the field of global ethics, carrying out high-quality research that has been independently assessed as world leading and is helping to shape public policy and practice.

## Background

The Centre for the Study of Global Ethics at the University of Birmingham was founded in 2001. It was set up to address the key ethical issues of our time.



- Ethics is the study of how individuals and institutions ought to conduct themselves. Global ethics focuses especially on those moral problems that arise in international or transnational contexts.
- The Centre approaches global ethics in a multidisciplinary way that combines both theory and practice, working with colleagues in other disciplines and governments, non-governmental organisations and private sector organisations to address key ethical problems.

## The evidence

- Birmingham's philosophy research was ranked second in the country in the Research Excellence Framework (REF) 2014, with 80 per cent having a global impact and 83 per cent rated as 4\* or 3\* – the two highest categories for quality.
- Birmingham's philosophy research was ranked first in the country for impact which was led by global ethics.
- Global ethics at Birmingham has recently captured major research grants for projects on mental health, the ethics of nuclear non-proliferation, beauty norms and standards of perfection.

**A SERIES OF HIGH-PROFILE STAFF APPOINTMENTS HAVE HELPED GLOBAL ETHICS AT BIRMINGHAM IN ITS AIM OF CONTINUING TO GROW ITS FACULTY RANKS TO SUPPORT WORLD-CLASS RESEARCH, PUBLIC OUTREACH AND POLICY IMPACT, AS WELL AS GROWING STUDENT DEMAND FOR THE STUDY OF ETHICS AND GLOBAL JUSTICE.**

**GLOBAL ETHICS INVESTIGATES SOME OF THE MOST IMPORTANT MORAL PROBLEMS FACING HUMANITY INCLUDING EXTREME POVERTY, GLOBAL WARMING, GLOBAL HEALTH, GLOBAL DEVELOPMENTS IN SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY, WAR AND HUMANITARIAN INTERVENTIONS, GLOBAL GOVERNANCE, GLOBAL TRADE AND CONSUMPTION, AND GENDER JUSTICE.**

## Key projects

- Professor Heather Widdows, Centre Director, recently concluded a series of major projects looking at the ethics of 'biobanking' – the storage of human biological samples for research – which has made an important contribution to the emerging debate around this controversial issue. She has served on the UK Biobank Ethics and Governance Council and currently serves on the Nuffield Council of Bioethics. After securing a prestigious Leverhulme Major Research Fellowship, Professor Widdows is now writing a book on beauty ideals, under contract with Princeton University Press, which explores the global dominance of beauty norms, both as moral ideals and as an issue of justice.



- Dr Scott Wisor is helping in the global fight against poverty through the development of a new way of measuring deprivation around the world. The new tool has been trialled nationally in the Philippines, will be deployed next year in Fiji and is being presented at a United Nations commission, all with the aim of giving governments and international organisations a more accurate picture of poverty and how to tackle it most effectively.

**AN IMPORTANT NEW BOOK EDITED BY DR HERJEET MARWAY AND PROFESSOR HEATHER WIDDOWS WILL EXPLORE VIOLENCE INFILCTED ON AND CARRIED OUT BY WOMEN, LOOKING AT THE EXTENT OF AGENCY ATTRIBUTED TO WOMEN WHEN IT COMES TO VIOLENCE.**

Birmingham is working with Yale University and the University of Delhi to support the development of a pioneering global justice programme in India. The Nyaya Global Justice Programme at the University of Delhi will be a major intellectual hub for the study of international ethical questions that have strong implications for India and neighbouring countries.

