

How do we deal with a world of finite resources?

Goals:

- Have students generate responses/solutions to Lifeboat Problem and, in general, crisis/scarcity/humanitarian intervention scenarios—*what should we do when others are in need of resources/aid that we control?*
- Students will be able to question assumptions that underlie philosophical thought experiments

I. Introduction

- **We present: Lifeboat Problem (sans his solution) and ask: what should we do?**
- **Quiet/write time:** brainstorm responses
- **Turn and talk:** How did you respond?

II. Group discussion

- Open up discussion
 - Students will discuss their responses to this problem
 - We may present his solutions to the lifeboat problem and have them respond (if discussion needs direction)
- Questions to consider when evaluating responses:
 - Should we help the others?
 - Why? Why not? What are the risks? What do we owe others (the people in the water)?
 - What risk and/or sacrifice are you willing to undertake for the good of others/society?
- Add changes lifeboat problem:
 - What if the people in the water used to be on the boat and were thrown in?
- Interrogate the nature of the problem
 - How did the people in the water get there?
 - How did the people on the boat get there?

III. Real-world

- What real world situations parallel this problem?
 - Ukraine - refugees, prospect of US war
 - Hardin - global hunger
 - Afghanistan sanctions and frozen assets – split with 9/11 families

IV. Relevance?

- Considering the potential applications of the problem to real world, we can begin to ask
 - What is this experiment suggesting/trying to illustrate about problems in the world? Is it useful?
 - What does it tell us about how to live our lives (if anything)?
 - Is this a model of human society?
 - What does this assume about human nature? About the world?
- Getting at the assumptions that underlie the posing of the problem
 - We live in a world of resource scarcity
 - True in some ways, false in others (there is enough food to feed everyone)
 - The people in the lifeboat have no responsibility for the people being in the water
 - Not true - relationships of extraction between wealthy and poor countries
- *Constructing a thought experiment, particularly one to be applied to the real world, can build in assumptions about human nature/society/the world and thus predispose us to certain conclusions. In considering a real-world argument rooted in such experiments, we must recognize these assumptions and critique them.*