

Pre-college Philosophy lesson 6 - Crime and Punishment

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Goals: Discuss different philosophies of punishment, retributive vs restorative. Discuss the societal goals of punishment. Question the nature of punishment.

Intro: Names and one example of crime that they feel deserves a “minor” punishment.

First Activity: Why We Punish/Means of punishment

- Have students write down what they believe the main reason that we punish
 - Go around the room and each student says what they wrote
 - Discuss similarities and differences between their views of punishment
- Think about severity of crimes and corresponding severity of punishments
 - How should we take into account societal factors when discussing punishment?
- Defining a few terms with them (maybe they will get there on their own, but we should definitely make sure that they know the differences between these two forms of justice)
 - Retributive justice focuses on punishment as a primary means of restoring justice
 - Restorative justice focuses on reaffirming shared values and learning from mistakes as a means of restoring justice

Second Activity: Heinz Problem

- Heinz Problem
 - Should Heinz steal the medicine that saves his wife? Should he be punished? How should he be punished?
 - What would happen if he did/did not steal the medicine? Compare and contrast
 - Is punishment consequentialist by nature? Is there something more to punishment than the possible outcomes?
 - What is the severity of the punishment that would be “right” for this action (taking into account all potential actions he might take)?
- What types of actions deserve punishment?
 - How should we hold people accountable for their actions, is retributive or restorative justice better?
- Is punishment necessary?
 - Is Retributive punishment good?
 - Is Restorative punishment good?
 - Either more good than the other?

- Is punishment an example of care?
- Do all immoral actions deserve punishment?
- Is there a moral aspect to punishment?

Third Activity: Superheroes (if needed)

- Are superheroes the ultimate purveyor of good/moral actions?
- Should superheroes be punished for damaging large metropolitan areas?
- Do they escape punishment?

Guiding Questions:

- When is it right to punish?
- Is punishment necessary?
- Punishment of people in power