

*Global Ethics: An Introduction* Written by  
Kimberly Hutchings  
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Kimberly Hutchings' *Global Ethics: An Introduction*, is an ambitious, accessible and interesting book, which raises several key questions surrounding contemporary international law, and the ethical systems which influence these laws. Hutchings uses the first chapter of her book to explain the usage of the term global ethics in the title:

*Global Ethics is a field of theoretical enquiry that addresses ethical questions and problems arising out of the global interconnection and interdependence of the world's population* [author's italics].

At its core, this book conducts a 'theoretical enquiry' into ethics, as opposed to a history of ethical debates. From this perspective, the book clearly recognizes the dynamic relationship between written law and its scrutiny by researchers. What is most refreshing about this

book is that the reader is encouraged to participate in the key ethical debates introduced in the text through a series of questions and case-studies, which he or she is called upon to evaluate on ethical grounds. This book operates on a number of levels. It is useful as an introduction to global ethics. However, it also manages to comment upon, and extend, ethical debates from the last ten years, the “War on Terror,” for example, features as a topic in several parts of the book. *Global Ethics* is most beneficial for the undergraduate student, studying Law, Sociology or Politics. Hutching dedicates this book to her students, and she clearly has them in mind when she incorporates “references and further reading,” at the end of each chapter. Similarly, the book’s glossary ensures that those who are new to the topic become quickly familiar with the terminology the text uses to illuminate the subject. As a tutor myself, I appreciate the transferability of the book’s structure into particular lesson plans or assignments. For example, the chapter on the “Ethics of War” would form the basis for an excellent discussion on the ethical questions surrounding war, especially as it explains each of the ethical arguments for war in succession (e.g. “Comparative Justice;” “Just Cause;” “Last Resort” etc.) It is precisely the length of such chapters

in conjunction with the breadth of the argument contained within them that would be likely to provoke constructive discussions in a seminar environment. In this respect the book could potentially become primary reading material on any of the courses listed above, because of its appeal to student readers on the topic.

*Global Ethics* is a carefully researched and scholarly text, which, in addition to its suggestions for further reading at the end of each chapter, cites throughout the body of the writing key references to the most recent research in the related field. Hutchings understands that it is not possible to fully engage with *all* of the leading research on Global Ethics in one book, and thus, introduces her text with a list of central premises that she wishes to develop:

Global Ethics: in this book it is defined as the systematic investigation of: (a) different accounts of how we are to ground the authority of moral claims about global issues (*why*); (b) different substantive answers to moral questions about war and peace, the global political economy, the global environment, clashes of incommensurate values exacerbated by globalised conditions (*what*); (c) different views about the identity and nature of morally relevant actors in the global sphere (*who*) and (d) different practical implications drawn from the above for the entitlements and obligations of individuals and collective moral actors related to each other through conditions of globalization (*how*).<sup>16</sup>

By connecting each of the above points under the terms, why, what, who and how, she draws upon the interconnectedness of ethical issues between governments, organizations and global economies. At no time does this book remove its attention from a global investigation of ethics, and it draws upon ethical dilemmas from areas as diverse as Afghanistan, Iraq, and Kosovo. *Global Ethics* also invokes an array of recent cultural and historical examples to explicate the above enquiries, drawing on the ethical debates within international aid and the production of the Millennium Development Goals, alongside the urgency of the current debate on how to respond to global climate change. This book's strength comes from its willingness to reconcile traditional ethical paradigms (Kantian, Benthamite etc.) with current ethical dilemmas in the world. However, while the book engages effectively with the problem of the global in a legal context, it contains only a limited discussion on the emergence of globalization over the last thirty years and the ethical problems surrounding it – the exploitation of poorer countries by major global economies, for example. Given that the book is specifically an introductory study of global ethics, this may have had the effect of curtailing extremely interesting readings of particular

ethical issues. For example, the *Ethics of War* chapter would have benefited from an elaboration on the fascinating possibilities it alludes to, in particular, the discussion of ethical *phronesis*, or the ongoing process of moral judgment which underpins all armed-conflict.

Nevertheless, *Global Ethics* should essentially be regarded as a useful starting point towards a wider discussion on contemporary ethics. It is both informative and analytical, as, throughout, it encourages its readers to reflect upon what the previous chapter has addressed. This book's greatest achievement lies in its ability to open up a complex series of ethical debates by grounding such debates in language which is easily accessible to readers who are new to the subject. *Global Ethics*, if used as a teaching device, serves not only to make ethical discourse more accessible but also to provide a space through which students may interrogate this discourse.

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