Organizing a High School Ethics Bowl: A Comprehensive Guide

by Roberta Israeloff & Matt Deaton, Ph.D.

The Squire Family Foundation
"After spending the day at the Long Island High School Ethics Bowl, I find myself feeling optimistic about the ‘younger generation’ – for the first time. Hearing these students grapple with these serious issues gave me hope for our future."

– Audience Member & Parent, 2012 Long Island HSEB

“The faculty members and graduate students running the event gave just the right gravitas to the competition, creating a spirit of civility in the room that benefited every student who participated. High school sports could learn a few things from Ethics Bowl about collegiality and respect for others.”

– Audience Member & Parent, 2012 Tennessee HSEB

“I had a tendency to be a little inflexible and unyielding once I determined my opinion on an issue. However, the Ethics Bowl helped force me to consider and even accept opposing arguments. This has translated to how I think about problems overall.”

– Student Participant, 2012 Long Island HSEB

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Letter from the Authors........................................................................................................................................... 4
What is an Ethics Bowl?........................................................................................................................................... 5
  What kinds of topics are discussed? ....................................................................................................................... 5
  How competitive is an ethics bowl? ...................................................................................................................... 5
  Which communities sponsor high school ethics bowls? ...................................................................................... 6
How Does an Ethics Bowl Work? ............................................................................................................................ 7
  Who participates in an ethics bowl? ....................................................................................................................... 7
  How does a team prepare? .................................................................................................................................... 8
  How does an ethics bowl proceed? ...................................................................................................................... 8
What criteria do judges use to score the rounds? ................................................................................................... 9
How are points awarded? ....................................................................................................................................... 10
How long does a bowl last? ..................................................................................................................................... 10
Are there rules governing team participation? ..................................................................................................... 10
Can students bring notes with them to the event? ............................................................................................... 10
Do students need to cite ethical theory and theorists? .......................................................................................... 11
Appendix

Why Organize an Ethics Bowl? .................................................................................. 18

What are the benefits for the country? .................................................................. 18

What are the benefits of high school ethics bowls for students? ............................... 19

General Questions ................................................................................................. 21

What is philosophy? .............................................................................................. 21

What is ethics? ........................................................................................................ 21

What are the four dominant ethical theories? ......................................................... 21

Where can I get more information? ...................................................................... 22

Appendix .................................................................................................................. 24

2013 National High School Ethics Bowl rules, procedures and format .................. 24

Rules ....................................................................................................................... 24

Competition procedure ......................................................................................... 25

Competition format ............................................................................................... 27

Two Sample press releases .................................................................................... 28

Long Island Bowl press release ............................................................................. 28

East Tennessee Bowl press release ...................................................................... 29

Sample letter to principals .................................................................................... 30

Sample registration form ....................................................................................... 31

Sample letter to prospective judges .................................................................... 32

Sample flyer ........................................................................................................... 33

Sample judge scoring sheet .................................................................................. 34

Sample game plan .................................................................................................. 36
LETTER FROM THE AUTHORS

Welcome to the rewarding world of High School Ethics Bowls!

Thank you for your interest. The mere fact that you’ve opened this document speaks volumes about your commitment to ethics.

As we explain in the following pages, ethics bowls at the high school level truly possess the potential to transform America's political culture. When students think through issues in the way ethics bowls encourage, they naturally become more respectful, thoughtful, and virtuous. And as the network of high school ethics bowls spreads across the nation in the coming decade, American civil discourse will begin to elevate as a result – transforming the public forum from a place of petty quarrel to a home for the sincere and cooperative pursuit of justice.

Luckily, organizing a bowl isn't difficult, and needn’t be expensive. And with the help provided in this guide, doing so is fully within your grasp. But the really good news is that you don’t have to do it alone. We are eager to provide free consultation – our assistance doesn’t end with this document. This is only the beginning.

We encourage you to create a rough action plan and begin reaching out to potential volunteers immediately. Share your enthusiasm, your ideas, and this document – turn your good intentions into positive outcomes, one step at a time. And remember to stay in touch! We're here to help.

Sincerely,

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WHAT IS AN ETHICS BOWL?

An Ethics Bowl is a collaborative yet competitive event in which teams analyze a series of wide-ranging ethical dilemmas. Responses are judged according to the quality of a team’s reasoning and how well team members:

- organize and present their case
- attend to and analyze the morally relevant features of the case
- anticipate and preemptively respond to commentary and questions

An exciting tournament, an ethics bowl is a great way for students to deepen their understanding and appreciation of interesting ethical and philosophical issues.

WHAT KINDS OF TOPICS ARE DISCUSSED?

High school ethics bowls typically utilize case studies most obviously relevant to young students, such as questions concerning cheating, plagiarism, peer pressure, use and abuse of social media, privacy, relationship responsibilities, and the like. However, political and social issues -- free speech, gun control, and eco-tourism -- and bioethical issues, such as cloning, parental consent, and stem cell research, are also of great interest to teenagers, and are sometimes included.

HOW COMPETITIVE IS AN ETHICS BOWL?

Although the event is competitive, it is intended to promote collaboration. Teams do not have to take pro/con positions; in fact, they can agree with each other. They are not required to refute each other’s points but rather are asked to offer commentary on one another’s arguments. Teams are coached to not think in terms of “beating” the other team by out-arguing their opponents, or to try to score points through rhetorical or semantic fine points. Rather, they are encouraged to arrive at whatever seems to be the best answer together, through informed, civil dialogue.

In addition, many bowls award not only the winners, but also first- and second-place runners up, as well as several honorable mention awards for such areas as teamwork, best responses during the “commentary” portion of the round, and best responses to judges’ questions.
WHICH COMMUNITIES SPONSOR HIGH SCHOOL ETHICS BOWLS?

The high school ethics bowl initiative has shown impressive growth. In 2008, there were only three bowls – one each in Florida, Maryland and New Jersey. But 2011 saw eight regional high school bowls, and as of spring 2012, there are at least nine more regions in the process of creating bowls across the US (in California, Georgia, Illinois, Indiana, Pennsylvania, Texas, Utah, Washington, and Washington DC). We anticipate that several of these new regional competitions will send teams to the National Competition.

![Image of students working together]

Just as impressive, registration in existing regions has increased dramatically. The East Tennessee High School Ethics Bowl in Knoxville, for example, began with two teams; three years later, six registered. The Long Island Bowl began with 10 teams from 8 schools; this past year, 22 teams from 14 schools registered. The Chapel Hill Bowl has had similar success: in its first year, 7 teams from 6 schools participated; last year, 14 teams from 11 schools attended. Attendance at all regional bowls is expected to increase again in 2012-13.

A major development that is fueling recent growth is the announcement of an impending national bowl. The Inaugural National High School Ethics Bowl (NHSEB) will be held on April 19-20, 2013, at the Parr Center for Ethics at the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill. Additionally, a Case Writing Competition will be held in conjunction with the national bowl, in which students will be invited to write their own ethics bowl cases and study questions. Winners will earn cash awards, and winning cases will be archived and used in future bowls.
HOW DOES AN ETHICS BOWL WORK?

There is some flexibility in how ethics bowls are structured, depending on resources, how many teams participate, and other factors. Bowls have taken place with as few as two teams, and as many as twenty-two: they can occur in school gymnasiums or in college auditoriums. The structure and rules are adaptable.

However, we are going to describe the procedures adopted by the NHSEB because teams that wish to participate in the national competition will have to use these rules and guidelines.

WHO PARTICIPATES IN AN ETHICS BOWL?

Each bowl needs:
- At least one organizer.
- Moderators who read case questions and time the rounds.
- Judges.
  - Judges are drawn from the community from an array of professions. Anyone with an interest in ethical issues can be a judge; no philosophy background is necessary. However, judges should be disinterested, and inspire confidence in the objectivity of the event. For example, parents of students at a competing school might project the appearance of partiality, and for that reason are typically poor candidates. A judges training video is available here.
  - The number of judges required depends on the number of teams participating. Each individual round should be judged by a panel of at least 3 judges.
- At least one coach for each team, usually a high school teacher at the school.
- One assistant coach for each team, usually a philosophy graduate or undergraduate student or faculty member from a nearby college.
- Students/team members. Teams typically have between 3-5 students.
HOW DOES A TEAM PREPARE?

Teams are typically assigned an official coach (usually a high school teacher), as well as an assistant coach (often a philosophy graduate student, undergraduate student, or faculty member from the organizing institution). Together they meet and think through ethical case studies as they would during an actual competition. Cases from previous Intercollegiate Ethics Bowl (IEB) competitions and high school ethics bowls are archived here and may be used for practice purposes as early as a team pleases. Just be sure to credit IEB.

However, teams typically receive the pool of official cases at least two months before the event itself. (This differs from the National High School Ethics Bowl, when the official case pool is released one month prior to the event itself.) All cases used during the bowl will be drawn from this pool. Students can also receive study questions to guide their analysis and preparation. However, the specific questions for each case asked on the day of the bowl are not revealed beforehand.

HOW DOES AN ETHICS BOWL PROCEED?

Bowls are typically divided into rounds, and each round is divided into two parts (two cases are considered in each round) so that each team has a chance to present, comment and respond, and answer judges’ questions. The procedure is as follows:

1. Moderator reads the first selected case.
2. Presentation: Team A, the presenting team, is allowed two minutes to confer. Team A then presents its case for 7 minutes.
3. Commentary: Team B confers for one minute, and then comments on Team A’s presentation for 3 minutes. Note: During this portion of the round, Team B should not present its analysis of the case under discussion, but rather should comment upon the case that Team A presented.
4. Response: Team A confers for one minute, and then responds to Team B’s commentary for 3 minutes.
5. Judges’ Questions: Over the course of ten minutes, judges may ask members of the presenting team questions related to the case.
6. Judges score the round. Each individual round should be judged by a panel of at least 3 judges (4-5 judges for the final round). A sample judges’ scoring sheet is included in the appendix here.
7. Then, the moderator reads the second case designated for the round, and the teams switch positions, so that now Team B becomes the presenting team, and the round proceeds as above.
8. At the conclusion of the round, the winner is announced.

WHAT CRITERIA DO JUDGES USE TO SCORE THE ROUNDS?

Teams are judged based on how well they convey an understanding of the ethical theories they cite, how carefully they attend to the nuances in the cases, the overall effectiveness of their presentation, how well they embody the spirit of the philosophical pursuit of truth (as opposed to a combative disposition bent on “winning”), and how well the teams follow the official rules and procedures. At the end of the bowl, scores are compiled and the places are announced. In the event of a tie, teams are placed according to the lowest number of losses, greatest point differential, highest point total, and finally, if still tied after all of the above has been considered, a coin toss.
HOW ARE POINTS AWARDED?

Presentation: 30 points  
Commentary: 5 points  
Response: 5 points  
Judges’ questions: 20 points

The highest score a team can attain is 60 points. The team with the highest score (total points from all three judges) wins the match.

HOW LONG DOES A BOWL LAST?

Length depends on how many teams participate, and how many rounds are scheduled. An ethics bowl can take anywhere from 3 – 7 hours.

ARE THERE RULES GOVERNING TEAM PARTICIPATION?

At most bowls, teams decide which member(s) will present their case. The allotted time can be divided so that each person has a turn to speak, or one person can make the entire presentation. In some bowls, teams in which all members participate receive special recognition for teamwork, but the decision to use this as a criterion is left to the bowl’s organizer(s).

CAN STUDENTS BRING NOTES WITH THEM TO THE EVENT?

Students are not permitted to bring notes to the rounds; however, paper and pens are provided for team members to communicate with each other during rounds. Team members are also not permitted to consult with their coaches during rounds, but may do so between rounds.
DO STUDENTS NEED TO CITE ETHICAL THEORY AND THEORISTS?

Citing ethical theory and quoting philosophers is not required or necessary. People can and do make sound moral judgments simply by focusing on moral relevancies, drawing illuminating comparisons, and striving for logical consistency amongst their considered convictions. Familiarity with J.S. Mill or Aristotle is not required to do that.

That said, studying ethical theory and reading philosophy – especially theoretical and applied ethics – does tend to make reasoning through ethical issues easier and more fruitful. However, quoting Kant, especially incorrectly, may come across as an appeal to authority – a reasoning fallacy that may undermine an otherwise outstanding argument. Teams are therefore encouraged to study academic ethics during their preparation, and may very well benefit from incorporating what they’ve learned into their presentations, but are cautioned to cite theory only if competent to do so.

IS THERE A DRESS CODE?

This can be determined by the organizer. Generally, the suggested attire is more formal than shorts and flip flops, but less formal than suits and ties.
HOW IS AN ETHICS BOWL ORGANIZED?

As you read the below guidelines and begin organizing your bowl, remember that you don’t have to do any of this alone. High School Ethics Bowl Organizers are an incredibly helpful bunch. So should you have questions about a particular step, don’t be afraid to contact Roberta or Matt. If we can’t answer your question, chances are we know an organizer who can!

WHAT IS THE ROLE OF THE LEAD ORGANIZER(S)?

The organizers need to: (1) find a venue for the bowl, (2) recruit schools to complete, and (3) coordinate the logistical and organizational elements.

WHAT TYPE OF VENUE IS NEEDED?

Ideally, high school ethics bowls take place on college campuses; this lends gravitas to the event, and enables some students who wouldn’t otherwise visit a campus to experience it. It also helps cement ties between the team members and their assistant coaches, who are often affiliated with sponsoring colleges. However, the bowl can also take place in a high school. Whatever the location, rooms (such as regular classrooms) are needed for the regular rounds, as well as a gym, theater or auditorium for the championship rounds. If breakfast and lunch are provided, accommodations for the meal will be needed as well.

You may want to consider AV equipment so that the questions are projected onto the backdrop, and microphones. You may also consider having the rounds, particularly the final rounds, videotaped. A video record enables organizers to review and improve the bowl, and can serve as a valuable promotional tool.
WHAT’S THE BEST WAY TO RECRUIT HIGH SCHOOLS TO PARTICIPATE?

Several different approaches have worked. Organizers can contact principals, department chairs (particularly from the social studies/history and/or English departments); or teachers, particularly those who coach debate, forensics, Model UN, and similar competitions with aspects common to ethics bowls.

Organizers with a university affiliation have also had success reaching out to the education department or program at their school: because student teachers are placed in community schools, this is a good place to make key contacts. Sometimes, education departments have a designated liaison between the university and local schools who can help with recruitment.

Whatever your initial approach, it is a good idea to clear a school’s participation with its principal at some point. A sample letter to send principals can be found in the appendix here.

WHAT’S THE BEST SCHEDULE TO FOLLOW IN PLANNING AN ETHICS BOWL?

Generally, staging an ethics bowl requires five to six months of preparation. Here’s a draft schedule:

August/September:

Pitch idea to colleagues and recruit volunteers. A sample judge recruiting letter is in the appendix here.

Receive the official case pool from the National High School Ethics Bowl. Alternatively, if planning to hold a practice or scrimmage bowl, organize a committee to compose, edit and select cases and questions. Archived cases from previous IEB bowls can be found here. Please credit IEB if you use them.

Recruit teams – teacher/coaches and students – by mailing brochures and information about ethics bowls, and following up with phone calls and in-person visits. A sample letter to principals can be found in the appendix here.
here. Email Matt to request a sample PowerPoint to present interested students or administrators.

October:

Court stakeholders – principals, teachers, assistant coaches, etc.

November:

Ask teacher/coach to commit to participate and determine how many teams will be participating (which determines the number of rounds, cases, and judges you'll need). If your bowl has ample funding, sometimes a monetary incentive (a partial pre-payment for committing to participate) is effective. A sample registration can be found in the appendix here.

Send packet of cases, study questions and other study guides to coaches and teams. (This can be done sooner if teams are serious and on board.)

December:

Book venue, order trophies.

February:

Send press release to local media (two samples can be found in the appendix here), confirm everyone’s participation, confirm logistical details.

Hold ethics bowl.

WHAT NEEDS TO BE DONE AS THE BOWL APPROACHES?

As the bowl draws near:

- Ensure the venue is still available and will be ready (PA equipment, seating, etc.)
- Touch base with the coaches—see if they have any last-minute questions
- Ensure the judges are attending and understand the rules and procedures
- Ensure everyone has directions to the event and knows where to park
➢ If you’ve ordered trophies (do so at least a month prior to the event), verify the spelling and pick them up
➢ If changes arise, keep everyone in the loop

Also, if you’ve never hosted an event like this, printing a personalized “game plan” that will lead you from the opening introductions all the way through the award presentations can really help. Find a complete sample game plan at the end of this document in the appendix here.

HOW MUCH DOES AN ETHICS BOWL COST?

The budget for a successful ethics bowl can run as little as $250. At minimum, funds are needed to purchase trophies for the winning team(s), and to cover copying and other administrative costs. Beyond this, there is a wide range of discretionary spending. Funds can be used to purchase “thank you” gifts for all the volunteers – coaches, moderators and judges – as well as to provide runner-up and honorable mention prizes, if those are given. Additionally, food can be provided.

If organizers can raise additional funding for the event – whether through private or corporate donations, or a university office such as Campus Outreach or Community Events – participating in the bowl becomes more prestigious and enhances the possibility that the event will expand and be sustained in future years.

Additional funds can be given as monetary awards to winning teams which can be earmarked to help create or sustain philosophy/ethics clubs – to buy texts, and help underwrite food costs for regular meetings. Funds can be also used to offset travel costs associated with participation in the National High School Ethics Bowl for your bowl’s champion.
HOW CAN ONE GENERATE PUBLICITY?

Generating positive publicity is essential to expansion, and this is almost impossible without the help of the media. When contacting media professionals, keep in mind that they are often overworked and underpaid, and will be more likely to give your bowl the attention it deserves to the extent that you make their job easy. So supply photography, offer quotes, and write your press releases as if they’ll be printed as-is, for in many cases, they will. Find two sample press releases in the appendix here.

HOW DO ETHICS BOWLS BECOME SUSTAINED AND GROW?

The key to sustainment and growth is recruiting quality volunteers, and giving them increasing degrees of responsibility as it is earned. The lead organizer will need to pitch the idea to friends and colleagues in the hope that they’ll offer to help. This usually isn’t difficult – finding people to volunteer to join in an ethics bowl is a relatively easy sell.

What’s more difficult is maintaining continuity since changing life situations will often alter colleagues’ ability to help, and since graduate students, in particular, have a habit of graduating.

The key to succession is to recruit replacements as soon as they enter an organization, and nurture their involvement through the years. It’s also a good idea to keep an eye out for someone for whom you can groom for the leadership role, in case you are unable to continue as lead organizer at some point.

BONUS TIPS

- **Educate yourself a bit on ethical theory.** Just as you don’t need to be a hall-of-famer to organize a kids’ baseball league, you don’t need a Ph.D. in philosophy to organize a high school ethics bowl. But it helps to know the basics: the essence of
philosophy and ethics, as well as the four dominant ethical theories. We’ve provided a brief primer that addresses just those points [here](#).

- **Try to generate publicity** for the event. Beyond courting the press, post flyers and use social networks to invite not only the school community but the general public as well. Also, find someone to videotape and photograph the event. These records will be key when you begin expansion efforts.

- **Secure a venue and settle on a date prior to mailing invitations.** Having a place and time for your bowl will make schools more likely to participate.

- **Pick a weekday that doesn’t conflict** with sports, holidays, other special events or church. How do you know if a candidate day is good? Many school districts post their calendars online. If you can’t find one via Google, call or email the superintendent.

- **The best venue might just be the one that’s free and available!** All you need is a stage area for the teams, a prominent view for the judges, some space for a moderator, and seats for the crowd. Holding the event in a space that’s respectable, neutral and big enough to accommodate all the participants will bolster the bowl’s prestige and importance.
Consciously reflecting on your reasons for organizing an ethics bowl will make you a better organizer and a more convincing advocate.

Two prime reasons for organizing the event include its positive impact on participants' character and by extension our political culture.

Name-calling, intimidation, and fallacious arguments are all too common in contemporary American politics. Whatever its source, this corrosive approach to public discourse has infected our political chambers and our town halls, and even our religious institutions and living rooms.

High school ethics bowls are a much-needed counterbalance to this unfortunate trend. The hope is that as ethics bowls expand and take root across the country, the growing wave of alumni will exert their positive influence not only in the political arena, but also in business, civic associations, and throughout our society.

The resulting change will take time to bring about, but it is one America desperately needs. And few solutions promise to make a more lasting and deep impact than high school ethics bowls.

Maybe you already have a vague idea as to why you might be interested in putting together an ethics bowl in your area. But *explicitly* knowing why you want to do this will make you a more convincing advocate – you’ll be able to articulate and share your reasons with others, which will help convince them to get on board.

Here are some of the reasons that have motivated previous ethics bowl organizers:

1. **The dire state of American public discourse.** Anyone who’s watched a town hall “discussion” lately has witnessed some pretty disheartening (and scary!) stuff. Promoting ethics bowls in local communities should help change the combative political culture for the better, eventually leading to a more thoughtful, engaged
citizenry and better public policy. Not only will an ethics bowl directly impact the outlook of the students and teachers involved, it will also affect their families, peers, and with a little media attention, the broader community. Ethics bowls really do have the potential to create a more just world.

2. Exposing pre-college students to philosophy can do a world of good. It’s a shame that most kids don’t get their first taste of philosophy until college, and that most who don’t go to college never experience philosophy at all. With a surfeit of creative energy and several pivotal decisions to make, high school students can immensely benefit from the critical thinking skills doing philosophy fosters. Many organizers, for example, wish that they had had the opportunity to develop a more reflective, discerning mind when they were 17!

3. To make the world a better place. No society can sustain too many Socrates clones, meddling in government affairs and “corrupting” the youth. But the world would definitely be a better place if more of us had the ability and the inclination to appreciate life’s big questions and to think through them in a careful, reason-based way. High School Ethics Bowls are one way to spread the fruits of philosophy beyond the academy, and hopefully leave the world a little better than we found it.

WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS OF HIGH SCHOOL ETHICS BOWLS FOR STUDENTS?

Students who participate in high school ethics bowls naturally improve their reasoning skills and learn to express themselves in a more professional, reasonable and articulate manner. There is also some reason to think their standardized test scores will improve as well.

Researchers in Scotland found that after 16-months of weekly philosophical discussion, 9, 10 and 11-year-old students improved their scores on a standardized cognition test by 6 points, opposed to a control group whose scores did not improve at all. These benefits followed the students into high school where they continued to outdo their control group counterparts by a significant margin.¹

But perhaps most importantly, participants learn to engage their peers in cooperative deliberation over important moral questions. In an educational climate that often suppresses creative exploration and rewards conformity, ethics bowls invite students to tackle tough issues and empower them with a methodology for doing so.

Much of their growth occurs during preparation – the hours engaged in rational discussion with their teammates and coaches. Then the event itself, with its emphasis on civility, clear reasoning, and cooperation, reinforces dispositions cultivated behind the scenes, ultimately molding the students’ character for the better. And with the help of quality coaches and assistants, this experience lays the foundation for years of respectful dialogue to come.
GENERAL QUESTIONS

WHAT IS PHILOSOPHY?
Academic philosophy is the reason-based attempt to answer life’s big non-empirical questions. Philosophers author, critique and revise “arguments” (collections of statements called “premises” used to logically support a conclusion) in an effort to answer questions like, What is knowledge? What is the highest human good? What is justice? and What are the fundamental rules of logic?

WHAT IS ETHICS?
A major sub-discipline of philosophy, ethics concerns questions of right and wrong. There are of course many ways to decide moral questions, but what distinguishes the philosophical approach is that philosophers demand arguments as to why an action is or isn’t morally acceptable, and they demand that those arguments be publicly defendable.

Rather than being hostile to other approaches, most philosophers agree that ethics complements religious and legal reasoning, and often requires the input of cultural values and moral intuitions. Again, what sets philosophical ethics apart is simply its dedication to logical argumentation.

WHAT ARE THE FOUR DOMINANT ETHICAL THEORIES?
The four dominant ethical theories are:

- Kantianism
- Consequentialism/Utilitarianism
- Feminist Care Ethics
- Virtue Ethics
Kantianism has two mandates: a) that we only do things we could rationally endorse everyone else doing as well, and b) that we treat persons with respect and never as mere tools.

Consequentialism/Utilitarianism requires that we make decisions that bring about the best consequences or maximize net happiness.

Feminist Care Ethics gives us permission (and sometimes an obligation) to prioritize the interests of persons with whom we have intimate relationships.

Virtue Ethics recommends that we behave according to recognized virtues, such as honesty, bravery, and loyalty, and avoid recognized vices, such as dishonesty, cowardice, and treacherousness.

Each of the four is supported by a rich body of literature, and each seems to capture some essential feature of what it means to make an ethical judgment. For a more complete (but still very brief) overview, see Matt Deaton’s “Ethics in a Nutshell,” available for free online. For more in-depth coverage, Stanford’s online encyclopedia of philosophy is an excellent place to begin: http://plato.stanford.edu.

Last, some philosophers reject the top-down theory approach altogether, and instead promote Moral Particularism, which places great weight on the details and uniqueness of each case.

WHERE CAN I GET MORE INFORMATION?

The Ethics Bowl was conceived of by Dr. Robert Ladenson, philosophy professor at the Illinois Institute of Technology. What began in his classroom eventually became a national college event, the Intercollegiate Ethics Bowl (IEB), now in its 16th year. For more information about the IEB, visit:

http://www.indiana.edu/~appe/ethicsbowl.html

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ethics_Bowl

http://ethics.iit.edu/index1.php/Programs/Ethics%20Bowl

To learn about other communities that sponsor high school ethics bowls, visit the Squire Family Foundation at http://www.squirefoundation.org/ and the Pre-college Ethics
Interest Group page on the Association for Practical and Professional Ethics website at http://www.indiana.edu/~appe/pcehics.html.

For more detailed information on criteria for judging, score sheets and a training video for judges, as well as other resources, visit http://www.indiana.edu/~appe/ethicsbowl.html (scroll down to the section entitled “The National Championship Rules and Cases”).


To see video clips of ethics bowls, visit: http://www.youtube.com/results?search_query=ethics+bowl&aq=f
2013 NATIONAL HIGH SCHOOL ETHICS BOWL RULES, PROCEDURES AND FORMAT

It should be noted that the below content remains in draft status, and is currently being altered by the National High School Ethics Bowl Steering Committee. The official rules, procedures and format should be settled by fall 2012.

RULES

The cases for the 2013 National High School Ethics Bowl will be released on Wednesday, February 20, 2013. Each case will be paired with study questions to aid teams in preparation.

There are no limits to the resources that may be used in researching the questions prior to the competition. Students are encouraged to consult all resources, including teachers, to understand the full breadth of the cases, determine their positions, and make the strongest possible presentation.

During competition, scratch paper will be provided for the competitors to make notes during the cases, but outside notes and materials are prohibited. All notes and materials will be collected at the end of each case.

When one team is allowed to confer or speak, the other team, judges, and audience members must remain silent, although writing and passing notes is permitted (for example, when Team A is given their case and question, they are allowed to confer for two minutes and then present for seven minutes. During those nine minutes, Team B is permitted only to write notes, but must remain silent.)

The moderator controls the room during matches and should address any unacceptable behavior including, but not limited to:

- Coaches, parents, or audience members communicating with (verbally or non-verbally), or demonstrably reacting to, competitors during a match.
• Judges showing hostility or asking inappropriate questions to competitors. Inappropriate questions include, but are not limited to, any that highlight a competitor’s race, religion, gender, gender identity, ethnicity, disability, national origin, sexual orientation, etc. Judges should direct their questions to teams, not to individuals.
• Anyone in the competition room who intentionally makes noise while one of the teams, judges, or moderator has the floor.
• Foul, insulting, or excessively graphic language by anyone in the competition room.

COMPETITION PROCEDURE

1) Each team is allowed up to five members competing in any one match. The team members must be selected and seated at the table before the cases and questions for that match are announced. Each match will begin with a coin toss. The team that wins the coin toss may elect to present first (to be the team designated as Team A) or to have the other team present first (and thus to be the team designated as Team B).

2) Copies of the first case and question will be distributed to the competitors and to the judges. Neither the judges nor the team members will have advance knowledge of which case will be presented or which question will be asked. The moderators will then read the question.

3) Team A will then have up to two minutes to confer, after which any member(s) of Team A may speak for up to 7 minutes (total) in response to the moderator’s question, based on the team’s research and critical analysis. This is known as the presentation period.

4) Next, Team B will have up to one minute to confer, after which Team B may speak for up to 3 minutes in response to Team A’s presentation and to the moderator’s question. This is known as the commentary period.

5) Team A will then have up to one minute to confer, followed by 3 minutes to respond to Team B’s challenge. This is known as the response period.

6) The judges will then begin their 10 minute question and answer session with Team A. Before asking questions, the judges may confer briefly (no more than 30 seconds). Each judge should have time for one question. Judges may ask more questions if time permits.

7) More than one team member may respond to a given judge’s question. Team members are not expected to confer for longer than 20 to 30 seconds after a question has been asked.
8) Judges shall evaluate the responses of team solely in terms of the following criteria:

   a. **Clarity and Intelligibility**: Was the presentation clear and systematic? Regardless of whether or not you agree with the conclusion, did the team give a coherent argument in a clear and succinct manner?

   b. **Identification and Discussion of Central Ethical Dimensions**: Did the team’s presentation clearly identify and thoroughly discuss the central ethical dimensions of the case while avoiding irrelevancies?

   c. **Deliberative Thoughtfulness**: Did the team’s presentation indicate both awareness and thoughtful consideration of different viewpoints, including especially those that would loom large in the reasoning of individuals who disagree with the team’s position?

9) The judges will score each team as follows:

   a. 0-30 for a team’s answer to the Moderator’s question (30 best). In evaluating a team’s answer, the judges will give the team a score of 0-10 relative to each of the three evaluation criteria indicated in Rule 8. (Team A)

   b. 0-5 for the opposing team’s commentary (5 best) (Team B)

   c. 0-5 for the response to the opposing team’s commentary (5 best) (Team A), and

   d. 0-20 for the response to the judge’s questions, by the team that answered the Moderator’s question (20 best) (Team A)

The judges are not permitted to discuss their scoring decisions with each other; each judge is to rely on his or her own private judgment.

10) After the judges have made their scoring decisions, the moderator will give a second case and question to the same two teams.

11) The competition will proceed as above, with Team B presenting in the second half, Team A offering commentary, Team B responding, and then Team B participating in the judge’s question and answer session. Thus, in each match, each team will have the opportunity to present one case and to respond to the other team’s presentation of another case, for a total of 60 points possible from each of the three judges (180 points total).

12) At the end of the match, the moderator will compile and announce the scores for each team and the winner of the match.

13) The winner of the match will be the team with the greater number of total points. Moderators will validate scores with the teams and judges and pass score sheets to the competition coordinator for tallying with scores from the other matches.
COMPETITION FORMAT

The competition will begin on the afternoon of Friday, April 19, 2013 with registration and a plenary session required for all participating teams (students and coaches).

Each team will compete in two seeding matches following the plenary session on Friday afternoon. Each team will compete in two more seeding matches on the morning of Saturday, April 20, 2013 (teams assigned by random draw).

At the end of the fourth round, the teams will be ranked by the number of wins (0-4). When two or more teams have the same number of wins, the following tiebreakers will be exercised, in this order:

- **Lowest number of losses** (so a team that ties, 2 wins, 1 tie, and 1 loss will rank higher than a team with 2 wins and 2 losses)
- **Greatest point differential** over all four matches (If two teams have 3 wins and 1 loss, and Team A has a total point differential of +18 [winning two matches by 10, winning one match by 6, and losing one match by 8] while Team B has a point differential of +14 [winning one match by 3, winning one match by 7, winning one match by 5, and losing one match by 1], Team A will be ranked higher in the standings).
- **Highest point total** over all four matches (out of 720 points total). (If two teams have 3 wins and 1 loss, and both have total point differential of +18, but Team A has 505 total points for four matches and Team B has 496 points, Team A will be ranked higher in the standings).
- **Coin toss**

The top four ranked teams after the four seeding matches will advance to the semifinals. The four semifinal teams will be announced after lunch.

The rules and procedure for the semifinals and finals will be identical to the other matches. The two winning teams from semifinal matches will advance to the final match. The winning team will be the National High School Ethics Bowl Grand Champion.

A closing ceremony will immediately follow the final match. Awards will be given for outstanding team and individual performance in various categories.
TWO SAMPLE PRESS RELEASES

Here are two sample press releases: one from the Long Island Bowl, and a second from the East Tennessee Bowl. These are only examples – feel free to alter your press release according to your vision, and the specifics of your event.

LONG ISLAND BOWL PRESS RELEASE

Contact: Roberta Israeloff
Email: risraeloff@squirefoundation.org
Phone: 631.662.7645

For immediate release

THIRD ANNUAL LONG ISLAND HIGH SCHOOL ETHICS BOWL TO TAKE PLACE AT MOLLOY COLLEGE ON SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 11, 2012.

East Northport, NY: The third annual Long Island High School Ethics Bowl will take place at Molloy College, Rockville Centre, NY, on Saturday, February 11, 2012. Ten schools from the metropolitan area (including Long Island, Manhattan, and New Jersey) will field 22 teams. The bowl begins at 8:00 a.m., with breakfast and introductions; the final round will begin at 2:30. First and second place prizes, as well as three honorable mentions, will be awarded.

The event, profiled last year in both The New York Times and Newsday, is sponsored by The Squire Family Foundation, founded by Long Island native Gary Squire, which advocates for more philosophy instruction at the pre-college level; and by Molloy College.

An Ethics Bowl is a collaborative yet competitive event, more nuanced than debate, in which two teams are presented with a series of wide-ranging ethical dilemmas and are asked to analyze them; they are then judged on the basis of their analyses. An exciting tournament, it’s also a way for students to gain valuable insight into ethical issues. Judges, representing many professions, are drawn from the community.

Matt, please adjust font in this paragraph to conform to others – thanks. The ethical dilemmas used in a high school ethics bowl range from those particularly relevant to young students (questions about cheating, plagiarism, peer pressure, use and abuse of social media, the right to privacy, relationship responsibilities) to political and social issues (free speech, gun control, eco-tourism) and bioethical issues (cloning, parental consent).

According to Michael Steinmann, director of the Stevens Institute High School Ethics Bowl, the event promotes intellectual, personal, and social growth. It deepens students' understanding of the complexity of ethical issues; increases their sense of personal responsibility; and promotes a model of rational, civil discourse so essential to functioning democracies.

The high school ethics bowl is modeled on the popular Intercollegiate Ethics Bowl, now in its 16th year, sponsored by the Association for Practical and Professional Ethics. The event was created by Dr. Robert Ladenson.
Dear [MEDIA OUTLET EDITOR, WRITER, PRODUCER, ETC],

Sponsored by the Philosophy Department and organized by yours truly, I’m writing to let you know about Thursday’s 1st Annual East TN High School Ethics Bowl.

Two teams are slated to compete--one from Catholic High School and a second from Tennessee School for the Deaf. The bowl is an effort to spread the fruits of applied ethics into the local community, encourage the love of wisdom in pre-college students, and inspire the formation of high school philosophy clubs--eventually producing a more thoughtful citizenry.

The teams from TSD and Catholic will be presented with three ethical case studies (perhaps on drug use, abortion, pollution, end of life issues, etc), asked questions involving application of the four dominant ethical theories (Kantianism, Utilitarianism/Consequentialism, Virtue Ethics and Feminist Care Ethics), and judged by Professors John Hardwig (Philosophy Dept Head) and Glenn Graber (renowned bio ethicist) according to their accurate application of the theories, attention to moral relevancies, and how well they embody the philosophical pursuit of truth.

I hope that someone from your office will cover the event, a) to reward these wonderful students and coaches for their hard work, and b) to set an example for Knoxville on how to reason through controversial ethical issues with sobriety, care and impartiality.

Event: 1st Annual East TN High School Ethics Bowl
Teams: Catholic High School, coached by Sister Anna Wray, O.P.; Tennessee School for the Deaf, coached by Emily Headrick and Dave Kyser
Location: Shiloh Room, University Center, UT
Date: Thursday, November 19th
Time: 6:30-8:30 pm
Cost: free
Contact: Matt Deaton at 865-323-9773 or matt@mattdeaton.com

Sincerely,
Matt Deaton, MA
Graduate Teaching Associate
Philosophy Department
University of Tennessee
865-323-9773
http://mattdeaton.com/
Dear Principal NAME,

I’m writing to invite YOUR SCHOOL to participate in the first annual East Tennessee High School Ethics Bowl. An opportunity for your students to showcase their critical thinking skills, teams from the surrounding area will analyze case studies featuring moral dilemmas and submit recommendations as to what the protagonists ethically ought to do. A panel of volunteer applied ethicists from UT’s Philosophy Department will then judge each team’s answers and supporting reasoning, and winners will advance until a champion is crowned.

Ideally you’ll find a faculty member interested in organizing and coaching a team, who either myself or another volunteer from the philosophy department will meet with and train. Beyond preparing for the bowl, if students and a faculty sponsor are interested, I would be more than happy to facilitate the formation of a Philosophy Club, though forming a club is not necessary to compete. Why would anyone do philosophy for fun? Apart from the intrinsic pleasure of thinking through life’s big questions, the logical reasoning skills developed in philosophy are beneficial in almost every area of life (philosophy majors score higher on law school entrance exams than any other major).

This first ever bowl will tentatively be held on Thursday, November 19th on the UT campus. If you or others have questions, please don’t hesitate to give me a call on my cell phone at (865) 323-9773 or shoot me an email at jdeaton1@utk.edu. I sincerely hope that you’ll chose to pass the word along to your faculty, that a teacher will be interested in coaching a team, and that your school will be represented in the first ever East TN Ethics Bowl come November.

Hoping to hear from SCHOOL soon,

Matt Deaton, MA
Graduate Teaching Associate (PhD, ABD)
Philosophy Department
University of Tennessee
801 McClung Tower, Knoxville 37996-0480
Tennessee Ethics Bowl

Team Registration

Name of Team (High School):

Name of Coach(es):

(1)

(2)

Number of Team Members (4 minimum, 6 maximum) _______

Name of Team Members:

(1)

(2)

(3)

(4)

(5)

(6)

Alternate Team Members: (optional)

(1)

(2)

We (name of school) ______________________________ commit to participate in the 2011/2012 Tennessee High School Ethics Bowl, scheduled for the 15th of March 2012 at the University of Tennessee.

______________________________ (sign)

Coach
Dear Prospective Ethics Bowl Judge,

I’m writing to invite you to serve as a judge at the Second Annual Long Island Ethics Bowl which will take place on Saturday, February 12, 2011, at Bethpage High School. The event is co-hosted by the Bethpage school district and The Squire Family Foundation, which I direct, whose mission it is to promote more pre-college instruction in philosophy, especially ethics.

During an ethics bowl, teams are presented with ethical dilemmas which they have had the opportunity to study and analyze, and are asked questions about the cases. They are then judged on the quality of their analysis of each situation. The event is competitive but not adversarial: teams can agree but for different reasons. The format allows for teams to respond to each other, and to respond to questions from the judges; the goal is to raise students’ ethical awareness and sensitivity, encourage collaborative thinking and promote civil discourse. The Intercollegiate Ethics Bowl, on which the High School Ethics Bowl is modeled, is celebrating its 17th year. Creating a parallel national network of high school ethics bowls is one of our Foundation’s goals.

Eight schools from the metropolitan area participated last year; so far this year, twelve schools have indicated their interest. The bowl begins at 8 a.m. with a breakfast and introductions; after the morning rounds, lunch is served, followed by the semifinal and then the final round.

Please be assured that not all the judges are philosophers. One of the goals of the bowl is to include people from many different professions and walks of life since ethics is of concern to all of us.

If you’re at all interested in joining us, I’d be happy to send you more detailed information about the event and the role of a judge, or to speak with you to answer any questions you may have. I have a feeling that this event will leave a lasting impression on you. It encourages the kind of responsible citizenship we’d all like to see imbued.

With all best wishes and thanks for your consideration,

Roberta Israeloff, Director
Squire Family Foundation
1st Annual East TN
High School Ethics Bowl

Sponsored by the
University of
Tennessee
Philosophy
Department

An excellent opportunity to hone your critical thinking skills, tackle challenging ethical issues with logical clarity, and make contacts at UT. Competition to be held at UT November 19th.

For more information contact Matt at (865) 323-9773 or jdeaton1@utk.edu.
http://web.utk.edu/~philosop/
2013 National High School Ethics Bowl

PRESENTING TEAM: __________________ JUDGE: __________________

Part 1: PRESENTING Team’s initial presentation (7 minutes; 30 total points)
1. Was the presentation clear and systematic? Regardless of whether or not you agree with the conclusion, did the team give a coherent argument in a clear and succinct manner?

1-10 ___________
1-2 = Incoherent presentation
3-4 = Serious logical problems in the argument (poor)
5-6 = Hard to follow the argument (passable)
7-8 = Reasonably clear and systematic
9 = Crystal clear presentation
10 = Exceptional

2. Did the team’s presentation clearly identify and thoroughly discuss the central moral dimensions of the case while avoiding irrelevancies?

1-10 ___________
1-2 = Failure to cover any relevant moral dimensions
3-4 = Serious missing or underdeveloped dimensions (poor)
5-6 = Some significant dimensions are missing or poorly covered (passable)
7-8 = Most dimensions are present and well developed
9 = All dimensions present and clarified appropriately
10 = Exceptional

3. Did the team’s presentation indicate both awareness and thoughtful consideration of different viewpoints, including especially those that would loom large in the reasoning of individuals who disagree with team’s position?

1-10 ___________
1-2 = Minimal awareness of different viewpoints
3-4 = Minimal consideration of different viewpoints... (poor)
5-6 = Underdeveloped discussion of different viewpoints... (passable)
7-8 = Solid analysis and discussion of different viewpoints, including careful attention especially to those that would loom large...
9 = Insightful analysis and discussion of different viewpoints, including full and careful attention especially to those that would loom large...
10 = Exceptional

Total from front (maximum 30)

TURN OVER after initial presentation

Comments for team __________________________________________
__________________________________________
__________________________________________
__________________________________________

34
Part 2: RESPONDING Team’s Commentary (3 minutes; 5 total points)
To what extent has the team effectively dealt with the presenting team’s arguments?
1 = Failure to respond  2 = Weak or irrelevant response (poor)
3 = Some points are made (passable)  4 = Solid response  5 = Exceptionally composed commentary

1-5 Points for RESPONDING Team added to other score sheet

Part 3: PRESENTING Team’s Response to Commentary and Questions (3 minutes; 5 points)
How did the team respond to the opposing team’s commentary?

1-5 Points for PRESENTING Team

1 = Failure to respond  2 = Weak or irrelevant response (poor)
3 = Some points are made (passable)  4 = Solid response  5 = Exceptionally composed commentary

Part 4: PRESENTING Team’s Response to Judges’ Questions (10 minutes; 20 points)
How did the team respond to the judges’ questions?

1-4 = Failure to respond  5-8 = Weak or irrelevant response (poor)
9-12 = Some points are made  13-16 = Solid response  17-20 = Exceptionally composed commentary

1-20 Points for PRESENTING Team

TOTAL SCORE FOR TEAM

Total from Front Response to Commentary + Response to Judges’ Questions = Total Score (maximum 60)
Comment for team

..........................
As promised, here’s a sample game plan on which you can model your own notes as your event approaches. Notice that it provides guidance for both host and moderators, for depending on the size of your event, you’re likely to have additional moderators apart from the event host to oversee concurrent sessions. Feel free to insert and omit items as needed – this is only an example – do whatever works for you.

**Host’s Opening Procedures**

To begin:

- Thank the audience for coming
- Introduce yourself
- Briefly discuss:
  - What is ethics?
  - What is philosophy?
  - Why a high school ethics bowl?
- Provide an overview of the day’s events

**Moderator’s Script for Round One**

Before you begin reading this script:

1. Give the judges their scoring sheets.
2. Be sure that the teams are seated and that the tables are clear of anything but pens, blank paper and water bottles. Discard everything else.

Good morning, I’d like to welcome everyone to the ____________ Ethics Bowl. My name is___________ and I will be your moderator for this round.

Sitting next to me are the judges for this round. If you could take a moment to introduce yourselves we would appreciate it.
(This shouldn’t take more than a minute or so—don’t let them talk too long. When they are finished say thank you.)

In addition, before we begin we ask that everyone in the room turn their cell phones off for the duration of the round. You cooperation in this matter is greatly appreciated.

There will be two sessions of presentations. In the first session, Team A will present on its assigned case and Team B will present commentary, and then in the second part of this session the roles will be reversed. I will keep the time for each session and will inform you when you have 1 minute remaining and when time is up. So, let’s begin...

Team A, the case you will be presenting is Case # 4: Torture of a kidnapper and the case question is: Is torture or the threat of torture unethical if it might prevent innocent suffering? Team A, you will have one minute to consult for your presentation.

(Set timer for one minute--while the team is consulting, please give each team the packets with Case #4)

Time is up. Team A you have seven minutes to present your case, I will inform you when you have one minute remaining. You may begin...

(Set timer for 7 minutes...inform teams when they have one minute remaining.)

Time is up, thank you team A.

Team B, you have one minute to consult for your commentary. (Set timer for one minute.)

Time is up. Team B, you have seven minutes to present your commentary. I will inform you when you have one minute remaining.

(Set timer for 7 minutes...inform teams when they have one minute remaining.)

Time is up, thank you team B.
Team A, you have one minute to consult for your response. *(Set timer for one minute.)*

Time is up. Team A, you have five minutes to present your response. I will inform you when you have one minute remaining.

*(Set timer for 5 minutes...inform teams when they have one minute remaining.)*

Time is up. We want to thank team A for their presentation on Torture of a kidnapper. The judges now have an 8 minute period to ask Team A questions regarding its presentation. *(The judges can only ask Team A questions at this time—NOT team B.)*

*(Set timer for 8 minutes and allow the judges to ask the teams questions.)*

Okay, time is up. We will now have a 3 minute stretch break and then we will start the second session of this round. *(Set timer for 3 minutes.)*

Time is up. Please be seated.

We will now begin the second session of round one. Team B will be presenting and team A will be commenting.

Team B, the case you will be presenting is Case # 5: Spanish ban of Bullfighting and the question is:

Can it be argued that a culturally engrained event such as bullfighting is unethical?

Team B, you will have one minute to consult for your presentation.

*(Set timer for one minute--while the team is consulting, please give each team the packets with Case #5.)*

Time is up. Team B you have seven minutes to present your case, I will inform you when you have one minute remaining. You may begin... *(Set timer for 7 minutes...inform teams when they have one minute remaining.)*
Time is up, thank you team B.

Team A, you have one minute to consult for your commentary. *(Set timer for one minute.)*

Time is up. Team A, you have seven minutes to present your commentary. I will inform you when you have one minute remaining. *(Set timer for 7 minutes...inform teams when they have one minute remaining.)*

Time is up, thank you team A.

Team B, you have one minute to consult for your response. *(Set timer for one minute.)*

Time is up. Team B, you have five minutes to present your response. I will inform you when you have one minute remaining. *(Set timer for 5 minutes...inform teams when they have one minute remaining.)*

Time is up. We want to thank team B for their presentation on Spanish ban on bullfighting. The judges now have an 8 minute period to ask Team B questions regarding their presentation. (the judges can only ask Team B questions at this time—NOT team A)

*(Set timer for 8 minutes and allow the judges to ask the teams questions.)*

Time is up—we want to thank both teams for their presentations. I will give the judges a few moments to finish completing their score sheet which they can give to me. While I am calculating the scores the judges will give the teams feedback on their performances in this first round.

*(Collect the score sheets and add the totals. When the judges are done giving feedback, which should be no more than 5 minutes or so, you will tell the teams:)*

Here are the final scores for this round. We will now be taking a fifteen minute break and you should be in your assigned room for Round Two no later than 10:40. Round Two starts at 10:45. Thank you.
(Someone will come and collect the scoring sheets and envelope for Round one from you so put everything inside of the envelope—you should have to score sheets from each judge (you do not have to add up the judge's choice scoring sheets)

Host’s Closing Procedures

1. Optional: “While the judges tally their final scores and decide on a winner, I’d like to take this opportunity to engage you, the audience. Without commenting on the teams’ performances, so as not to sway the judges’ scores, what are your thoughts on the cases we've considered?”

2. Awarding the trophies: You can begin with the winning team, and then announce the runner-up and honorary awards, or begin with the honorary awards and work up to the winner. Give them the trophy, and pose for a picture.

3. Optional: Give the judges the opportunity to address the teams.

4. Closing: “Thank you ladies and gentlemen for attending this wonderful event. Many thanks again to [mention names of all involved]. Please give the teams, coaches, and yourselves a healthy round of applause.”