

What is discrimination, when is it wrong and why?

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Abstract

We distinguish among people all the time, on the basis of all sorts of traits and for a myriad of reasons. Sometimes doing so is clearly permissible. Sometimes doing so is clearly impermissible. And sometimes people disagree about whether particular policies or practices are permissible or not. What explains which are which? There are no simple answers. Rather, philosophers and legal scholars have different ideas about which instances are wrongful discrimination and why. In addition, they disagree about what evils discrimination law aims to eradicate. In this talk, I will survey the different answers that scholars give to these questions and the debates these various approaches give rise to.

Biography

Deborah Hellman joined the Law School in 2012 after serving on the faculty of the University of Maryland School of Law since 1994. Hellman's work focuses on discrimination and equality. She is the author of *When is Discrimination Wrong?* (Harvard University Press, 2008) and co-editor of *The Philosophical Foundations of Discrimination Law* (Oxford University Press, 2013). In addition, she writes about the constitutionality of campaign finance laws and the obligations of professional roles, especially in the context of clinical medical research. She teaches contracts, constitutional law and classes related to the theory of equal protection and the relationship between money and rights.

Hellman was a fellow at the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars (2005-06) and the Eugene P. Beard Faculty Fellow in Ethics at the Edmond J. Safra Center for Ethics at Harvard University (2004-05). She was awarded a National Endowment for the Humanities Fellowship for University Teachers in 1999 and was a visiting professor at the University of Pennsylvania Law School in 2007-08 and at the University of Virginia in the fall of 2011.