

Discussion Topic Ideas

Julia Wise, with ideas from Elizabeth Van Nordstrand and Sam Hilton

Charity recommendations

A good topic for December, when updated recommendations have come out from places like:

- [GiveWell](#)
- [Animal Charity Evaluators](#)
- [Giving What We Can](#)

I know one person who leads a lunchtime discussion on the latest GiveWell recommendations in their workplace cafeteria each December - it's a convenient reason to hold such a discussion.

Chat with a speaker

If an EA-relevant speaker is in town, see if you can schedule a meetup for people to chat with them.

Reading group

Assign a short reading (one group had good success with 20-minute reads that people could read on the train on the way there) and have a discussion. Could also try installments of a longer work.

Ideas for essays that might be interesting to discuss:

- [Reasons to be nice to other value systems](#), Brian Tomasik
- [How you can help without making a difference](#), Julia Nefsky
- [The value of coordination](#), Benjamin Todd
- [Beware surprising and suspicious convergence](#), Gregory Lewis
- [The timing of labour aimed at reducing existential risk](#), Toby Ord
- [Should you wait to make a difference?](#) 80,000 Hours

Population ethics

- Interventions that affect population size (i.e. saving lives)

- [Demographic transition](#)
- GiveWell on [The impact of life-saving interventions on fertility](#)
- Hans Rosling TED talk on [Global population growth, box by box](#)
- Toby Ord, [Overpopulation or Underpopulation?](#)
- Existential risk and [long-term population possibilities](#)

TED talks

[Lots of options.](#) Plan to do one talk with time for discussion afterwards, and perhaps a second talk and more discussion.

Catastrophic risk

Life as an EA

- Budgeting
- Relationships when one person is more interested in EA than the other
- How much to help family and friends vs. other causes
- [Parenting as an EA](#)

Giving now vs. later

- [Lots of links](#)
- A [discussion sheet](#) from Stanford EA

Ethical Consumption

- Food choices
- Other purchases

Problem-solving session

Everyone writes their next big step/an ethical question on a sticky note; post them all up on a wall and have everyone discuss.

Self-care for EAs

- When do you notice feeling discouraged about EA projects? What helps you get your groove back?
- If you work from home or otherwise work alone on EA projects, what helps you feel connected to others?

- When do you feel inspired by the size of the work that needs doing in the world, and when do you feel overwhelmed or guilty for not doing more?
- How do you deal with times when you feel you're not doing enough?

Lightning talks

Group members give series of [5-minute talks](#) on topics of interest to them

Philosophy concepts that come up in EA

Not the same as “philosophy of EA”! Intended to explain concepts that non-philosophy majors keep hearing about.

- Positive vs. negative utilitarianism
- Total vs. average utilitarianism
- Deontology vs. consequentialism vs. virtue ethics
- Rule utilitarianism vs. act utilitarianism

General skills

- [Motivational interviewing](#)
- Comfort zone expansion
- Meditation
- “Things I have learned from books” - multiple people present

Lots of other discussion topics

[Sheets from Stanford EA](#)

Petrov Day, September 26

Celebrating the day [Stanislav Petrov](#) helped the world not end. Could also do a session on multiple unsung heroes, such as [Norman Borlaug](#) or [Archie Cochrane](#).