What is the common good? AY 2020-21

Core sources

The term “common good” raises immediate questions: How do we define what is good for society as a whole? What happens when collective benefit runs counter to individual benefit? How are questions and assumptions about the common good built into academic inquiry, as well as our daily lives?

Our sources aim to start conversations in a range of contexts: systemic racism in the US; the ethics of sharing genomic data; climate change and economic growth; nuclear power; social mobility; genocide and reconciliation; public health; voting rights and representation; the tradeoffs of telling the truth. We invite you to browse widely, read deeply, and join the conversation.

1. Michael Sandel “Are We All In This Together?” (2020)

[Image: https://dearborn.org/285568/detroits-marquees-become-a-sign-of-coronavirus-times/]

“We need to ask a basic question…. What do we owe one another as citizens?”


“Friendship is crucial to encountering what is novel, alien, and unsettling, and such is the business of learning.”
3. Story of Noah in the Bible, Quran, & Torah


“My Lord, let me land at a blessed landing place.” (Quran)


“Innovation is not a value in itself, although it is often treated like one.”


“Are we gonna live together? Together, are we gonna live?”
6. Thomas Cole, “The Oxbow” (1836)  

https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/10497

“View from Mount Holyoke, Northampton, Massachusetts, after a Thunderstorm”


https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2017/01/30/the-atomic-origins-of-climate-science

“Weapons and the weather are twisted together, a wire across time, the long fuse to an ongoing debate about the credibility of science, the fate of the Earth, and the nature of uncertainty.”

8. Moon Duchin, “Can geometry save democracy from gerrymandering?” (2020) and “Gerrymandering metrics: How to measure? What’s the baseline” (2018)

https://mggg.org/chicago

“How hard could it be to write down what it means to be a good shape and what it means to be a bad shape when it comes to political districts?”
9. Raj Chetty, *Opportunity Insights*

https://opportunityinsights.org/race/

“The defining feature of the American Dream is upward mobility—the aspiration that all children have a chance at economic success, no matter their background.”


https://hub.jhu.edu/2017/01/11/vaccines-autism-public-health-expert/

“Herd immunity...is implausible only if we think of our bodies as inherently disconnected from other bodies. Which, of course, we do.”


“You were born where you were born and faced the future that you faced because you were black and *for no other reason.*”

https://www.penguinrandomhouse.com/books/251467/in-other-words-by-jhumpa-lahiri/

“Tonight, with no lights, they would have to eat together.”


https://www.nationalgeographic.org/activity/assessing-hurricane-maria-damage/

“Extreme weather and climate events and their impacts can occur in complex combinations, an interaction shaped by physical drivers and societal forces.”


https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Xinjiang_re-education_camps

“It is reported that...Xinjiang had interned over 1 million Uygurs, Kazaks and other Muslim minorities who all are subject to persecution in internment. What's your answer to such allegations?”
15. President Harry S. Truman, *Press Release by the White House August 6, 1945*

[Image of atomic bomb]

https://www.gettyimages.com/photos/atomic-bombing-of-hiroshima?mediatype=photography&phrase=atomic%20bombing%20of%20hiroshima&sort=mostpopular

“It is an atomic bomb. It is a harnessing of the basic power of the universe.”


[Image of mosaic]

https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/indigstudies/chapter/truth-and-reconciliation-commission-of-canada/

“Truth, tell the truth.”

17. Mark Phillips et al, “*Genomics: data sharing needs an international code of conduct*” (2020)

[Image of flower]

https://www.nature.com/articles/d41586-020-00082-9

“Further regulatory uncertainty risks...undermining people’s faith in scientific collaboration for the public good.”

https://www.spacetelescope.org/images/heic0822a/

“What would happen if we decided to survive more?”

19. James Madison, Federalist No. 10 (1787)

https://www.constitutionfacts.com/founders-library/first-party-system/

“Complaints are everywhere heard...that the public good is disregarded in the conflicts of rival Parties.”

Albert Wu, https://twitter.com/withyoudrwu/status/813851746841882625

“Citizenship in poor communities is greater than the sum of exclusions.... Instead, it is a broad difference in the way the government—from police to schools to the welfare system—orients itself towards its residents.”


“The Baltimore riot of April 27, 2015, started with a shutdown of public transportation.”