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## **AMA Announcement: Monday 2/19 12PM ET - Debra Satz on political philosophy, public policy and the ethical limits of markets**

BERNARDJORTCUTT [R/SCIENCE](#)

The moderators of [/r/philosophy](#) are pleased to announce an upcoming AMA by [Professor Debra Satz](#), Marta Sutton Weeks Professor of Philosophy at Stanford University and co-host of the *Philosophy Talk* radio program.

This AMA is the fourth in our [Spring 2018 AMA Series](#); you can find more details on all of this semester's AMAs with philosophers by going to the [AMA Hub Post](#). You can find all of our previous AMAs over the years by going to the [AMA wiki](#).

Professor Satz will be joining us on Monday February 19th at 12PM ET to discuss issues in political science, public policy, the ethical limits of markets and more. Hear it from her:

### [Debra Satz](#)

I'm [Debra Satz](#), the Marta Sutton Weeks Professor of Philosophy at Stanford University and co-host of the [Philosophy Talk radio program](#). I grew up in the Bronx, and was the first of my family to go to college. From there, I graduated from City College of New York and received my PhD from M.I.T. where – after toying with the idea of writing on the philosophy of logic – I wrote a dissertation focusing on Marx's theory of social progress. Although I have traveled far from where I began, my experiences growing up in the Bronx continue to influence my work and thought.

My philosophical work has been broadly concerned with the economic preconditions for a democratic society of equals. But rather than approaching this question at a very high level of abstraction, I have focused on the ethics behind the creation and operation of particular markets. Markets in the abstract are models of freedom and equality. Freedom because each has the choice to enter into, or refrain from entering, any particular exchange. Moreover, because each of us is linked through countless others, no one is under the thumb of any particular person. This latter point also underwrites our equality. In theory, neither is dependent on the other and each has the right to refuse a deal which we view as unfair.

But, in reality, many markets depart very far from that theory. Some markets involve agents who are asymmetrically situated: One person desperately needs a good that only the other has (think of credit markets in the developing world); or, one person has relevant knowledge that another person lacks (think of the market for used cars). Moreover, some markets involve risks that fall on others besides the transacting agent (think of exchanges that generate pollution); or markets where others are transacting on our behalf (think of child labor markets where parents transact on behalf of their children, or governments where dictators transact debt on behalf of their populations).

My book, [Why Some Things Should Not be For Sale: The Moral Limits of Markets](#) develops a theory that distinguishes between ordinary markets that resemble abstract markets and what I call noxious markets. Noxious markets are characterized along four parameters: weak agency, background vulnerability and inequality of the transacting agents, harms to individuals, and harms to society. My book examines markets in body parts, commercial surrogacy, child labor and prostitution.

Importantly, I argue that the fact that a market is noxious does not entail the conclusion that we should ban it. It may be possible to increase agency (by giving parties better information) or address third party harms through regulation. But a message of my work, which resonates with a long tradition of political economy (where figures such as Adam Smith, David Ricardo, Karl Marx and RH Tawney are central) is that not all markets are the same.

I also have interests in the distribution of educational opportunities, where I have argued that the sharp divide policy makers and philosophers draw between adequacy approaches and equality approaches is overdrawn. A theory of distributing educational opportunity that is adequate for a democratic society will have strong egalitarian elements. In addition to pursuing my interests in education (which was my path out of poverty), I am writing a paper which examines the role of the state's distribution of in kind goods

(such as health care) for a democratic society of equals.

I look forward to discussing my work with you on reddit!

**Links of Interest:**

My book: [Why Some Things Should Not be For Sale: The Moral Limits of Markets](#) Thanks to OUP can **purchase it 30% off from their site with promocode AAFLYG6.**

A newer co-authored book dealing with the relations between ethics and economics: [Economic Analysis, Moral Philosophy and Public Policy, Third Edition](#)

My Stanford Encyclopedia Article on [Feminist Perspectives on Reproduction and the Family](#)

My *Ethics* article "[Equality, Adequacy and Education for Citizenship](#)"

My class day speech at Stanford University on the [Moral Limits of Markets](#)

The [Philosophy Talk radio program](#) which I co-host

**AMA**

Please feel free to post questions for Professor Satz here. She will look at this thread before she starts and begin with some questions from here while the initial questions in the new thread come in.

Please join me in welcoming Professor Debra Satz to our community!

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