



Susan Wolf's "Moral Saints": Lesson Plan

Topic	
Susan Wolf argues being a moral saint, or “a person whose every action is as morally good as possible” is an incredibly flawed concept, let alone goal. Whether they are a Rational or Loving Saint, a moral saint is required to give up all personal interests and strip away their personality until it is nearly nonexistent for the sake of others.	
Possible subjects/classes	Time needed
Philosophy, Ethics, Religion, Sociology, Government, Politics	30-45 minutes
Video link:	
https://academy4sc.org/topic/susan-wolfs-moral-saints-not-a-heavenly-existence/	
Objective: <i>What will students know/be able to do at the end of class?</i>	
<p>Students will be able to...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Define moral saint and list the different kinds of there are. • List the problems with being a moral saint. • Explain why changing the definition or requirements of a moral saint does not solve said issues. 	
Key Concepts & Vocabulary	
Morality	
Materials Needed	
Worksheet	
Before you watch	
Think-pair-share: What does it mean to be a good person? What does it mean to be a moral saint? How do the requirements differ?	
While you watch	

1. Define Wolf's moral saint.
2. List three skills or traits that are incompatible with being a moral saint.
3. What's the innate problem with proposals to remedy the problem of Wolf's moral saint?

After you watch/discussion questions

1. Do you think being a moral saint should be difficult? Explain.
2. Why do people strive to become moral saints?
3. Wolf's article is often attacked and hotly debated - why do you think that it is?

Activity Ideas

- In partners or small groups, evaluate a pop culture "saint" or saint-like icon. Make a chart keeping track of their saint-like and unsaint-like behavior, characteristics, and traits. Afterward, determine whether that person or character is a moral saint. Use the evidence you've collected with your chart to defend your final assessment.
- Wolf's essay relates fairly closely to the concept of "self-care", or the importance of doing activities that improve one's mental, emotional, and physical state. Write a short essay comparing and contrasting the two. What similarities do they share? Differences? What do you think Wolf would've thought of the concept?
- Individually complete the Worksheet. Then review answers as a class.

Sources/places to learn more

1. Carbonell, Vanessa "What Moral Saints Look Like." *Canadian Journal of Philosophy*, vol 39, no 3, Sept 2009, pp 371-398. DOI: 10.1353/cjp.0.0057.
2. Casanovas, Ager P. "Can Moral Saints be Unattractive? A conciliatory reply to Susan Wolf's divergence between Moral Ideals and Personal Ideals." Oct 2018.
3. Maranges, Tommy. "Susan Wolf's 'Moral Saints:' A Summary." *Philosophy Bro*, May 27, 2010.
4. Wolf, Susan. "Moral Saints." *The Journal of Philosophy*, vol 79, no 8, Aug 1982, pp 419-439. DOI: 10.2307/2026228.