Note to Students:
The following Study Guide is designed to draw you and your fellow students into a substantive, meaningful engagement of Kwame Anthony Appiah’s Honor Code. We hope that the lively discussions that will occur in your class by engaging this document will spill over and inspire you to participate in the April 12 Common Text Symposium as well as the upcoming Undergraduate Research Symposium. Watch for invitations to submit papers.

Although these sample exploratory questions serve to inspire critical thinking, discussion and debate, we hope that they will help you formulate and answer your own questions about Appiah’s claims in his research. Remember that as Howard students, you are committed to Howard’s mission—solving community or global unsolved problems. Howard’s founding was the solution to a massive problem facing women and minority students nearly a century and a half ago: a first-rate higher education for those who would not otherwise have the opportunity. General Howard’s role in the Freedmen’s Bureau focused Howard’s attention on African American communities. Howard University’s role in Brown v. the Board is another bold example of the University’s research efforts to solve unsolved community problems.

About Kwame Anthony Appiah:

Called a post-modern Socrates, Kwame Anthony Appiah asks profound questions about identity and ethics in a world where race, ethnicity, religion and nationalism continue to realign and reform before our eyes. His seminal book Cosmopolitanism is a moral manifesto for a world where identity has become a weapon and where difference has become a cause of pain and suffering. In intellectually stimulating language, Appiah challenges you to look beyond the boundaries -- real and imagined -- that divide us, and to see our common humanity.
Appiah is the Laurance S. Rockefeller University Professor of Philosophy at Princeton University. He is also the President of the PEN American Center, the internationally acclaimed literary and human rights association. He was born in London, to a Ghanaian father and an English mother; raised in Ghana; and educated at Cambridge University, where he received a Ph.D. in philosophy. As a scholar of African and African-American studies, he established himself as an intellectual with a broad reach. His classic book In My Father’s House and his collaborations with Henry Louis Gates, Jr. -- including The Dictionary of Global Culture and Africana -- are major works of African struggles for self-determination. In 2007, Cosmopolitanism won the Arthur Ross Book Award, the most significant prize given to a book on international affairs. In 2009, he was featured in the documentary Examined Life, and was named one of Foreign Policy’s Top 100 public intellectuals.

**Appiah’s Premise:**
Appiah’s work examines a highly speculative approach to explaining why humanity's cruelty sometimes comes to be rejected. Commenting on his own research, he said that the most important result of his work would be for readers to see how future generations will regard commonly accepted contemporary practices as utterly barbaric. He mentions as examples the continuing mistreatment of women and insensitivity to the pain we cause animals in using them as primary food sources.

**Impact of Appiah’s Text:**
The best result of your reading Appiah’s text would be to find other examples of barbaric practices that might attract your research attention and even spur you to become a catalyst for positive change. A recent New Yorker articles states that “more than half of all black men without a high-school diploma go to prison at some time in their lives. Mass incarceration on a scale almost unparalleled in human history is a fundamental fact of our country today--perhaps the fundamental fact, as slavery was the fundamental fact of 1850. In truth, there are more black men in the grip of the criminal-justice system--in prison, on probation, or on parole--than were in slavery then” (Adam Gopnik, “The Caging of America,” New Yorker January 30, 2012, pp. 72-73).

Howard has a historical commitment to social justice. Perhaps your reading and criticism of Appiah’s research could help lead Howard to a new university-wide research effort toward a moral revolution in the US criminal-injustice system.

**Discussion Questions:**

I. WHY READ THIS BOOK?

A) The author’s answer: To find out “What we can learn about morality by exploring moral revolutions” (xi).

B) Is morality best studied by the social sciences (such as Psychology, Sociology, Anthropology) or by the Humanities?

C) Why does the author pay such explicit attention to Aristotle’s concept of eudaimonia or happiness?

II. CRITICAL READING’S FIRST STEP: DEFINING KEY TERMS
A) What are key differences between *morality* and *ethics*?
B) What are the author’s key definitions of *honor*? Can you criticize his definitions through your own experience?

III. THE DISTINCTION BETWEEN MORAL AND ETHICAL REVOLUTIONS
A) Why does the author single out honor as an engine of moral revolutions?
B) Can honor drive ethical revolutions?
C) Should the abolition of dueling and foot-binding be counted as revolutions in the same sense as the abolition of slavery?

IV. CRITIQUING THE AUTHOR’S PRIMARY HYPOTHESIS: CAN “HONOR” BE A SINGLE SOURCE OF MORAL REVOLUTION?
A) What other concept can match the effectiveness of the honor code in causing behavior change among humans?
B) What might be some examples of these causes?

A) Is the author’s method of explaining moral revolutions reducible to a single discipline?
B) Does a multidisciplinary approach to a problem make a thinker into a philosopher?

VI. HOW DOES THE AUTHOR DECIDE WHICH CASE STUDIES TO CHOOSE FOR ANALYSIS?
A) Can you think of other case studies that would involve the concept of honor?
B) Does honor serve as a primary engine of warfare?
C) Is the importance of honor relative to types of culture?
D) If so, do “honor cultures” exhibit quite different behaviors driven by principles other than honor?

VIII. IS APPIAH’S ANALYSIS OF THE END OF DUELING SIMPLISTIC?
A) What other causes apart from honor might lead to the end of dueling?
B) Can his analysis be generalized for other countries, other cultures?
C) Is dueling a symptom of a deeper cultural behavior that still predominates in some cultures?

IX. IS APPIAH’S ANALYSIS OF THE END OF FOOT-BINDING IN CHINA SIMPLISTIC?
   A) Can analogies be drawn between foot-binding in East Asia and the female genital mutilation discussed in his chapter four?
   B) Is the sexism that generates these behaviors endemic in many cultures?

X. WHAT ARGUMENT DOES THE AUTHOR PROVIDE FOR DESIGNATING HONOR AS ONE OF THE MOST IMPORTANT--IF NOT THE MOST IMPORTANT--REASON FOR THE ABOLITION OF SLAVERY IN GREAT BRITAIN?
   A) Could economic reasons for abolition be cited more plausibly?
   B) Does the author fully consider the impact of the industrial revolution on the course of slavery?
   C) Is slavery still practiced in today’s world—by other means?
   D) What forces more powerful than honor might lead to the true abolition of slavery?

XI. IS HONOR THE PRIMARY FORCE IN THE AUTHOR’S CHAPTER ON WARS AGAINST WOMEN?
   A) Has sexism played an integral role in the development of virtually all cultures?
   B) What prospects are there for the abolition of wars against women?

XII. WHAT OTHER AUTHORS AND TEXTS MIGHT YOU CONSULT FOR A DEEPER ANALYSIS OF THE STRUCTURE OF MORAL REVOLUTIONS?
   A) Do other texts offer arguments on behalf of the structures of ethical rather than moral revolutions?
   B) Can you imagine what an ethical revolution would look like? Is the history of ethics across time and culture in fact a history of revolution?
   C) Stephen Pinker in *The Better Angels of our Nature* (2011) claims that humans are becoming not only more moral but more ethical over time. Can you offer arguments for and against his position?