

Term Essay Assignment

Your term essay is due **Wednesday, December 10**, at the beginning of class. After that time, a late penalty will be assessed at a letter grade per day, or portion of a day, that the paper is late.

Choose a topic from those we've examined this semester. Using at least three *primary* sources in addition to the reading selections in our anthology, write a critical philosophical essay arguing a position regarding the chosen topic. Although your position should be developed in dialogue with the positions of the philosophers you've chosen as primary sources, it is your philosophical thinking that I want to see expressed in the paper's argument.

Procedurally, please note the following:

1. Submit a statement of what topic you are going to address by ***Friday, October 31***. Include a statement of the question that you intend to answer in your essay.
2. Submit a bibliography of your additional sources by ***Friday, November 14***.

I will be glad to meet with you to discuss your paper during my office hours or at other times by appointment.

Your essay should have a *thesis*, which is a one-sentence statement of your position, and should set forth an *argument* that supports that thesis. You should draw on the primary source materials, but I don't want a mere summary of those arguments. I will be looking for the argument *you* develop in answering your question and the reasoning behind *your* answer.

Your papers should:

(1) observe the basic rules of edited American English. Failure to do so inhibits your attempt to communicate with others.

(2) follow the scheme of presentation for academic essays that is found in *MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers* (6th. ed., New York: Modern Language Association, 2003), with the exception that you should place the required heading on a separate cover sheet and put only the title of your paper (not your name) on the first page. Also, please number the pages in the top right corner and do not include your name with the page number. Then staple all the pages together in the top left corner. (This enables me to evaluate the essays without knowing the author's identity until the evaluation is done.)

(3) be typed, double-spaced, and be approximately 2,000-2,500 words in length. (Use an 11- or 12-point font.)

(4) *be entirely your own work*. If you use someone else's words or ideas, be scrupulous in acknowledging that fact by the use of quotation marks, where appropriate, and references. Failure to do so constitutes plagiarism.

(5) be submitted on time. See above statement on due date.

Criteria for evaluation:

Your philosophical essays will be evaluated in light of the four criteria below. Papers that fulfill these criteria in an exceptional way will be awarded As; papers that do so in a superior way, Bs; and papers that merely meet the criteria at a satisfactory level, Cs. Papers that do not fulfill the criteria at a satisfactory level will be given Ds and Fs, depending on the severity of the problems.

- Organization:

The paper is exceptionally well organized. It contains a clear thesis statement that focuses the paper, and each and every paragraph logically contributes to the development and defense of that thesis. The paper is succinct, to the point, and avoids needless words.

- Understanding:

The paper exhibits a thorough and accurate understanding of the philosophers' arguments that are examined and critically explicates those arguments where relevant to the development of its critical thesis.

- Criticism

The paper takes a critical (evaluative) stance toward the problem under examination, clearly articulating a position with regard to the question asked. The position is based on solid reasoning that is well supported with relevant evidence.

- Mechanics

The paper is flawlessly presented, with no spelling or grammar errors. It properly references the ideas and words of others and conforms to the style stipulated by the *MLA Handbook*.

I will ask you to submit your papers to TurnItIn.com to assure that you have used your sources correctly. Instructions for this will be distributed in the weeks before the paper is due.