

Philosophy 110
Spring 2019

Essay 1 Assignment

Essay 1 is a 5-7 page (typed and double-spaced) argumentative essay. It is due by 11:59 pm on Sunday, 3/24/19.

Choose a social or political issue that has been subject to public debate and disagreement in recent years. Take a clear position on that issue, and defend that position with a strong, well-developed, and well-explained set of reasons.

The range of possible issues to discuss is too wide to capture in a single list. Some examples of suitable issues include: abortion, euthanasia, the death penalty, affirmative action, regulation of firearms, animal rights, marijuana/drug policy, same-sex marriage, transgender rights, immigration policy/DACA/DAPA, access to health care, climate change, and so on.

A few examples of positions on these issues might be: “Women have the right to control their own reproductive systems, which includes the choice to end an unwanted pregnancy”; “All humans, including unborn humans, have the right to life, and that makes abortion immoral”; “Equality requires that universities consider the racial and ethnic background of applicants when deciding whom to admit”; “Gun control measures are ineffective and violate the fundamental American right to own firearms”; and so on.

In the essay’s introductory paragraph, introduce the issue to the reader and state your position in the form of a thesis statement. Defend your position throughout the body of the essay. Each body paragraph should develop and focus on a clear reason, or premise, in support of your position. There is no fixed number of body paragraphs that your essay should have; the number of paragraphs depends upon the number of reasons you offer in support of your position. Finish the essay with a conclusion paragraph that sums up what was discussed in the essay.

This is an argumentative essay, not necessarily a research essay. The point is to develop a very strong, well-reasoned argument in support of your position. So, for this essay, thoughtfulness and originality are more important than research. Now, you may certainly use research to incorporate good points made by others into your own argument, but you still need to analyze those points and explain why they are persuasive. And, of course, all uses of outside research must be carefully documented through proper citation.

When choosing a topic, keep in mind that Essay 2 will be a defense of your position against the strongest counter-arguments against it. In Essay 2, you will use research to identify arguments contrary to your own, and you will explain why those opposing views are incorrect. So be sure to pick a topic that is suitable for both Essay 1 and Essay 2.

General Essay Guidelines

Each essay needs an *introductory paragraph*. This paragraph briefly introduces your subject to the reader, and it ends with your *thesis statement*. The thesis is the point that you are trying to get across with your essay. The entire essay can be seen, in a sense, as support for your thesis; anything in the essay that does not help support your thesis is not relevant and should not be included in your essay. Also, the essay should end with a *conclusion* paragraph that reiterates your thesis, and summarizes what you've said in your paper to support your thesis. The conclusion paragraph should contain no new points.

Use your own words. When using research, quotes should be sparingly used. They are appropriate to accentuate a particular point, particularly if a writer's words are themselves unique or particularly well-constructed, and they can be necessary as textual evidence to support your account. But do not rely on quotes to do the work of summarizing and explaining.

Remember that your essay is a composition. Pay attention to the presentation of points. Be sure that each paragraph logically follows from what precedes it. (And be sure that each paragraph has one clearly identifiable topic.) The essay should read like one organic whole, not like a series of parts.

Be careful not to assume unreasonable prior knowledge on the part of the reader of your essay.

All sources must be identified by a works cited page, and each time you refer to a source or rely upon ideas from a source, you must cite that use, including specific page numbers if applicable, in the text of the essay where you are using that source. If you use an outside source and do not do these two things, the paper will either not be counted as credit for the assignment, or it will receive a low grade. Furthermore, the paper may be seen as an example of plagiarism – using someone else's work and passing it off as your own – and will receive a "0" and may result in further disciplinary actions. (You may use whatever style of citation you wish; the point is that you always give credit to your sources and that you give the reader the information necessary to review your sources should she or he desire to do so.)

Always remember to use sufficient detail in explaining points. Do not raise a point that needs explanation or discussion without subsequently explaining/discussing it.

Within philosophy, the first-person voice is commonly used, so you may use the first-person voice in this essay if you wish.

Pay attention to grammar and spelling at all times.