

# **Instructions for Group Writing Projects**

## **Contemporary Ethical Issues**

### **Philosophy 2305**

#### **Dr. Robert Tierney**

#### Basic Task

Each group is to write a paper on an assigned article.

For the First Group Writing Assignment, all groups will write on Michael Walzer's "Terrorism: A Critique of Excuses."

For the Second Group Writing Project there are two articles that students will work on.

- Alastair Norcross, "Puppies, Pigs and People: Eating Meat and Marginal Cases"
- R.G. Frey, "Moral Standing, the Value of Lives, and Speciesism"

Your group will be assigned to work on one of these articles.

#### Paper Length

The paper should be 1,250 to 2,000 words. Don't just scrape past the minimum length and then stop. Make sure you write a good paper.

The appropriate length for this assignment may vary a bit from student to student, depending upon his or her approach and writing style. Be as concise as you can be without sacrificing the quality of the content of your answer.

#### Special Note on Second Group Writing Project

Regardless of which of the two articles you are assigned on the Second Group Writing Project, you should read both articles. Having a deeper appreciation of contrasting views on the subject will allow you to do a better job when you write your paper.

#### Paper Structure and Contents

In writing your paper, you should carry out the following tasks:

- I. General Introduction: This should at least mention: the author, the issue, the author's general stance, and what you are going to do in this paper. (Do not include biographical information about the author.) Consider this to be your reader's first introduction to this author, this topic, and what you plan to say about them. Set that out in suitable prose and you've got your introductory paragraph. Remember what an introductory paragraph is supposed to do: You are telling your audience what you are going to do in the paper. (Standard form in an essay is: tell your audience what you are going to do (introductory paragraph), do it (body of the essay), and then tell them what you did (concluding paragraph).) Do a solid job, but don't make a big to-do about it. You do NOT want to start out with "Throughout history ... blah, blah, blah, cliché, cliché, cliché, word, words, words ..."
- II. Main Body of Essay
  - A. Overview of the Article: This should involve maybe one to three paragraphs (or so)—it depends upon the article, your approach to the

article, and your prose style. There is no mechanical algorithm to compute the appropriate length for all group projects. In this section, you want to follow through on what you said in the introduction about the article you are analyzing. You need to give the audience some kind of overview of the issue that your author is addressing.

Part of this will be giving your reader a clear indication of the scope of the topic your author addresses. For example, suppose an author were writing about the prejudicial effect on juries of witness identifications in rape trials. It would not be adequate to say that the author is talking about law, or criminal law, or rape trials, or prejudicing juries, or witness identifications, or the prejudicial effects of witness identification on juries. All of those descriptors are too vague or general. Take some care to identify the scope of the topic your author is addressing.

From there, you should describe your author's major views or conclusions on this issue, and try to characterize how he arrives at these conclusions. The latter should include a description of your author's general argumentative strategy and the ethical theory or framework he is applying. An author might not have a full-fledged theory that they are applying, but you can see whether they are talking like a Deontologist or Consequentialist, whether they are taking about rights, duties, or consequences, and so on.

- B. Argument Analysis: Here you should provide a close analysis of two important lines of argument from the text you are analyzing. Don't pick arguments that are not germane to the main issues in the article. In other words, don't focus on arguments concerning tangential issues. You are to explain these arguments to your reader as if they have never seen them before. This will mean actually recapitulating the argument, and explaining it and any necessary background as appropriate. So you need to know how the argument works and be able to get your reader to see how it works.
1. Strong Argument: Of the arguments that you select to talk about, select one line of argument because you think it is particularly effective. You will need to explain and support your position that this argument is particularly effective, i.e. *rationally* persuasive.
  2. Weak Argument: Of the arguments that you select to talk about, select one line of argument because you think it is particularly *ineffective*—in other words it is a weak argument, i.e. an argument that is *rationally* unpersuasive. To carry out this task, you can use a number of different strategies. For instance, you might attack the logical structure of the argument, or come up with a counterexample to one of the premises upon which it relies. You might also criticize how the author uses a particular ethical theory if you think that he has misapplied it. You might argue that the author cherry picks examples favorable to his theory and that you can come up with other relevant examples where his approach yields paradoxical or morally repugnant results. Alternatively, you might try to show that the ethical theory applied by that author generates apparently wrong or repugnant conclusions on some

relevant issue (i.e. relevant to the topic being addressed) such that it is an unreliable guide to the relevant moral issue.

III. General Conclusion: Recapitulate for the reader what you have done in this paper. That is, in summary form, tell them what you just did in your paper.

A good paper will make significant use of at least two of the following concepts at some point in the paper:

- Consequentialism
- Positive and Negative duties
- Conflicting Duties
- Consequence Insensitivity (i.e. the idea that some moral rules should be followed even when this will mean NOT producing the best outcome)
- Distribution Insensitivity (i.e., the feature of Consequentialism that we discussed in connection with three key objections to Consequentialism)
- Hedonism vs. Other Theories of What Is Intrinsically Valuable.

#### More on Writing

Remember, you should write as if you are addressing your paper to a reasonably intelligent adult who has no prior familiarity with this material.

Sometimes an argument in a philosophical text depends upon something said earlier in the text. You might need to do some explaining to put the argument in context. Make sure to provide whatever is needed to make the argument clear to the reader.

Though you are to write the argument in your own words, you must be clear and precise. If special philosophical terminology is needed, use that terminology. However, you must explain any such terminology to your reader.

Carry out the assigned task clearly, precisely, concisely, and completely. Your goal is to make it obvious to your instructor that you understand the relevant material. Of course, a good answer will explain any philosophical or technical terms used in an answer.

Your answer should largely consist of sentences of your own construction, not quotations. However, you can and should use quotations from the relevant text to support what you have already explained in sentences of your own construction.

Do not use lazy paraphrasing. If you are going to quote, then quote; if you are not, then you should properly construct your own sentences. If such “paraphrasing” comes without an appropriate citation, it is plagiarism according to the UHD standard—regardless of whether or not you are using sources provided in this course.

#### Citations

When quoting a source that is a document used in this course, you must give a proper citation. *A proper citation includes the specific page on which that quote occurs.* If you are using a source from this course to inform your thoughts and ideas, but not directly quoting it, you do NOT have to give a citation.

You can use either MLA or Chicago style cite form. I will not worry much about the details of cite form as long as the citations are complete and clear.

*Do not use outside sources—i.e., use only the sources of information provided to you by your instructor in this course. If you do not follow this rule, i.e., if you use outside sources, then you must follow appropriate citation requirements, which are much more demanding than those I have just given in relation to course sources in the preceding paragraph. The standard for outside sources mandates not doing anything that constitutes plagiarism according to UHD policy (see below).*

### Plagiarism

The following is UHD policy.

Plagiarism includes, but is not limited to:

- Directly quoting the words of others without using quotation marks or indented format to identify them.
- Using sources of information (published or unpublished) without identifying them.
- Paraphrasing materials or ideas of others without identifying the sources.

Note that I am hereby specifying that “identifying” a source requires (1) giving full bibliographic information at the appropriate place (i.e. the bibliography and, where required by the specific system of citation used, the first point at which the source is cited) as well as (2) giving a specific page citation in each instance at the location in the body of the text where have cited that source.

If you do not fulfill these obligations, you will get an F for plagiarism. For a full description of the penalties see the syllabus.

### Warning: Do Not Work with Students from Other Groups

Every group must write their own answer independently. Please see the definition of academic misconduct in the student handbook.

### Text Format

Your answer should type-written, double-spaced and in Verdana 10-point font. In the upper left-hand corner of the first page, type the paper title (i.e., “Walzer Paper” for the First Group Writing Project and either “Norcross Paper” or “Frey Paper,” depending on which article you are writing on, for the Second Group Writing Project). Immediately below the title write the full name of every member of the group, “Philosophy 2305,” the number for your section of the course (i.e., the CRN number), and the date. If your work runs to more than one page, make sure that the names of all group members and the page number appear in a footer on every page. Do not make a separate cover page.

Use section numbers and headings to divide up the paper as appropriate—each section of the paper outlined in the rubric provided in these instructions should be marked out with a heading in bold font that, at the very least, indicates which part of the paper you are writing about.

### Submission and File Format

This assignment is to be submitted via Blackboard. You must submit your work in .doc or .docx format. If you do not, you may receive no credit for this assignment.