

Assignment: Critical Analysis Essay

Assignment Overview: Students will choose a philosophical text related to themes discussed in class. They will write a 3-5 page essay that critically analyses the argument presented in their chosen piece. This exercise aims to enhance students' critical thinking, comprehension, and argumentative skills by focusing on the identification, breakdown, and assessment of an author's reasoning.

Objectives:

1. Identify the main thesis and supporting arguments.
2. Examine the logical structure and coherence of the argument.
3. Provide a concise, well-structured analysis that demonstrates critical thinking.

Assignment Requirements

Select a piece of writing that presents a clear argument; this could be from our course readings or a different text of your choosing. If you choose a new text, make sure to explain how its argument connects to themes we've studied, such as ethics, rationality, or critiques of knowledge. The goal is to demonstrate your ability to critically engage with the argument and relate it to the philosophical ideas we've explored in class.

Identifying the Argument Structure

Begin with an introductory paragraph summarizing the text and stating its main thesis. Identify the key arguments used to support the thesis. Outline these in the order they appear, explaining the relationship between them.

Analysis and Critique

Choose an approach for analysing the argument: examine the text's historical context, trace the development of a key concept, or explore the author's method, such as questioning or dialectics. You might also consider unspoken assumptions, the ethical or political implications, or compare the text with another philosopher's work. Select the approach that best helps you critically engage with the text's main ideas and structure.

Reflection

- Conclude with a reflection on the impact of the argument on your understanding of critical thinking.
- Explain how the argument, despite its strengths or weaknesses, contributes to the broader themes of critical thinking as discussed in class.

Formatting:

- Length: 3-5 pages, double-spaced.
- Use clear, concise language and well-organized paragraphs.
- Include citations for any references to specific lines or concepts in the text.

Evaluation Criteria:

- **Clarity and Understanding (30%)**: How well does the essay identify and summarize the main thesis and supporting arguments?
- **Analytical Depth (40%)**: Does the analysis show insight into the strengths, weaknesses, and logical structure of the argument?
- **Critical Thinking (20%)**: Are fallacies and assumptions thoughtfully identified? Does the student demonstrate independent critical reflection?
- **Presentation and Organization (10%)**: Is the essay well-organized, proofread, and formatted?