Paper 1 Instructions

Paper 1: 15% of final grade
Due November 3ʳᵈ by 11:59 PM
Length: This paper will be 1000-1500 words long.

1. Why is it important for STEM students to write?

This is a good question, not something to be shrugged off as obviously misguided. After all, for many of you, you will not need to write an "argumentative, analytical paper" at any point in your career. So, why would you need to practice that skill at Kettering?

My answer is that writing is the best method for honing skills you *will* use: most notably, the ability to think carefully and logically about complex ideas. To even vote for a political candidate in an educated way, you need to have these skills, much less to be a member of the most influential companies on the planet, which you are (or will be) a part of. Writing is the best avenue for refining these skills because it requires you to be detailed and careful in your reasoning. It is the venue that best allows me to help you improve your reasoning.

2. What is an "argumentative, analytical paper?"

In my way of thinking, which carries over to other instructors (though they may use different terms or concepts to describe the style of paper), such a paper is one where you *engage critically* with others.

3. What is critical engagement?

Critical engagement has two components: engaging with someone else's idea and taking a critical stance *in* one's engagement. Being able to do this is important because it is a matter of forming conversations with other people while contributing something new.

> Pitfalls of critical engagement—
> Engaging without being critical: this happens when one considers another person's view but does not subject it to scrutiny. For instance, one might read a text, paraphrase the general idea in it, say that one agrees with it, and then leave things there. This person just repeats the other person. Such a response does not contribute anything new to the existing discussion. As a result, others don't have a reason to listen to you.
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> Being critical without engaging (i.e. "yelling into the void"): this involves formulating and offering an opinion on a topic, but without *building on* what others have had to say about it. It's you on your own and it often lacks clarity, detail, and depth. The reason is that others will have made distinctions, defined concepts, and outlined clear arguments that you will likely not be able to come up with on your own.
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> *Critical engagement* involves developing your view about a matter by building on what others have had to say about it. **It amounts to forming a conversation with others about the issue.** Being critical does not necessarily mean that one has to *disagree* with what others have said. You can, for instance, help clarify what someone else has said.

However, no matter what, one contributes something new to the discussion. This response is both interesting to read, and it also possesses depth. Your goal in this paper is to engage in this manner.

So, with this background, let me now explain your project for Paper 1. By the due date for this paper, we will have considered a number of questions:
1. Are STEM fields more or less important than artistic fields?
2. Is morality relative?
3. Where did our moral sensitivity come from, and is it found in other species?
4. What kinds of beings are owed consideration in the sense that you and I are?
5. Are we morally responsible for (implicit) biases?

In your paper, I would like for you to engage critically with **one** author on one of these topics. There are many ways you can do this, and I allow you to come up with your own topic. Each paper, though, must do the following:
1. Set the stage: give enough of an overview for your reader to understand the details of the conversation you are entering into.
2. Articulate a clear and interesting thesis (key: It must be interesting and not obvious)
3. Explain or define any key concepts needed for your thesis (notice how Korsgaard did this for "normative self-government").
4. Critically engage, closely, with at least 1 source so far from class
5. Provide a detailed and convincing argument for your thesis
6. Entertain a plausible objection to your view and respond to that objection convincingly
7. Write as if a peer at KU, not in this class, were reading your paper

One of the challenges you will face is picking an *interesting* thesis, but also one that is not too "big." A 1000-word paper is a bit over 3 pages in length, so you do not have much space to do everything I am requiring. To make your thesis manageable, anchor it directly in what your chosen author has said. E.g. Rather than argue "A moral sensitivity does not exist for animals," argue something more like "Franz de Waal's evidence that is supposed to show that animals have moral emotions is insufficient for showing this. The reason is that…"

Another of the challenges you will face is figuring out how much detail to provide for a proper argument. This simply takes practice—something you will be refining over the coming years—but for starters, keep in mind that an argument consists of two things: a conclusion and premises (or reasons) in support of that conclusion, *where those premises are supposed to link up with each other in some logical way to support the conclusion*. One common pitfall I see is when students think they offer an argument just by offering an opinion/conclusion. Another pitfall is when students offer lots of evidence/reasons for a conclusion, but where the premises do not actually build on each other and instead are merely separate points. Rather than list a bunch of incomplete arguments of this sort, I want you to provide at least one complete argument.

Formatting:
- 12-pt Times New Roman font
- 1-inch margins
- Double-spacing

Citations:
- Your textual evidence for this paper should be drawn only from required course readings. Thus, you do NOT need a works cited page.
- When quoting, just feel free to use parenthetical citation with the author's or authors' last name(s) and the page number, if available: e.g., (Korsgaard 23), (de Waal 45).

Popular kinds of critical engagement (each describes a kind of thesis/argument in abstract).

Reductio Ad Absurdum: Author 1's view implies something contradictory. Therefore, it is false.
- Related method: Author 1's view implies something really counterintuitive (even if not contradictory), so we should reject it.

Argument on opponent's own grounds: Author 1 argues XYZ because ABC. Even if they are correct about ABC, though, it actually implies not-XYZ.

Argument about new insights: Author 1's theory seems correct, but Author 1 has not noticed such-and-so interesting implication of it. I build on Author 1's view to draw out this implication. Even though it is surprising, it does not cast doubt on Author 1's view.

Argument about overlooked cases: Authors 1, 2, and 3 all talk about X. They have not, however, explored a related phenomenon, Y. So, I aim to provide an account of Y.

Adjudicating arguments: Author 1 has provided an argument against Author 2's view.
Version 1: I argue that Author 1 has not accurately understood Author 2's view and that, once properly understood, we can see that Author 1's view is unsuccessful.
Version 2: I argue that Author 1's objection is convincing but that we can revise Author 2's view so that it avoids the objection.
Version 3: I argue that there is a different, and more fundamental, objection to Author 2's view than the objection outlined by Author 1.

Argument by analysis: Author 1 is correct that we should treat X in such-and-so ways, however they do not provide a complete account justifying why. So, I analyze why X is of value such that we ought to treat it in special ways.

Argument by interpretation: Author 1's discussion is interesting, but it is unclear exactly what their view is (or, alternatively, their view is underdeveloped). So I identify a few ways to interpret their remarks and suggest that one of them, in particular, is both plausible and fits best with the text