

Project: Ethics and Science

For this project, you'll write a letter to the editor in which you'll give an argument related to science and public policy.

Directions. Choose one of the following topics related to science and ethics and write a "letter to the editor" in which you defend a "yes" or "no" answer to the question. You should choose ONE of the following questions:

1. Should non-human animals (such as rats, pigs, or chimpanzees) be used in medical research? If so, which guidelines are appropriate?
2. Should governments put on a tax on carbon (or methane) emissions to help fight climate change?
3. How can we ensure that artificial intelligence is used to help humanity rather than harm it?
4. How should governments or individuals respond to the threat of pandemic disease (such as COVID)?
5. Should we institute a system of universal healthcare? What might the benefits or costs?
6. How should schools and parents respond to a young person's request to pursue medical treatments related to their being transgender?
7. What limits should be placed on the "genetic engineering" of humans?
8. Is there a particular area of scientific research that should receive more funding? (For example, space exploration, vaccine development, etc.).
9. How can schools better support the mental health of their students, based on recent research?
10. What counts as a "healthy diet"? How should the USDA's requirements change to reflect new research?

Requirements. In your essay, you must:

1. Introduce the topic you'll be talking about.
2. Offer an argument in favor of your position. Your argument should include a detailed discussion of an article from one of the following sources (which are known for their "popular" summaries of scientific research):
 - a. Scientific American (<https://www.scientificamerican.com/>)
 - b. Aeon (<https://aeon.co/>)
 - c. Atlantic Monthly (<https://www.theatlantic.com/>)
 - d. New Scientist (<https://www.newscientist.com/>)
 - e. Nature (<https://www.nature.com/>) – more technical
 - f. Science (<https://www.science.org/>) -- more technical

Hint: To find articles, try googling "[Your topic] followed by [website address]". For example, "Animal research ethics www.scientificamerican.com".

3. Describe the best argument against your position.
4. Give a convincing response to the argument against your position.
5. In your conclusion, say a bit about *how* you argued. For example, you should state whether the argument is *inductive* or *deductive* and how you determined this.

Project Requirements

1. The project should be between **500** and **1000 words**. I won't penalize you for going over, though please make an effort to be concise as possible, given the material. Make things "as simple as possible, but no simpler."
 - a. A-level essays are often (though not always!) closer to 1,000 words than 500.
2. Material I've provided you with in our "textbook" (which contains both my lecture notes and other readings) can be cited informally by identifying the chapter, page, and author (if needed). If you choose to use outside resources, please use a standard citation style (such as APA, MLA, or Chicago), and provide a full citation. As a rule, **no more than 15%** of your paper should be quotes.
3. Please don't use the words or ideas of others without proper attribution. Please see the syllabus for details on plagiarism and academic integrity policy. I regularly use www.turnitin.com to check for plagiarism or related issues.
4. Essays that reproduce the handouts will not receive good grades. Nor will essays that simply "give your thoughts" on an issue (without demonstrating knowledge of the class material, and the ability to apply it to novel cases). Since the project is meant to help you understand the class material, you should try to use your own words and examples to explain what you've learned.
5. Please submit your essays as MS Word files. I will grade them on a **first-submitted, first-graded** basis.

Grading Rubric

The project is worth FIVE points. Your grade will depend on how well you do each of the following:

1. How well are you able to **explain** and **apply** the relevant course material? By the end of the essay, the reader should come away with a clear idea of what you've learned in the class, and how it applies to whatever problem/issue you are writing about.
2. To what extent does your essay offer a coherent and creative response to the problem/question? In an argumentative essay, for example, you should make an (evidence-based) **argument** for a **thesis** and be sure to consider any potential objections fully.

Factors such as your paper's **structure** (e.g., intro/body paragraphs/conclusion) and **language** (e.g., grammar, style) are important to the extent they influence the above. The grading criteria are as follows:

Grade	Description
0	No answer was submitted or evidence of plagiarism.
3 or below (D or F)	Fails to meet minimal requirements regarding content (e.g., addresses a related question) or word count. Essays that simply report what you "believe" or "feel" without providing an <i>argument</i> may receive grades in this range.
C (3.5 points)	It meets minimal requirements regarding both content (it offers an answer to the assigned question and attempts to defend this answer) and word count. However, there may be some significant errors or omissions when explaining relevant class material or providing a detailed, complete response to the question.

<i>B (4 points)</i>	Fully meets content and word count requirements and provides satisfactory explanations of most major arguments and concepts from class. There are no significant errors in argumentation or explanatory gaps. However, explanations/examples/arguments may, at points suffer from a lack of clarity or completeness compared to A essays.
<i>A (5 points)</i>	Meets and exceeds minimum requirements. The essay's treatment of course material shows a complete mastery of the relevant content and provides a creative, well-thought-out response.

I will grade essays in the order they are submitted (first-come, first-serve).