

Weekly Response Paper Guidelines

1. Assignment: Ten times during the semester, and **no more than once during any given week**, you will write a 250-350 word (~1 page) paper, responding to an assigned class reading. Your paper should include the following two elements:

(a) **Synopsis:** Provide a brief synopsis of the reading. What conclusion was the author trying to argue for? What were some of the reasons that the author used to support his/her conclusion? Keep this portion brief, though. This is not a book report. This is a *response* paper. So, most of your essay should be devoted to part (b).

(b) **Response:** Share some of the thoughts that you had in reaction to the reading. Here are some examples of the sorts of things you might want to discuss:

- Did you agree with the author(s)? Why or why not? (Defend your evaluation.)
- While you were reading, did any potential reply or answer to some question raised by the author occur to you—i.e., perhaps something that the author overlooked, or failed to consider? (Or, do you have a suggestion for how to solve a puzzle or problem that was discussed? Etc.) If so, share a brief synopsis of your ideas.
- Did the reading remind you of anything interesting? (e.g., maybe something that you learned about in one of your other classes; or a book you've read; an experience you've had; etc.?) If so, say a bit about the connection that you perceived between our reading and that other piece of the world.
- Did thinking about this topic cause you to see the world differently in any way? (or, perhaps re-evaluate your beliefs, goals, actions, etc.?) Is there some important lesson here that you think we could all benefit from learning? If so, say a bit about how this reading affected your worldview.
- Were there any portions of the reading that you were confused about? If so, identify the confusing passage, and then say a bit about what you think that passage *might* have been trying to convey.

You get the idea.

2. Due Date: For each paper, whatever reading(s) your paper is on, the assignment is due **by the beginning of class on the scheduled day of that assigned reading**. For example, if you are writing on Perry's 'Dialogue on Personal Identity and Immortality', then your paper is due by the beginning of class, on Friday 9/4.

To turn in your paper, please upload it to the appropriate dropbox on Blackboard.

Late papers will not be accepted.

3. Grading Rubric: I will be looking for three things when I assign grades:

- (1) Following Instructions: Did you complete the assignment according to the instructions above?
- (2) Clarity: Do you explain yourself in a way that is *clear, concise, and well-organized*? You should think of this as a somewhat informal assignment. However, your writing should still be clear enough and careful enough that someone who has never taken philosophy could read it and understand it (and perhaps even learn something from it!).
- (3) Careful, Contemplative Reasoning: It should be evident that you have actually thought carefully about the reading that you are responding to, and that you have put some time and consideration into your response. In short, this is not meant to be the sort of assignment that can be completed successfully 10 minutes before class.

Extra Credit: If you like, you may turn in an 11th reading response paper after completing your first ten. If you do, I will count your best 10 papers toward your Response Paper grade (which constitutes 10% of your final grade); i.e., your lowest score will be dropped.