

Short Answer:

Please answer 3 of the following 5 writing prompts. 25 pts each. Some of you may worry about whether or not your answers are too short. For you, I offer the following suggestion:

A full point answer should be around three paragraphs. The first paragraph should address the second sentence. The second paragraph should address the third sentence. And the third paragraph should address the fourth sentence. Also, as you write this, do **not** assume that I will know what you are talking about. The test of good short-answer exposition is that a fairly smart 13 year old picking this up could fully follow your explanations as you have written them. A nice way to see if your answers leave anything out is to have someone not in this class read your answer, and see if they are confused or not.

1. Nagel dismisses Camus' proposed response to the absurdity of life. Explain how Camus explained why life was absurd, and what he thought the right response was to this absurdity. Then, explain how Nagel understood life's absurdity and his preferred response to it. Finally, explain why Nagel rejected Camus' position.
2. Nagel relies on the notion of the *sub specie aeternitatis* for his argument about life's absurdity. Explain how Nagel argued that such a perspective exposes the absurdity of our lives. Then, explain how Trisel argued that such a failure to find meaning from a cosmic perspective was immaterial to whether or not our lives have meaning. Finally, explain which view you agree with, and why.
3. Kierkegaard concluded that reason and rationality were unable to provide the kind of subjective meaning required for understanding one's purpose. Explain how he argued for the meaning of life to be found only in the subjective. Then, explain how Kierkegaard claimed that despair follows a recognition of life's absurdity. Finally, explain Kierkegaard's solution to the issue of life's absurdity.
4. Trisel argued that the two ways to understand the 'indifference' of the universe did not generate the existential problem that Nagel, Kierkegaard, and Camus claimed. Explain why Trisel thinks that the 'lack of concern' for us version does not generate a problem of absurdity. Then, explain why she also thinks that the 'lack of preference' version does not either. Finally, explain how Trisel diagnoses the philosophical trend of looking to the universe for meaning.
5. Nagel relies on epistemic skepticism as a model for his argument about life being absurd. Explain how Nagel understands epistemic skepticism. Then, explain how he models his argument about life's absurdity off of that skeptical argument. Finally, explain why the life of the mouse is not similarly absurd.