

PHI 169 – CRITICAL REASONING – SPRING 2015

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ASSIGNMENT #5 – DUE MON APRIL 27

This assignment is preparatory work for the group project presentation (last two weeks; schedule TBA) and the final paper (due May 18th). This assignment should address the items below, (a) through (f). The expected length of this assignment is 2-3 pages.

- (a) Form a group of 4-5 people with whom you'll give a presentation as well as write a 20-25 page paper. If you prefer to work in a smaller group or alone, please say so and explain why. If working alone is your preference, your final paper should be 7-12 pages in length. For groups of 2-3 people, the required length is 13-16 pages.

NOTA BENE: You are encouraged to exchange ideas with the people in your group, but each of you will write this assignment individually and receive an "individual grade". If you present and write the final paper as a group, you'll receive a "group grade" for the paper, or else you'll still receive an "individual grade".

- (b) Identify the topic of the paper. Together with the other members, please select a topic that interests you. The following topics are merely indicative: racial profiling and the NYPD stop-and-frisk policy; racial discrimination; gender equality; the death penalty; economic inequalities; immigration reform; taxation; poverty; public debt; health care; capitalism; democracy; pluralism; religion in society; terrorism; same-sex marriage; college education; art and culture in society; science *versus* religion.
- (c) Narrow down the topic in (b) by identifying a specify set of questions you want to address in the paper. Be as precise as possible in formulating the questions of the paper. Define each key term and show how the questions you have formulated relate to other questions. A couple of things to keep in mind:
 - As for narrowing down the topic, recall that when we discussed the topic of economic inequalities, we distinguished four types of questions (descriptive, etiological, normative, and policy oriented questions).
 - Regarding how one question can relate to others, recall that when we discussed whether the rich should be taxed more, we examined related questions, such as:

Who are the rich? How do people become rich? How would the tax revenues from the rich be used? Are the rich responsible for the poor? Do the rich have an obligation to help the middle-class? Does higher taxation hurt the economy? Etc.

- (d) Collect data and statistics that will help you address the questions you have formulated in part (c). Discuss why your data and statistics are relevant for (c) above. Always indicate your sources. For some guidance on how to go about this, review the statistics and data we looked at while talking about economic inequalities.
- (e) Collect articles that will help you address the questions you have formulated in part (c). You should read the articles you have collected, write up a brief summary of each, and demonstrate why they are relevant for (c) above. For some guidance on how to go about this, review the articles we looked at while debating whether the rich are taxed enough.
- (f) In light of items (a) through (e), formulate the overarching goal of the paper. You can aim to defend a specific thesis (e.g. that the richest 1% pay enough taxes in the US today), or compare and contrast conflicting arguments (e.g. compare and contrast arguments for and against the death penalty), or find an explanation for a puzzling phenomenon (e.g. find an explanation for why college tuitions have gone up so dramatically in recent years). Aim for something that you are passionate about and want to know more about.

Set high standards for your work. Be a rigorous and creative researcher. I expect to say “wow!” as I read your work.