

PHI 169 – CRITICAL REASONING – SPRING 2016

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ASSIGNMENT #3 – DUE APRIL 11

This assignment has three parts and you must do at least two:

1. FGM
2. Beliefs of the world's Muslims
3. Living conditions in the Palestinian territories

This assignment can be done either alone or in group. *The group option is recommended.* If you select this option, hand in one copy of the assignment for the entire group.

Handwritten assignments or late assignments are not accepted.

1. FGM Riza Aslan claims that “FGM is not an Islamic problem but an African problem”. Sarah Heider thinks he is wrong. After watching the videos posted on the course website, please assess their disagreement, as follows:

- (a) Identify all the pieces of evidence that Aslan provides for the claim that FGM is an African problem, not an Islamic problem.
- (b) Identify all the pieces of evidence that Heider provides against Aslan's claim.
- (c) Look for further evidence that supports Aslan. Cite your sources.
- (d) Look for further evidence that supports Heider. Cite your sources.
- (e) In light of the above, provide a reasoned and careful assessment of the disagreement between Aslan and Heider. Is one of the two right? Is neither right? Are they both right? Motivate your answer.

NB: Regarding (c) and (d), the course website contains additional articles which may be useful, but feel free to look for more elsewhere.

2. Beliefs of the World's Muslims Social commentators such as Sam Harris and Ayaan Hirsi Ali hold that Islam today—as a set of religious beliefs—is incompatible with so-called Western beliefs or values. Others hold that the majority of practicing Muslims today do not hold fundamentalist beliefs. In this background, please do the following:

- (a) Select 10 questions from chapters 1, 2, 3 and 4 of the report *The World's Muslims*.

- (b) For the 10 questions you selected, determine whether a positive or negative answer is incompatible with Western beliefs or values. (You will have to specify the meaning of “incompatible with Western beliefs or values”.)
- (c) Summarize the responses to the 10 questions. Your summary should display the quantitative data appropriately, divided by question, country and geographical region.
- (d) For each of the 10 questions, determine whether the majority (>50%) of Muslims hold beliefs that are incompatible with Western beliefs. Take into account the different geographical regions and countries.
- (e) In light of the above, provide a reasoned and careful assessment of whether commentators such as Harris or Ali are right or wrong. Motivate your answer.

3. Living conditions in the Palestinian territories In her speech at Yale, Ranja of Jordan offers an Arab perspective on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Please do the following:

- (a) Identify 3 factual claims Ranja makes about the living conditions in the Palestinian territories. These will often—though not always—be claims that are supported by quantifiable data, such as the unemployment is x% or the refugees are x%.
- (b) Check whether the 3 factual claims made by Ranja are correct. Cite your sources.
- (c) Look for other factual claims about the living conditions in the Palestinian territories. These can be about economic indicators or historical events. Cite your sources.
- (d) Identify 3 anecdotal claims¹ Ranja makes about the living conditions in the Palestinian territories.
- (e) By combining factual and anecdotal claims, assess the living conditions in the Palestinian territories and compare them with the conditions in the United States or other countries. Make the comparison precise and cite your sources.

¹These can consist, for example, of narratives describing the difficulties a mother must face or the typical day of a child living in the West Bank. Anecdotal claims cannot be reduced to quantifiable data, but they nevertheless offer insights about people's lives.