

# SWI

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## Short Writing Assignment 1

### Plagiarism

Please review the plagiarism policy on the syllabus. It is critical that you prepare your assignment by yourself. Use only the textbook and handouts—it will take you less time to work through these materials than to find and read other sources. I will be checking for significant overlaps between submission as well as checking answers against Wikipedia, internet search results, standard essay sites, etc. If you include material in your essay without citing it, you will receive 0 for the assignment. A second violation will result in a 0 for the course, a report to the Dean, and a petition for a note to be added to your permanent academic record.

### Due Date

Please consult the syllabus and course website for the due date.

### Late Submissions

Per the policies outlined in the syllabus, late work will not be accepted. As the policies also state, there are no make-ups or extra credit opportunities. Any request for special treatment will be ignored. If you foresee difficulties submitting work on time, either because of personal or commitments, then you should start this paper early and submit it early.

### Format

Please submit the file as either a word file or simple .rtf file will also suffice.

### Grading

Please find the rubric and explanation of it [here](#).

## Resources

Please find links to writing resources [here](#)

## Word Count

Your dialog must be 500-750 words long. Essays shorter than 500 words or longer than 750 words will lose points.

## Prompt

Flex your imagination. You are a disembodied soul that has yet to see this world. You know nothing about what life you may live. You know nothing about what talents you might be born with, whether you will be able or disabled, advantaged or disadvantaged. The only thing you are aware of are two angels somewhere nearby. You have a choice to make. You can choose a body, to be born, live a life and die. Or you can choose to fade away into the peaceful nothingness from which you emerged. The angels disagree about what you should do. One tries to convince you that life is meaningless, that you are better off being nothing at all than a being who is born, lives a while, and dies. The other disagrees. You should choose life, they claim. For it is, they say, something full of meaning and purpose.

Write a dialogue between you and these two angels. In the mouth of the first angel, explain Tolstoy's initial argument that life is meaningless. In the mouth of the second, explain Tolstoy's subsequent conversion and argument that life is meaningful. Finally, in your own words, choose between life and nothing and explain your choice to the angels. Tell them why you found one argument convincing, the other not.

## Further Instruction

- This assignment covers material contained in Ch.8.1–8.3.
- Note that this is a dialog. Imagine the way dialogs go. There is some back and forth. There is humor. There are jibes. Characters have names. Write your dialog accordingly. See any play for some ideas on format.
- Allow your characters to question each other, rebut each other, etc.
- In explaining the argument that life is meaningless, make sure that the angel uses Tolstoy's fable of the cave.
- In explaining Tolstoy's subsequent claim that life is meaningful, be as specific as you can in explaining *what* that meaning consists in.
- Your choice should be guided by your evaluation of the two arguments. Don't merely say which conclusion you accept. This part of the dialog should focus on assessing the logic and premises of the respective arguments.