

Response Paper
Handout

Objective:

The response paper assignment has two major functions. The first is to keep you reading and thinking about the material in a timely way. The quarter system moves by so quickly that it is easy to get behind. Response papers are one (paternal) way of trying to avoid this problem. The second major function of the response paper is as a study guide and barometer of your writing. I ask you to explain and then expand upon the arguments in an article. This makes for an easy study guide when it comes time to study for the midterm and in terms of looking back when writing the final paper. Importantly you also get feedback from me which should help point out areas where you're doing well and areas to focus on for improvement. As always, feel free to ask me questions about your response papers before, during, and after you write them.

The Assignment:

Each response paper must be on only **one** article from the syllabus with the exception of the Fukuyama and Norgaard articles.¹

All response papers must be turned in **the day** in which a reading is covered in class unless special arrangements have been made with me in advance.

Response papers should be around one single spaced or two double spaced pages (around **600-700 words**). Please include a word count with each response paper.

Please make sure to include ALL of the following in your response paper:

1. A **brief** introductory paragraph where you state the conclusion of the article, it's relationship to other articles read so far, and your criticism/evaluation of the article.
2. One paragraph where you explain the author's main **argument**. Make sure to include not only the author's conclusion(s) but also her or his reasons for coming to that conclusion.
3. One paragraph where you do one (or more) of the following:
 1. Expand on an author's argument. This might include drawing out the implications of an argument (ex- "If Kant is right about our indirect duties to animals then the argument would imply that we would only have indirect duties to other non-rational agents including children and some comatose agents")
 2. Critique an author's argument. Point out a place where an author's argument either fails to prove what it sets out to prove or contradicts itself, or relies on problematic assumptions etc (ex- "Regan argues that privileging human suffering over animal suffering is a kind of species chauvinism but he neglects to take seriously the different ways in which human suffering is conceptually different from animal suffering")

¹ For that week you may write a single response paper on that pair of articles.