

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. 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. You must write one response paper for each of the major topics covered in the class (free will, morality, and personal identity).

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 BOTH of the following in your response paper:

1. One paragraph where you first state a thesis: “in this paper I first explain Socrates' argument that rhetoric and philosophy are distinct, then I criticize Socrates' point by suggesting that philosophy doesn't make sense according to his definition.” Then go on to:
 1. Explain the author's main **argument**. Make sure to include not only the author's conclusion(s) but also explain the argument that justifies that conclusion.
2. 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- “Parfit argues that personal identity is not what matters but that instead what we care about is psychological continuity and contiguity. Does this mean that on Parfit's view we could live forever in some relevant sense as a simulated person?”) It might also including explaining how the argument in the article relates to other authors we have discussed in the course.
 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- ““Pereboom thinks that there isn't a relevant difference in his Generalization argument but the kind of control or manipulation present in the different cases seems relevantly different. Only some of those manipulations undermine our freedom.”)