

Three-stage writing project

First short paper assignment (1 page)

Assignment

This paper is the first step in a multi-step process that will culminate in your completion of a final, longer paper at the end of the block. Here is the first step:

- Pick a topic of environmental concern that interests you, and describe your current ethical or political position on it, and your reason for adopting this position. . That is, if you think there is some action that should be taken on this matter, describe it and briefly describe your current reason for thinking this action is necessary. Perhaps there is a topic of environmental concern where you think popular proposals should *not* be enacted. If so, again please state briefly why.

While this paper is brief, please put some serious thought into it. Your second and third papers will both build on your topic choice, and I will be reluctant to let you change topics between assignments. To give you an idea of where this is going: eventually I will ask you to examine your current position on this topic in light of some of the ethical theory we study. I will ask you to evaluate your position in light of that theory. I will then ask you to look at the reasons offered for those theories, and decide whether or not, in the end, those theories should be adopted, and therefore whether or not your position is the correct one.

Second short paper assignment (2 pages, double-spaced)

Assignment

By the time this paper will be due, you will have read about utilitarian and teleological intrinsic value theories about the value of nature. Having read these materials, this second stage of your paper should follow these steps:

- Pick one theory you think best defends the environmental position you articulated in paper 1. Spend one page describing the rationale for this theory *and* how it reinforces your case. Note that these are separate points that should be clearly separated in your writing.
- Pick another (single) theory that raises problems (either directly, or by implication) for the first theory. Use your second page to describe the rationale for this theory, and how it undermines your case. Again, note that these are separate points that should be clearly separated in your writing.

At this point you do not need to editorialize and comment on which theory you think is better. You only need to focus on explaining the rationale for each theory and how it would evaluate the merits of your position.

To describe and explain each of the two theories you pick, I highly recommend preparing for yourself a short outline of the relevant article you're addressing, so that you can be sure to hit all of the *important* points of each theory in the course of your exposition.

Don't feel as if the theory you pick for part one has to offer the *best* possible defense for your position. You will have the chance to offer that in the final stage of your paper

Final paper assignment (5-6 pages)

Assignment

To complete this final stage of your paper project, please follow these steps:

- Revise your first two papers in light of my comments, and fuse them together as the introduction and first section of your paper. (In some cases, if my comments suggested it, you may need to do more than revise—you may need to rewrite.)
- Write a new final section, 2-3 pages long, in which you do **one** of the following things:
 - **Defend your original viewpoint, by defending the first, supporting theory discussed in the second paper against the criticisms registered by the second and against any other criticisms I may have registered in my comments.** Note that defending that first theory does not mean reasserting its conclusions! It means undermining the second theory by alleging that it involves logical gaps, or showing that the second theory contradicts important facts, or filling in gaps in reasoning where criticisms of it allege there are gaps.
 - **Defend your original viewpoint against criticisms by adopting a new theory, perhaps one we have learned about since the time the second paper was due.** If you choose this option, you will need to follow the same procedure you followed in the second paper: Spend at least one page describing the rationale for this theory *and* how it reinforces your case. But then you will also need to write about why you think this theory is superior to the theory you originally chose: explain why it does not fall prey to the objections of the second theory, why it is more logical, why it is more conducive to defending your view in particular, etc.
 - **Change your mind about your original position, and explain why.** Perhaps you will decide that the second theory you discussed in your second paper is simply more persuasive than the first, or perhaps my comments on that paper will cause you to doubt your original idea. If so, there is no need to change your position in the first half of your paper, except to change the tense in which you expressed it. Start by writing about the position you *used* to support, then give the theories pro- and contra, and then explain why you may have changed your mind and now support some other viewpoint. As in the case of the first option up above, note that changing your mind on the basis of the second theory doesn't just mean reiterating its conclusions, but explaining how objections that can be raised to *it* (which we may now have learned about) do not succeed, by showing that the first theory contradicts important facts, that the second involves fewer logical gaps, etc.