

Writing Assignment #5

Third Essay

3rd Essay (1000-2000 words, ~4-8 pages) + Postwrite. Write a persuasive essay on an issue involving **rhetoric and/or morals**. Use **the concepts, terminology, theories, and insights from our readings and class discussions**. Delve as deeply into the topic as you can. For many topics, some research will be needed. Here are some **possible** topics, **but please feel free to invent your own topic**:

- According to rhetorician Barry Brummett, "...rhetoric is so much a part of our everyday lives ...[that] one can study what it means to be human by thinking about what it means to be rhetorical." (1). Write an essay that makes a case for or against this assertion.
- Do the ends justify the means? In other words, do the importance and/or good intentions and/or long-term results of the ultimate goals allow us to do "whatever it takes" in order to achieve those goals? This question underlies many moral discussions. Using a particular societal issue (e.g., euthanasia, war, terrorism, abortion, the use of rhetoric in ads or politics) or a personal or college issue (e.g., dating more than one person at a time, cheating to get into med school, lying to parents, saying "I love you" when you're not sure you mean it, reporting someone else who cheated), write an essay whose ultimate purpose will be to throw some light on the issues of ends justifying means (i.e., your intro and conclusion should invoke the ends/means issue, but the body your essay will explore that one particular issue you've selected).
- How much individual freedom should we be willing to give up for security? There are several possible specific issues, any one of which you could select to explore this question- e.g., you might consider limits imposed on access to the Internet in order to protect children from pornography or to prevent information on how to build bombs or the home addresses of abortion doctors from falling into the wrong hands; or, using the measures taken by the US since September 11, 2001, attack on the Twin Towers as an example (e.g., the creation of Homeland Security, the checking of bags etc. at airports, racial profiling), take a position on how much individual freedom we should give up to protect us from terrorism? Whatever issue you select, adopt a position and persuade us that your position is more valid, more logical, more effective, more whatever than any other.
- Are there moral limits to what a scientist or engineer should do (e.g., in terms of testing on humans or animals, in terms of developing weapons or biological weapons, in terms of having a "responsibility to society" that transcends responsibility to a company or government or one's own curiosity or career?)
- Can scientists avoid using rhetoric? Should they avoid it?
- Should tolerance be considered a desirable trait to have? If so, what are the limits (if any) of tolerance? In other words, when (if ever) should we stop tolerating the offensive actions of some person or of some group or of some country? Write an essay proving your position.

- Assuming that Gorgias is correct that language has great potential for the control of the mind of others, what are the dangers of eloquence and what (if anything) can (and should) society do about those dangers and potential? Think about this issue at least in terms of politics and advertising.
- Often modern-day lawyers are seen as following the beliefs of sophists. After establishing what the sophists taught, look at 2-3 discussions of lawyer ethics in sophisticated magazines or in professional law journals or books of law ethics. Write an argument agreeing with the lawyers/sophists or disagreeing with them (and hence agreeing with Plato, perhaps).
- Is it immoral to teach students the art of rhetoric- i.e., to teach them how to "read" an audience and how to devise arguments that will influence that particular audience to think or feel or act in a particular way? What does teaching rhetoric suggest about the existence (or non-existence) of Truth? Write a persuasive essay defending and proving your position.
- Select an essay or article (from ESSAYS or some equally sophisticated source) that makes an argument about some rhetorical or moral issue- analyze that text's argument as part of your own argument about that same topic.
- **Or your own topic about a moral or rhetorical controversy.**