

## Major Essay #1 (Sophist Essay)

**Length:** 1000-2000 words, ~4-8 double-spaced pages

**Workshop Draft Due:** 8<sup>th</sup> class meeting; bring 4 copies

**Mandatory Revision Due:** 9<sup>th</sup> class; email me a copy before class starts, bring 1 hard copy to class

**Optional Revision Due:** No later than class #13; email me a copy before class, bring 1 hard copy to class

One of the hallmarks of being a sophist was having the ability to argue either side of a case—either pro or con. **Assume your audience is skeptical about your position.** Your task for this assignment is to select **one** of the Options below and then to write a 4-part essay (the parts should have the following **boldfaced** headings:

- **Advocate:** In the 1<sup>st</sup> part of the essay, you are the advocate for one position
- **Opponent:** In the 2<sup>nd</sup> part of your essay, you are the opponent of the position advocated in your 1<sup>st</sup> section.
- **Advocate's Rebuttal:** In the 3<sup>rd</sup> part of the essay, you-the-advocate give a rebuttal of the argument made by you-the-opponent.
- **Opponent's Rebuttal:** In the 4<sup>th</sup> part of the essay, you-the-opponent give a rebuttal of the rebuttal made by you-the-advocate.

### Option 1:

In Plato's *Gorgias*, Calicles says, "This I conceive to be justice according to nature: he who is better and more intelligent should rule and have the advantage over baser men." He also says that real morality is the right of the strong to pursue whatever they desire.

1. You-the-advocate argue that Calicles is correct, giving modern-day examples, giving reasons to support this concept of justice, etc.
2. You-the-opponent argue that Calicles is wrong, pointing out the flaws in his argument, explaining what you think justice is, and giving reasons to support your idea.

### Option 2:

In *Gorgias*, the question is asked, "Is it better to suffer injustice, or to commit injustice?"

1. You-the-advocate argue that it is better to suffer injustice.
2. You-the-opponent argue that it is better to commit injustice.

### Option 3 (which might be seen as Option 2 rephrased):

In the following brief poem, poet/novelist/journalist Stephen Crane raises a question that he leaves up to us to answer:

A man feared that he might find an assassin;  
Another feared that he might find a victim.  
One was more wise than the other.

1. You-as-advocate argue that the man fearing that an assassin will find him is wiser.
2. You-as-opponent argue that the man fearing to find a victim and thus to become the assassin is wiser.

### Option 4:

The following scenario is adapted from Erasmus: "A community offers a monetary reward for the murder of a tyrant. A man breaks into the tyrant's home, but the tyrant is away. Only the tyrant's 12-year-old son is at home. The intruder kills the tyrant's son. The tyrant returns to find his beloved son dead. The tyrant then commits suicide. In the ensuing days, there is a dispute over the reward; some community members do not believe the man has rightfully earned the reward."

1. You-as-advocate argue that the man deserves the reward.
2. You-as-opponent argue that the man does not deserve the reward.