

4. Ethical Argument Essay

Due: 10th class, 3/14 (T)—bring 2 copies

Mandatory Revision Due: 10th class, 3/121(T)-- EMAIL me a copy before class

Optional Revision Last Possible Date: 4/20 (R)

Length: 750-1500 words, ~3-6 pages

Overview: In your essay, analyze an ethical situation from as many angles as possible, and then argue for a particular course of action. Assume your readers are skeptical about the course of action you are recommending, so you must use evidence and logical demonstrations and appeals to various tools in the “Ethical Tool Chest” handout in order to prove that your position is ethical and practical.

Workshop Variation: Instead of doing a traditional workshop, each rhetor will present his/her case orally to the class; then class members will make suggestions about the ideas etc. So come to class prepared to give a speech about the case and to explain and defend your position.

Organization: Follow this rhetorical arrangement (for this assignment, though, do not use headings):

- A brief Introduction that establishes kairos (why should we—students and teacher of 21W.747—be interested in this particular case at this particular time?) and that gives a forecast.
- A Background section that briefly explains the major details of the case
- An Ethical Analysis section which examines the ethical situation from as many angles as possible, explaining where and how various ethical elements from the “Ethics Tool Chest are in conflict; the more ethical elements you consider, the better the analysis will be.
 - o If there is not enough relevant information given in the scenario, use the rhetorical “what if” technique
 - o “If x were true, the moral implications would be...” and “If y were true, then the moral implications would be...”
- An Ethical Argument section in which you explain the course of action that should be pursued and then prove that your position is the most ethical (usually this means that your position satisfies more principles etc. than any other, or that it partially satisfied more without ignoring others).
 - o Note, if there are several participants involved, you need to discuss the best course of action for each of them as it relates to the overall “best” course of action you recommend.
- A brief conclusion that states your thesis explicitly for the first time. The thesis of such an essay does not state the “right answer” (since there isn’t one); rather, the thesis might say something like: “Although the principles of utilitarianism (“greatest good”) and community suggest a different course of action, the principle of character growth, the Golden Rule, and participant K’s obligations to x and y show that participant K should do W.” Note too that the thesis in this essay should be in the conclusion rather than in the Intro.

Directions:

- After reading all 7 of the cases listed below from Chapter 10 in ETHICS, select one:
 - o Case 10.4 (What was that again?)
 - o Case 10.9 (“Rent Battle”)
 - o Case 10.10 (“Suicidal?”)
 - o Case 10.11 (“With Charity Toward All”)
 - o Case 10.12 (Contemporary Social Problems: Who Cares?)
 - o Case 10.13 (“Freedom of Religion?”)
 - o Case 10.16 (“A Second Chance?”)
- Use the terms and concepts from the “Ethics Tool Chest.”
- Do not focus exclusively on the practical “consequences,” although those can certainly be part of your analysis.
- The questions at the end of each Case raise important issues—try to include considerations of as many of these as fit comfortably in your analysis and argument.
- This should be a coherent, thoughtful essay (and use no headings).

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