

Social Structure, Public Policy, and Ethics Course Assignments

Assignment Type 1: Course Readings and Discussion Questions

Throughout the semester, you will be charged with reading various texts outside of class. We will discuss those texts together in class. Throughout the semester there are various dates on which you must submit *two discussion questions* the night before class. **These questions are due at 8:00 a.m. on the Blackboard site the morning before class listed on the syllabus unless otherwise noted.** Your questions should note something you did not understand from the reading, or raise a concern you had in light of what you read (such as a criticism, or a clarification question).

Discussion Questions Assessment

Your discussion questions will be graded as follows:

- 10/10 pts- Two questions submitted that demonstrate having read the material
- 5/10 pts- Two questions submitted, but do not demonstrate having read the material
- 3/10- 1 question submitted
- 0/10 pts- no questions submitted

To demonstrate that you have read the material, your questions should be *specific* and refer to a particular part of the text or particular line of argument. In addition, **you should briefly summarize (in 1-2 sentences) the parts of the text that gave rise to your question.**

At the end of the semester, your grades on the discussion questions will be averaged, and this will constitute your initial participation grade for the class. Your attendance will then be factored in, giving one final participation & attendance grade. Please see the syllabus for the attendance policy.

Note: if you miss class on the day discussion questions are due, you will receive a grade of 0/10 for your discussion questions.

Assignment Type 2: Blog Posts & Class Presentation

The first written assignments for this course are in the form of blog posts. You will belong to a group of three students who must all contribute to a blog throughout the semester. The posts will be structured as follows. During the first half of the semester, your group will select one real-world ethical issue pertaining to *domestic* social structure and public policy that is a topic in this year's presidential election. During the second half of the semester, your group will pick another topic from the election, but one that pertains to international policy. There are four main components of the blog:

1. Primary Blog Entries

Every two weeks, one member of your group will write a 500-word *primary blog entry* about your chosen topic. The blog entry should highlight a policy stance taken by one of the candidates, or reference a recent article about your topic. The primary blog entry must then relate the policy stance or article to one of the theories we have discussed in class *during the last two weeks*. The goal is to have you continuously connect your chosen topic to the work we are doing in class.

2. Blog Responses

Once the primary blog entry is posted, it is the responsibility of one remaining group member to respond. *Blog responses* should either (1) raise criticism or (2) present a novel way of justifying the position cited in the original post. Responses should be between 200 and 300 words.

3. Conclusion Post

On the Friday after primary and response posts are due, you will discuss your blog posts with your group in class. Following your discussion, the remaining group member will write a *conclusion post* in which you record what you as a group learned through your blog discussions that week. This final post can be more informal than the original posts, but should record the input of all group members. This post can be written during your group discussions in class and finished after class if necessary.

4. Group Presentation

Finally, your group will be charged with giving a twenty minute presentation on your chosen topic to the class. During this presentation, you should do the following:

1. Give a brief overview of what the policy issue is.
2. Discuss at least 3 candidates' stances on your policy issue (ideally conflicting stances)
3. Explain whether the candidates' stances cohere/do not cohere with the ethical theories discussed in class.

Following your presentation, the class will ask questions and discuss.

Blog Post Assessment

Every member should write one primary blog post, one response post, and one conclusion post in the first half of the semester pertaining to the group's chosen domestic policy topic. The same will be done during the second half of the semester for the group's foreign policy topic.

You will be evaluated on the quality of your primary blog posts and responses, conclusion posts, and class presentation, as follows:

- Primary blog posts will be evaluated on the extent to which they (1) provide an adequate description of the topic or article they've chosen to discuss, (2) accurately assessed the content of that topic or article in light of one of the theories we have discussed in class in the previous two weeks, and (3) provided an original evaluation of parts (1) and (2) (in other words, what do *you* think about it?). Please cite any resources that you use.
- Response blog posts will be evaluated on the extent to which they present thoughtful, thorough replies on the primary blog post. In particular, response posts should either (1) provide a critique of the primary post or (2) provide further, novel justification for the primary post.
- Conclusion posts should summarize the blog discussion for the week, highlighting the main topics and themes as a record for the group.
- *If you are not present for your group's in-class blog discussion, you will receive a 15 pt. deduction from your blog post grade for that week.*
- The group presentation will be evaluated on both clarity and content.

Assignment Type 3: Course Papers

In addition to contributing to a group blog, each student will be required to write two papers for our course. The papers will test the student's ability to apply the theoretical content discussed in class to a real-world policy problem, and to do so on their own, rather than in a group discussion setting.

Students will receive their first papers back with a grade and instructor feedback. Students will then be asked to write a 1-2 page response piece in which they explain how they can improve their essay writing in the second essay, given the feedback they received on paper 1.

Course Paper Assessment

Papers will be graded according to their clarity and content. In particular, students will be graded on their ability to accurately summarize the content discussed in class, and their ability to apply that content to their chosen policy topic. An in-depth prompt will be distributed for each paper with further instructions.

Blog Post Schedule

Group Number _____

Blog posts 1-4: Domestic Policy
Topic: _____

Blog Post 1 – Due Friday January 15 at 5:00 p.m.

For your first blog post, please select one student in the group to type up your chosen topic. Why has your group chosen that topic? Why do you think this topic is particularly important to discussions of political equality? In addition, please post the list of who will be responsible for the primary post, responses, and conclusion blog posts for weeks 1-4.

Blog Post 2 – Primary Post & Responses Due Thursday January 28 at 5:00 p.m.

Group member _____ will be responsible for primary blog post 2.
Primary post due Monday January 25 at 5:00 p.m.
Group member _____ will be responsible for response post 2.
Response post due Wednesday January 27 at 5:00 p.m.
Group member _____ will be responsible for conclusion post 2.
Conclusion Post due Friday January 29 at 5:00 p.m.

Blog Post 3 – Primary Post & Responses Due Thursday February 11 at 5:00 p.m.

Group member _____ will be responsible for primary blog post 3.
Primary post due Monday February 8 at 5:00 p.m.
Group member _____ will be responsible for response post 3.
Response post due Monday February 10 at 5:00 p.m.
Group member _____ will be responsible for conclusion post 3.
Conclusion Post Due Friday February 12 at 5:00 p.m.

Blog Post 4 – Primary Post & Responses Due Thursday February 25 at 5:00 p.m.

Group member _____ will be responsible for primary blog post 4.
Primary post due Monday February 22 at 5:00 p.m.
Group member _____ will be responsible for response post 4.
Response post due Wednesday February 24 at 5:00 p.m.
Group member _____ will be responsible for conclusion post 4.
Conclusion Post Due Friday February 26 at 5:00 p.m.

Group Number _____

**Blog posts 5-8: Foreign Policy
Topic:** _____

Blog Post 5 – Due Friday March 18 at 5:00 p.m.

For your fifth blog post, please select one student in the group to type up your chosen foreign policy topic. Why has your group chosen that topic? Why do you think this topic is particularly important to political equality? Also, post the list of who will be responsible for the primary post, responses, and conclusion blog posts for weeks 5-8.

Blog Post 6 – Primary Post & Responses Due Thursday March 31 at 5:00 p.m.

Group member _____ will be responsible for primary blog post 6.
Primary post due Monday March 28 at 5:00 p.m.
Group member _____ will be responsible for response post 6.
Response post due Wednesday March 30 at 5:00 p.m.
Group member _____ will be responsible for conclusion post 6.
Conclusion Post Due Friday April 1 at 5:00 p.m.

Blog Post 7 – Primary Post & Responses Due Thursday April 14 at 5:00 p.m.

Group member _____ will be responsible for primary blog post 7.
Primary Post Due Monday April 11 at 5:00 p.m.
Group member _____ will be responsible for response post 7.
Response Post Due Wednesday April 13 at 5:00 p.m.
Group member _____ will be responsible for conclusion post 7.
Conclusion Post Due Friday April 15 at 5:00 p.m.

Blog Post 8 – Primary Post & Responses Due Thursday April 21 at 5:00 p.m.

Group member _____ will be responsible for primary blog post 8.
Primary Post Due Monday April 18 at 5:00 p.m.
Group member _____ will be responsible for response post 8.
Response Post Due Wednesday April 20 at 5:00 p.m.
Group member _____ will be responsible for conclusion post 8.
Conclusion Post Due Friday April 22 at 5:00 p.m.