

Essay

1 General Directions

The paper will be done in five stages.

Stage 1: Pick one of the topics below and devise a solution or response. Write no more than a page outlining your argument or arguments.

Due: Week 4

Please upload the assignment to Blackboard.

Stage 2: Devise an argument objecting to your proposed solution. Write no more than a page outlining this argument.

Due: Week 5

Please upload the assignment to Blackboard.

Stage 3: Incorporating your argument and the objection to it write a 2 to 3 page outline or rough draft of your paper.

Due: Week 6

Please upload the assignment to Blackboard.

Stage 4: On the basis of comments on your outline and suggestions for how to proceed you will turn your outline into a 4 to 5 page essay presenting the arguments for your solution. At this stage I will suggest some sources to read to help you formulate your arguments.

Due: Week 10

Please upload the assignment to Blackboard.

Stage 5: Again on the basis of comments on your draft and suggestions for how to proceed you will rewrite and polish your essay.

Due: Week 14

Please upload the assignment to Blackboard.

2 Due Dates

- Week 4: response
- Week 5: objection to response
- Week 6: outline
- Week 10: draft
- Week 14: final essay

3 Specific Directions

3.1 Response

Your initial response should state your response to the puzzle. It should give your (initial) overall answer and, most importantly, *the reasons why you think that answer is correct*. At this stage you do not have to do any outside reading concerning your chosen problem, just think about it as hard as you can and give your response.

3.2 Objection

Devise an objection to your initial response. Try and make your objection as plausible and as strong as you can. The important thing is to provide reasons, an argument, why your first argument is wrong.

3.3 Outline

Based on stages 1 and 2 write a 2-3 page outline of your paper. Your outline should do three things: 1) incorporate your argument from stage 1, 2) incorporate the objection from stage 2 and 3) respond to the objection with a counter-argument, an argument that the objection is mistaken.

The main thing to focus on is *the reasons for your answer* (for example, *why* is your decision the right, moral, one, for topic 1; why do you rank the people the way you do, in topic 2). Your aim should be to communicate the main points of your argument, its conclusion and the premises for it.

3.4 Draft

Based on feedback on your outline you should expand it into a 4-5 page essay. At this stage I will assign some readings to help you think about your topic.

The main purpose of your draft is to give more detailed versions of your arguments, and setting them out more carefully and to take into considerations what you learned from the assigned reading. There is no “right or wrong”, though there is a definite better and worse, the main thing is to present your arguments as clearly as you can.

3.5 Final Paper

Again, after getting back comments on your draft you should rewrite and polish it. At this stage I will direct you toward some more readings to help you formulate your arguments. You should expect to expand or clarify the arguments you discuss, either by presenting more of them or by delving into the argument or arguments in a more specific fashion. The final paper should be a formal essay presenting your considered view on your topic, and on other approaches to it.

4 Topics

Topic 1

Compare the following four cases. Your essay must answer the following *two* questions. What is the right thing to do in each case? **Why** is it the right thing to do?

To help you think about, and to answer, the two questions above you should answer the following questions. Are the cases morally the same or different? Is it the right thing to do in every case to save the five people and kill the one person? Or is it the right thing to save the one person and let the five die? Or should you save one person in some cases and five people in different cases?

1. A train has lost its breaks and is out of control speeding down a hill. Ahead of the train on the tracks are five people who are stuck on the track and will be killed if the train hits them. Just before the five people is a fork in the track. You are next to a switch which will divert the train. However, on the other track there is one person, who will be killed if the train hits them. There is no way to get any of the people off the tracks.
2. You are a very skilled surgeon. There are five people under your care, each of which needs an organ transplant. In the hospital there is also an

innocent person who, as it happens, would be a match for each of the five people under your care.

3. You have a bottle of medicine. Five people are dying, which would be saved by giving them one-fifth each of the medicine. One other person is also dying but they need the whole bottle to survive.
4. You and another person are on a bridge watching an out of control trolley hurtling toward five innocent workmen. You realize that if you push the other person over the railing they will stop the trolley from hitting the five men, but he will certainly die.

In each case you are faced with a choice to save one person or five, but what is permissible and/or obligatory in each case seems different. Are the cases different? Why? How? Are they in fact the same? Why? How?

Topic 2

Consider the story below. Your essay must do *two* things. Rank the persons' actions from best to worst (whose action was the most right and whose actions were the most wrong). State the standard you use to rank their actions (for example, how right or wrong an action is measured by how good or bad its consequences are - the action with the best consequences is the most right action, the action with the worst consequences the most wrong).

A man (M) and a lady (L) who are very much in love and devoted to one another, are separated by a river with no way of getting across to the other side. On L's side of the river, there is a boatman (B) who is able to take her over to the other side of the river but refuses to do so unless she pays him \$20, twice his normal fare. L has no money. Another man (S) then tells L that he will give her \$20 if she sleeps with him. L agrees to do so and on receiving the \$20, pays B who takes her over to the other side of the river. She is reunited with M and they are very happy together. However, a friend of M (F) finds out what L did with S and immediately tells M. On learning the news, M finds L and ends things with her, stating that he wants nothing more to do with her.