

## *Appendix B*

### *Writing Assignments in Introduction to Philosophy*

#### GRADED ASSIGNMENTS

- Homework assignments that ask students to respond to reading. Fishman gave twenty-one assignments of various genres requiring pupils to summarize and evaluate the readings and apply them to their own lives. These homework pieces often provided the basis for in-class interactions among students in groups and pairs. The homework assignments are listed below.
- Multi-draft essay. In the final month of the semester students were asked to write a multi-draft essay applying philosophic methods to a personal or public moral dilemma.
- Mid-term and final exams. These were student-generated essays exams (as described in chapter 2.)

#### UNGRADED ASSIGNMENTS

- Class Reflection Logs (CRLs). Nine times during the semester, Fishman asked students to reflect on their learning in the class. He collected the CRLs periodically, responding to them but not assigning a grade. The CRL questions are listed in Appendix C.
- Classnotes. Once during the semester each student served as class notetaker. He/she wrote up and made copies of his/her notes, distributing them to classmates at the beginning of the next session. The classnotes, which were read aloud and were often funny and entertaining, provided continuity and allowed all students but

one to participate in class discussion without having to take notes. Each day's notetaker, at the end of his/her notes, nominated the next scribe.

- Ten-minute, in-class freewrites. Fishman used freewrites regularly across the semester to allow students time to gather their thoughts before class discussion. He did not collect them.

## HOMEWORK ASSIGNMENTS

### Assignment #1 - Choosing and Defending One Side of a Debate (Frantz Fanon)

Please note that all homework is to be typed. Handwritten work is not acceptable.

After reading Max Hallman [1995], pp. 1–6 (in Hallman) and Frantz Fanon [1965/1995] (in Hallman, pp. 189–93), please choose one side or the other of the following debate and type a three or four paragraph defense of your position.

1. Fanon's view of capitalism as a form of colonization in which educators and clergy keep the exploited in submission is a distortion. It only serves to promote unrest among different races and social classes.
2. Fanon's view of capitalism as a form of colonization spotlights an important but usually hidden truth about White, Euro-America's treatment of Native Americans and African Americans.

### Assignment #2 - A Summary and Question about Stokely Carmichael

Please type a brief summary of Carmichael's [1966/1995] argument against racial integration of White and Black in America (in Hallman, pp. 194–99). Conclude your summary with a question about Carmichael's position which you would be willing to present to the class discussion leader.

### Assignment #3 - Short Essay on bell hooks

Please type a brief summary of what you consider to be bell hooks's [1981/1995] main points (in Hallman, pp. 199–209). Then indicate whether or not you believe there is such a thing in America as “White privilege.” Have you yourself ever been a victim or beneficiary of such privilege?

### Assignment #4 - Letter Exchange on Plato

All homework is to be typed. Hand-written letters are not acceptable. Two copies of your letter are required. One copy is to be given to me and the other copy is to be exchanged with your letter-partner at the start of class.

Reflect on your reading of Plato's *Apology* and *Crito*, and then write a 200-300 word letter to your partner in which you describe some aspect of the dialogues that you are having trouble understanding—a specific area you are having difficulty interpreting or fully comprehending.

You should make distinctions where you can—that is, describe what you understand and what you do not understand. You should refer to one or more particular passages in the dialogues where you are experiencing difficulty. Don't just say, “I don't understand the passage beginning at line 10 of page 64.” In other words, you should provide a context for what you do not understand so your reader can see your difficulties and thereby give you some assistance.

I hope this assignment will help you clarify your thinking about the *Apology* and *Crito* dialogues as well as describe a particular problem or problems to a classmate that you really want to know more about.

### Assignment #5 - Letter Response

Please bring two copies of your typed response letter, one for your letter partner and one for me.

Write a response of at least 200-300 words to the letter you received from your classmate. You may draw upon our class discussions as well as your own reading of Plato's dialogues. Please suggest possible answers to your classmate's questions and raise any other issues which you believe are relevant.

#### Assignment #6 - Short Essay and a Question about J.H. Holmes

Please write a short essay explaining what you got out of Holmes's [1929/1973] article (in Edwards and Pap, pp. 250–260). Please conclude with a question you have about his piece, one you are willing to share with your classmates and explore as class discussion leader.

#### Assignment #7 - Study Questions about Lin Yutang

Please type your answers to these study questions about Yutang's [1937/1995] article (in Hallman, pp. 286–292).

1. What does Yutang mean by calling himself a "pagan"?
2. Why does Yutang maintain his belief in God but surrender his belief in Christianity?
3. Yutang talks about "bending to the will of Heaven" (p. 292). What does he mean? Is this something you yourself want to do? Please explain.

#### Assignment #8 - A Question about William Paley

After reading the Paley [1802/1973] selection (in Edwards & Pap, pp. 419–434), please focus on a portion of the text or one of his arguments you find puzzling or difficult to understand. Please formulate a question which gets at the center of your puzzlement. Then type this question at the top of a blank page. We will form small groups, select the best question in each group, and pass it to the next group for a collective answers.

### Assignment #9 - A Debate about Clarence Darrow

Please type a brief essay after reading Darrow [1932/1973] (in Edwards & Pap, pp. 446–453) in which you defend one of these contrasting positions.

1. Darrow's position may be depressing, but it is an accurate one with which we need to learn to live.
2. Darrow's position is a one-sided, superficial view of human experience and our relationship to the world.

### Assignment #10 - Study Questions about Carol Christ

Please read Carol Christ's [1978/1995] article (in Hallman, pp. 268–278). After discussing the study questions with a classmate (to be assigned), type your answers to the following questions.

1. What surprises you most about Carol Christ's article?
2. Which of your own beliefs about the dominant Western religions and prevailing views about women in our culture does the article challenge?

### Assignment #11 - Letter Exchange about Bertrand Russell

Bertrand Russell's work, including *Marriage & Morals* [1929/1970], has been controversial, although about 25 years after this book's publication Russell received the Nobel Prize. Please reflect on the assigned sections of the text (chaps. 3, 5, 6, 10, 16) and then write a 200-300 word letter to a classmate in which you describe some aspect of the text that you are having trouble understanding—a specific area you are having difficulty interpreting or fully comprehending.

Please bring two copies of your typed letter. Refer to specific passages in the text. However, don't just take a sentence out of context and say you do not understand it. Indicate what you do understand and what you do not understand. That is, try to help your letter correspondent by indicating what you do understand of the general argument in which the specific and troubling quotation appears.

### Assignment #12 - Letter Response

Please bring two copies of your response letter, one for the classmate to whom you are responding, the other for me.

Write a response of at least 200-300 words to the letter you received from a classmate. In your response, you may draw upon our class discussions as well as your own reading of the assigned sections of Russell's *Marriage & Morals* (chaps. 3, 5, 6, 10, and 16). Please suggest possible answers to your classmate's questions, and raise any other issues which you believe are relevant to her or his questions.

### Assignment #13 - Short Essay and Question about Simone de Beauvoir

Please compose a brief essay explaining what you have learned by reading de Beauvoir [1949/1995] (in Hallman, pp. 25–31). Conclude with a question you have about de Beauvoir's article, a question you believe is important, one you are willing to explore as discussion leader with your classmates.

### Assignment #14 - A Question about Mary Daly

After reading the article by Mary Daly [1973/1995] (Hallman, pp. 159–171), please generate a question which goes to the heart of the issues in Daly's article. Since we will be using these questions in small groups during class, please also provide enough background material so that your reader can understand why you think your question is important or why you believe answering it will be instructive.

### Assignment #15 - Letter Exchange about Dewey (*Reconstruction*, chap. 2)

John Dewey (1859–1952) is America's best known philosopher and is considered the driving force behind the pedagogical reform movement known as "progressive education." The most accessible overview of his philosophy is *Reconstruction in Philosophy*

[1920/1962]. This book was written in 1919 and is the result of a series of lectures Dewey gave on a visit to Japan. *Reconstruction* was, therefore, not written for students but for an audience already familiar with the ongoing conversation in philosophy. Our assignments from this book are, thus, an important step forward in our efforts to become familiar with philosophy and to develop the skills to eventually contribute to its community of readers and writers. So make an extra effort with this book and be patient if the reading is difficult going in certain places.

Please reflect on chapter 2 of *Reconstruction*, and then write a one to two page letter to a classmate in which you describe some aspect of Dewey's chapter 2 that you are having trouble understanding—a specific area you are having difficulty interpreting or fully comprehending. Refer to specific passages in Dewey's text. Indicate what you do understand and what you do not understand. That is, try to help your letter-correspondent by indicating what you comprehend of the general argument in which the specific and troubling quotation appears. Please bring two copies of your typed letter to class.

#### Assignment #16 - Letter Response

Write a one to two page letter in response to the inquiry you received from a classmate this past Thursday. In your response, draw upon our class discussions as well as your own reading of chapter 2 of Dewey's *Reconstruction in Philosophy*. Please suggest possible answers to your classmate's questions and raise any other issues you believe are relevant to her or his questions. Bring two copies of your typed response letter, one for the classmate to whom you are responding and one for me.

#### Assignment #17 - Short Essay and Question about Paul Ree

Please write a short essay relating what you have learned from Ree's article [1885/1973] (in Edwards & Pap, pp. 10–27). Please conclude your essay with a question you have about Ree's piece, one you are willing to investigate as discussion leader with the rest of the class.

## Assignment # 18 - Study Questions about John Stuart Mill

John Stuart Mill, godfather to Bertrand Russell and England's most famous intellectual of the 19th century, distinguishes between fatalism and determinism in his article, "On Liberty & Necessity" [1843/1973] (in Edwards & Pap, pp. 52–58).

1. After discussion with a classmate [to be assigned], please outline Mill's distinction between fatalism and determinism and show the importance of this distinction for Mill's defense of human freedom.
2. Compare and contrast Mill's position with Ree's. Do you find any significant differences between Mill's and Ree's views on freedom of the will?
3. If you had to pick between Mill's position and Ree's, which would you choose? Please explain.

## Assignment #19 - Study Questions about William James

Taking a very different stance than Paul Ree or John Stuart Mill, William James [1884/1973], a famous American philosopher who taught at Harvard in the first part of this century, "hopes to persuade us" that we should assume that freedom of the will is true. James attempts to do this by examining the moral implications of the position he wants to resist, namely, determinism. His article, "The Dilemma of Determinism" is in Edwards and Pap, pp. 34–46.

1. Please explain how James understands determinism and indeterminism.
2. Does James persuade you that we have free-will? If so, why? If not, why not?

Assignment # 20 - Letter Exchange about Dewey  
(*Reconstruction*, chap. 1)

We end our readings for the semester with chapter 1 of Dewey's *Reconstruction in Philosophy* [1920/1962]. It brings us full circle to questions we faced at the start of the semester, for in chapter 1



Dewey provides an interpretation of the trial of Socrates and concludes with a discussion of his own definition of philosophy, its methods and subject-matter.

Please read Dewey's chapter 1 and write a one or two page letter to a classmate describing some aspect of this chapter that you are having trouble understanding—a specific area you are having difficulty interpreting or fully comprehending.

#### Assignment # 21 - Letter Response

Please write a response of at least 200-300 words to the letter you received from your classmate about Dewey's chapter 1. In your response, draw upon our class discussions as well as your own reading of Dewey's chapter to suggest possible answers to your classmate's questions and raise any other issues which you believe are relevant.

Please bring two copies of your typed response letter to class. One will be given to the classmate to whom you are responding; the other is for me.