

Nature and Human Values Major Paper Assignments

Paper 1 (150 points)

This assignment asks you to critically read an article, to completely and concisely summarize the author's argument, and to respond by critically analyzing that argument (rhetorical situation, claims, reasons, evidence, appeals), and ultimately evaluating it for your audience.

1. Choose **one** of the following articles: “Our Machine Masters” by David Brooks, “Introduction to Astronaut Bioethics” by Patrick Lin and Keith Abney, “What I Learned from Building an App for Low-Income Americans” by Ciara Byrne, OR “Can Big Data Be Racist?” by Cecilia Esther Rabess.
2. Critically read the article with this assignment's purpose in mind. Pay special attention to the author's main conclusion or claim, and how she or he attempts to achieve it. This means you will be focusing on his organization, argument structure, style, and tone.
3. Use this information to draft your summary. This section of your paper should be objective, neutral, and academic in tone—here you are merely reporting on what someone else has written. The summary section of the paper should be 1-2 paragraphs in length.
4. Determine your own response to the author's argument. Here, you are **making your own claim about the argument's success** using the reflections and annotations that arose from your critical reading. The response can take any number of forms—for instance, you may find the claim is successful but have issues with how it is presented (e.g. inappropriate tone, inadequate reasoning, poor evidence), believe the claim is flawed but admire the author's presentation, agree with some aspects and disagree with others, praise the whole thing, etc.)—but remember you need to support whatever argument you are making with **reasons and evidence found in the original text** of the article. This section should be 2-3 paragraphs in length (it is the most important part of the paper).

Paper 2 (200 points)

This assignment asks you to critically read a variety of articles about a topic, to synthesize the perspectives and arguments of the authors, and to respond by evaluating their contributions as well as writing your own reasoned response to the issue—take a position and situate it within the positions of the others you have explained. This response should be supported by evidence from other texts, and must refer to specific ideas or concepts from the readings.

1. Choose from the topics Technology in the Wilderness, Humanoid Robots, or Editing Embryos. Then, read the news article about your topic in the Paper 2 folder under the Assignments menu in Blackboard. This will help you understand the debate and possible arguments surrounding it.
2. Find TWO popular articles (credible, but not scholarly—like newspapers or magazines) relating to this issue. Then find TWO additional articles from scholarly academic journals that also deal with this topic. (You will be synthesizing FOUR total sources). Find articles that are varied in terms of audience, background, and perspective.

3. Critically read the articles with this assignment's purpose in mind. Pay special attention to the author's argument, and how he or she attempts to prove it. This means you will be focusing on his or her reasons and evidence, along with analysis.
4. Take notes on this information for use in your synthesis. Describe the arguments, approaches, evidence, and reasons that the authors use, and make note of similarities and differences, or places where their material converges or diverges. Also be aware of gaps in information—what is not explored, what evidence is not utilized.
5. Determine your own response to the issue discussed by the articles. Here, you should take a position that is informed by what you have read. For instance you could agree with one of the authors, disagree, partially agree, modify one of the arguments, or argue something different entirely. Remember you need to support whatever argument you are making with reasons and evidence from outside sources. Acceptable sources include other scholarly/academic texts, lecture points, and relevant personal experience. Use at least 1 and no more than 3 additional sources here, bringing your total to 5-7 sources.
6. Use this information to create your own thesis that reflects both the synthesis and your response.

Paper 3 (300 points)

This assignment asks you to examine a current ethical controversy in the engineering disciplines that relates to the environment, technology, human health, or policy. You will be utilizing skills you have developed in writing Papers 1 & 2: critical reading and thinking, summary and synthesis, source use and documentation, arguing for a position, and researching and using sources. Most importantly, you will be contending with ethical issues and mediating between points of view to find common ground and determine a solution, utilizing the concepts of dialogue for productive communication and problem-solving.

1. Choose a topic that is a current matter of debate that fits the following criteria:
 - a. It must be related to an engineering discipline.
 - b. It must have an ethically debatable component.
 - c. It must be related to concerns about the environment, technology, human health, or policy.
 - d. The topic may not already be outdated or formally resolved. For example, you cannot research the ethical implications of the construction of the Three Gorges Dam on the local communities in the area, because the dam has already been built. You can, however, research a solution to one of the controversies or problems surrounding the aftereffects of its construction.
 - e. Draft a proposal memo that explains, in 1 paragraph, what your topic is, how it is connected to engineering AND ethics, why it is a current debate, how it is concerned with the environment, technology, human health, or policy, and the potential stakeholders you have identified.
2. Research your topic to determine the perspectives of the stakeholders. Find as wide of a variety of sources from as many perspectives as possible. Discover what position the stakeholders have, and determine why. Pay close attention to the value assumptions and ethical arguments held and used by the stakeholders in their arguments. You must use between 5-7 sources. These sources MUST satisfy the following criteria:

- a. At least 2 sources must discuss the background of the topic (historical, legal, social, political, cultural), illustrating why this is an issue of concern.
 - b. At least 2 sources must be clearly argumentative on opposed sides of the issue (one from each).
 - c. At least 1 source must be a general source on engineering ethics, on an ethical theory, on environmental ethics, or on ethical concerns about humans and technology.
3. Create an annotated bibliography of your sources. List the sources in MLA format and write a 100-175 word paragraph after each that both summarizes the source and indicates how you will use it in your paper.
4. Determine a plausible, mediated solution to the issue that argues for a position on the topic in question, that takes into consideration the concerns of the stakeholders you have identified and attempts to find common ground between them, and that can be rationalized through ethical reasoning.