

Blog posts and comments

Overview and purpose

The point of these assignments is to (strongly) encourage everyone to do careful reflections on the readings, including through reading reflections by others and commenting on them. Reading the texts, by itself, doesn't do enough to really help them sink in and to help one develop one's own critical response to them. So I'm asking you to engage in some kind of informal reflection activity vis-à-vis the readings on a regular basis.

However, the nature of such reflections is more or less up to you. I offer some suggestions below, but you may choose another way to engage in reflection if you wish. If you think it may be far beyond the sorts of things suggested below, and you'd like to ensure that it fits the criteria for this assignment, just ask me (c.hendricks@ubc.ca).

Where to do your blog posts

You can either use a blog you already have, or create a new blog for the course, or do your blog posts right on the course website/course blog. Instructions for doing each of these is posted on the course website (look under "resources" on the top menu). <http://blogs.ubc.ca/phil449>

What sorts of things to write in your blog posts

You may choose to do one or more of the following, or something else of your choice. No matter what you choose, you shouldn't think of this as a formal writing assignment, but one that is more along the lines of "thinking out loud." It doesn't need to be carefully organized or argued for, but can be your first thoughts on a subject, first attempts at arguments, etc.

- Write down your understanding of the main conclusions(s) and arguments for them in the reading and discuss whether you think the arguments adequately support the conclusion(s).
- Consider and discuss what in the reading you find particularly important or valuable, and why
- Consider and discuss something in the reading that you find surprising, something you hadn't thought about before.
- Consider and discuss something you find particularly problematic in the reading and why.
- Write down some topics for discussion in class that the reading inspired for you, and discuss your own ideas on these. Then bring them up in class!
- Discuss what from the readings you might use in one of your papers, and how.
- Discuss how something from the readings might be applied to an ethical/social/political issue salient today

Criteria

Length of posts: As noted above, the particular sort of reflective writing you engage in is up to you. But all of the reflections should be at least 300 words long (no maximum, though I may not actually read more than about 1000 words for each assignment, given how many I need to read!).

Number of posts: You must complete at least two posts per month, no more than one per week.

Nature of comments on others' posts: A good comment does not simply say "good post" or "I disagree," but explains carefully why (just as you would when discussing in class). Be specific about what you think is strong or useful or interesting in the person's post, and why. You could ask a question to get a

conversation going. You could provide an argument for them to think about further, that's related to what they've said. You could point them to a resource that they might like to read/watch, given what they've said.

Number of comments on others' posts: You must give at least four comments on others' posts (ideally on four different people's posts, but I won't be a stickler for that; just try to comment on several different people's posts per month so that hopefully, no one will go without any comments on their posts!).

Submitting URLs: At the end of each month you'll need to submit the URLs for your blog posts and comments for the month (see due dates on the syllabus). To do so, just write a new post on your blog or the class blog with the URLs and I'll find them!

Marking

The blog posts and comments for each month will count for 2 points each, so 12 points are available per month (2 blog posts, 4 comments per month). To get 2 points for each post and comment:

- They must be on time, by the due date on the syllabus.
- All posts must reflect some original, critical thinking on your part (i.e., they should not just be summaries of the text, its arguments, etc.).
- Comments must have some substance beyond merely vague praise or disagreement. There must be some specific content to your comment, such as explaining what you think is good/problematic about the post.

If any posts or comments are late, you will automatically receive 1 point rather than 2, unless in cases where there is an excused reason for them being late. You may also receive 1 point rather than 2 for a post or comment that does not fulfill the above criteria. Of course, if you are missing one or more posts or comments, you will not get any points for those.

Note on the syllabus that the blog posts and comments count for 5% of your course mark. This will be calculated as follows. There are 12 points possible per month, for three months (January, February and March). Thus, 36 points is 100%. If you are missing one blog post and three comments, for example, but got full credit for the rest, you would get 28 out of 36, which is 78%.