

Morality and Medicine: Analytical Comment Assignments

Submit by email before Thursday's class each week

Scored on a scale of 0 (very incomplete) to 2 (entirely complete)

The 10 highest scoring assignments will count toward your final grade

Be sure to include your name on your responses!

Every week, starting on the week of August 25, you will be required to bring in a written response to one of the reading assignments from that week. Your response should take the form of a relatively brief analytical comment (200–300 words, excluding quoted material). This response should isolate a passage or stage in the argument that is central to one of the readings, recapitulate your understanding of the author's point by providing a supporting reason given by the author, and then raise a critical remark on this point in response—stating whether you agree or disagree with the author and explaining why.

These responses are a way of preparing for having an in-depth discussion of the paper during class time, so think of them in that context, and note: *it would help ensure that you have a good way to access the papers during class time.*

The grade on your response will not be based on whether I think you are right or wrong to say what you say, but instead on an evaluation of the effort made to comprehend the paper and seriously engage with the reading. A good response will not only state agreement or disagreement, but will also provide some supporting reasoning—that is, it will show an effort to justify your response to the piece.

Good supporting reasons should be based on factual evidence (e.g., “treatment A has been shown to cause less harm than treatment B”) and/or principles that ought to be rationally compelling to an interlocutor (e.g., “all other things being equal, we should prefer the treatment that causes the least harm”). Typically supporting reasons that solely appeal to tradition (“this is how we've always done it”), arbitrary authority (“my father said this is right”), purely subjective standards (“that's just what I feel”), personal attacks on an author, or other such [informal fallacies](#) are not regarded as good supporting reasons.

When possible, I'd encourage you to make an effort to understand the overarching purpose of the paper, and to think of your response in light of what the author is trying to do (maybe you think everything hinges on this passage, maybe you think the passage detracts from the quality of the paper, maybe it's simply hard to understand what the point of it is in relation to the rest of the paper, etc.).