

Sample Guidelines for Papers

Format

- Papers should be between 4 and 5 pages typed, double-spaced, with a 12 point font and standard margins.
- Number the pages of your essay.
- Proofread your essay before you turn it in. You may find that by reading the paper aloud to yourself, you will catch mistakes you would otherwise miss, when proofreading silently.
- Place the titles of essays in quotation marks, and italicize book titles.
- When you use a quotation, cite the quotation by putting the page number for the citation at the end of the sentence, *outside of the quotation marks, within parentheses, and before the punctuation*. For example:

Although some object to what we call “human rights abuses” in the name of equality, freedom, dignity, and justice, others would consider this objection an imposition of a western norm. According to Blackburn, “Many people will want to take such a stand, but then they get confused and defeated by the relativistic thought that, even as we say this, it is still ‘just us’” (24).

- Place punctuation (periods, commas, etc.) within quotations marks, unless followed by citation (as shown just above). The only usual exception is a semi-colon, which goes outside of the punctuation.

Incorrect: In this chapter, Stanley Fish attempts to refute the charge of “reverse racism”.

Correct: In this chapter, Stanley Fish attempts to refute the charge of “reverse racism.”

Incorrect: In this chapter, Stanley Fish attempts to refute the charge of “reverse racism;” he does so by referring to the arguments of several neoconservatives.

Correct: In this chapter, Stanley Fish attempts to refute the charge of “reverse racism”; he does so by referring to the arguments of several neoconservatives.

- Do not place ellipses at the beginning or end of a quotation. They are only appropriate in the middle. For example, here are different ways of quoting the following line. “After all, it is typically only the oppressors who are spokespersons for *their* culture or *their* ways of doing it” (27).

Incorrect: “. . . it is typically only the oppressors who are spokespersons for *their* culture or *their* ways of doing it” (27).

Correct: “[I]t is typically only the oppressors who are spokespersons for *their* culture or *their* ways of doing it” (27).

Incorrect: “After all, it is typically only the oppressors who are spokespersons for *their* culture” (27).

Correct: “After all, it is typically only the oppressors who are spokespersons for *their* culture” (27).

Correct: “After all, it is typically only the oppressors who are spokespersons for . . . *their* ways of doing it” (27).

- Use a semi-colon (;) only between two clauses that could each be complete sentences by themselves.

In this chapter, Stanley Fish attempts to refute the charge of “reverse racism.” He does so by referring to the arguments of several neoconservatives.

In this chapter, Stanley Fish attempts to refute the charge of “reverse racism”; he does so by referring to the arguments of several neoconservatives

- Pay attention to subject/verb agreement, and keep clauses parallel to one another. For instance, “According to Nussbaum, a *student* might defend female genital mutilation, although *they* might be uncomfortable with the practice” should read, “According to Nussbaum, a *student* might defend female genital mutilation, although *he or she* might be uncomfortable with the practice.”

Content

- For each of your papers, you will choose one of the questions and carefully answer it based on the text. For these papers, I am not interested so much in your opinion as I am that you have carefully read and understood the text (there will be many other opportunities for you to share your opinion in this course).
- Don’t use dictionary definitions.
- Although you’ve rightly been told to begin every paper with an introduction, in this class avoid beginning your paper with a general introductory section. For example, who Simon Blackburn is, when he grew up, and the titles of his major works are unnecessary for answering the specific questions on the reading guide. Because this type of information doesn’t help you answer the question, skip it and go right to your answer.
- Be sure to answer the questions specifically. Make certain that your answers are precise. Avoid introducing information that is not pertinent to your answer.
- Don’t use inflated rhetoric when describing the claims made by those such as Blackburn. It is not necessary to say how “profound” Blackburn was, that he was an “amazing writer,” or that he was “ahead of his time.” These fillers don’t support your argument.
- Do not use long quotations in place of explanation. Explaining the text is your job, and you should typically only use quotations to introduce a thought or an idea that you will explain further.