

## ESSAYS: INSTRUCTIONS AND TOPICS

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Sign-up sheets for essay topics are posted at <http://www.jordanbpeterson.com/Psy230H/the-course.php> under Writing Assignments.

The topics follow the course outline. Each topic is due on a different date (as listed on the website, where you can sign up). Each date can be chosen by a maximum of 10 students.

**NOTE: If you do not sign up in time, you will not have an opportunity to submit your essay. The essays have to be spread out over the course, so that the TA does not get ridiculously overworked.**

Each essay must be 750 words long (plus or minus 50 words), typed and double-spaced.

There are broad topic domains listed on the website. You have to choose a sub-topic, related to that broad topic, which can be intelligently addressed in the 750-word allowable length. So don't write on "Freud," for example. Pick something more specific, such as "The Oedipal Complex."

You will be graded on the basis of the suitability of your topic, as well as with regards to the quality of your essay.

Here are some hints for the construction of a good essay:

First, understand what you are doing. Adopt an aesthetic and intellectual attitude, as well as an appropriate technical approach.

### **Aesthetic Considerations**

Try to create something elegant and concise. Consider, as well, that an essay succeeds or fails at three fundamental levels of analysis: that of the sentence, paragraph and essay as a whole. Remember to write and edit at each level: (1) are your sentences elegant and careful? Have you chosen each word properly? Does the sentence say what it is supposed to say? (2) Do your paragraphs constitute the elaboration of a single idea? Are they sufficiently comprehensive and concise? (3) Does the essay succeed as a unit? Does it make an identifiable and intelligent statement.

### **Technical Considerations**

First, write a seven to ten sentence summary. Each sentence should carry enough conceptual weight to withstand elaboration into a paragraph. Second, write the paragraphs. Put the essay aside. After a delay (a day or more is optimal, as it is worthwhile to sleep at least once in the interim), write another outline, without referring to your first draft. This forces you to reconceptualize your ideas, at the paragraph level of analysis. Then return to the first draft. Reorganize it according to your new outline. Do not be afraid to throw out ideas that now seem superfluous.

This process can be repeated, as necessary, and constitutes an intelligent approach to editing. One additional repetition is usually sufficient to produce a decent essay.

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## ESSAY CREDIT

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Essays will be graded according to three criteria:

1. Relevance to topic.
2. Content of essay: does the student make a convincing argument?
3. Writing style, including grammar.

Pick an idea that is clearly of interest to you. Analyze that idea. Make your essays original. We are not merely looking for a summary or outline.