

English 7, Fall 2006
First Essay Assignment
Due: Tuesday, September 26

Write a short essay or story (about 500 words, or two pages) on one of the topics indicated below. Remember that this is a critical thinking class, so cover such things as claims and assumptions, vagueness and ambiguity, and validity and soundness, no matter what the topic of your paper.

For the first two topics, try to be as specific as possible, quoting from the text when helpful so that your reader knows exactly where your interpretations originate; cite the page number parenthetically after each quotation, and use short quotations integrated into your sentences rather than long, indented ones. If you have any questions about how to quote, look for answers in your handbook from English 1A, or talk to me.

For the third topic, you will need to show your familiarity with and understanding of the Socratic dialogues we have read by incorporating at least three paraphrases from either the *Crito* or the *Euthyphro* in your own dialogue. Even though you are paraphrasing, and not quoting, those passages, cite the page number for their sources parenthetically. And remember that your dialogue is an assignment for a critical thinking class, and so it must contain within itself a discussion on the logic and deductions in terms such as we have employed in class.

Assignments must be double-spaced and typed (or computer-printed). Revise your rough draft for clarity and structure, proofread your final draft thoroughly, and be sure (for the first two topics) to have an *argumentative thesis* or some point you are trying to make. Submit the printed copy of your essay in class on Tuesday, September 26, and an electronic copy of it online at Turnitin.com before that. (So set up your account at Turnitin.com as soon as possible, to be sure nothing goes wrong at the last minute—there are instructions in how to do that on the class web page. Our class id is 1578972 and our password is “syllogism.” Also remember that the printed essays can only be turned in by a student attending the full class, and not at any other time.)

1. Analyze the strengths and weaknesses of the central arguments and deductions in the two Socratic dialogues we have read, and then decide which dialogue seems to have the strongest (or weakest) basis in logic. You will want to discuss important deductions and inferences; then it will be up to you to comment on those discussions, and to support or challenge the arguments.
2. Apply the main Socratic method of the *Euthyphro* (requiring definitions for abstract concepts) to Socrates' own arguments in the *Crito*, in order to decide whether the philosopher should or should not have drunk the poison. As in the first topic, you will want to discuss important deductions and inferences, and to comment on those discussions.
3. Write your own Socratic dialogue, in which an abstract value (of great or little consequence) is under discussion. Whatever your topic, do not lose sight of the fact that the story will be graded not on its art, but on its logic—so spend time to develop that side of it.