

Civil and Uncivil Disobedience
(Expository Writing 20, Section 235)
Spring 2022

Classroom: Sever 104

Meeting Times: Mondays and Wednesdays, 1:30-2:45pm

Course Website: <https://canvas.harvard.edu/courses/102388>

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Office Hours: see Canvas for current information. No office hours the week after drafts are turned in and I am commenting on them.

Course Description: Recent years have seen a renewal of protest in the United States: against racism, police brutality, inaction on climate change, and much more. Notably new is the way in which conservatives have taken up the banner of resistance: a county clerk in Kentucky refused to sign marriage certificates for same-sex couples, huge numbers of people have rejected public health mandates, and many have retroactively described the events of January 6 at the Capitol in minimizing or even positive terms. When, if ever, is it justifiable to break the law for moral reasons? How can we fairly assess acts of civil disobedience by those of different political views? If you think you can ignore a law simply because you disagree with it, you are inviting others to ignore even laws you think are essential when they disagree with them.

To begin the course we will read influential selections, spanning the political spectrum, from thinkers such as Plato (the “Crito”), Kant (“What Is Enlightenment?”), Gandhi (from *Hind Swaraj*), and John Rawls (from *A Theory of Justice*) about these questions and their intertwinement with issues of free speech, non-violence, and our obligations in society. These texts are not difficult to read, but dense with claims and arguments. We will think about how to isolate one line of reasoning to analyze in your first papers, which will both be and focus on pieces of argument-based writing.

Next, we will turn to a number of concrete historical cases: Thoreau, who was jailed for refusing to pay his poll tax out of protest against slavery and imperialism (“Civil Disobedience”); Hannah Arendt’s coverage of the trial of Adolf Eichmann, one of the main architects of the Holocaust, who defended his actions by claiming that his obedience, a virtue, had been taken advantage of by his superiors (*Eichmann in Jerusalem*); and Martin Luther King’s and Malcolm X’s different visions of the struggle for civil rights (“Letter from Birmingham Jail” and “The Ballot or the Bullet”). Students will write a paper putting one of these examples in conversation with a bit of theory, testing its claims, or using them to deepen their analysis.

Finally, at the end of the course, we will consider selections from a range of different approaches and methodologies about whether uncivil or even violent resistance is ever justifiable. These will likely include work by Kennedy School political scientist Erica Chenoweth, local philosopher Candice Delmas, Ijeoma Oluo on protests by football players, and selections from the book that grew out Vicky Osterweil’s controversial post-Ferguson essay [“In Defense of Looting.”](#) Students will develop final research topics of their choosing, which might examine a philosophical argument, a particular protest movement or action (historical or recent), or a film or other work of art about civil disobedience.

Our three units will each follow the same general sequence of activities and assignments:

First, we will discuss a number of **sources**, the works that you will eventually be writing about. These discussions will allow you to test your understanding of the readings, try out possible claims and arguments, calibrate your sense of what counts as good evidence, and hear from and debate other students who interpret things differently.

Early in each unit, you will write a short **response paper**, based on a prompt. This will focus on a particular aspect of writing and also allow you to begin thinking about your full draft. You will receive feedback from your classmates on this first bit of slightly more formal writing.

Throughout each unit, we will work on a number of **exercises**, both in class and at home. These will allow us to think about and practice specific writing moves and skills. We will also think about **transferability**, or how the skills you are working on will be useful beyond Expos in other classes, and beyond your time at Harvard.

As you are developing your papers, we will discuss a number of **models**, usually real student papers from the past, to help you think about how to structure your own.

In the middle of each unit, you will hand in a full **draft** of your paper.

We will then think about how to improve and revise your drafts in two venues. One class meeting each unit will be dedicated to a **workshop**, during which we will discuss two student drafts. Doing so will help the writers of those drafts but, even more, it will help everyone more generally figure how to think about, discuss, and go about revision. You will also get extensive feedback from me. In Unit 1, after reading my written comments on your draft, each of you will have a one-on-one **conference** with me, during which we will discuss how you are revising. In Unit 2, I will provide my most detailed written feedback in lieu of a conference (but be available to discuss questions you have), so that you can practice revising on the basis of this kind of feedback, which will be more typical in your courses going forward. In Unit 3, we will in effect combine workshop and conferences, holding small group conferences, in which you will both give feedback to your partners and receive it from them (as well as me).

At the end of each unit (actually, we will have begun the next one), you will hand in a final **revision** of your paper. This is the main assignment, each unit, that receives a grade. The amount of reading assigned in the class is limited so that you can have a lot of time to revise your papers; this means we expect to see a great deal of improvement during the process.

Some big-picture premises that will guide our approach:

Writing is a process: Good writing doesn't happen overnight; it is the result of a process that includes conception, planning, drafting, revision, and a lot of other work behind the scenes that isn't explicitly included in (but very much affects) what is finally handed in. In our course, we will self-consciously break the writing process apart, practicing and discussing it stage by stage, each building on what came before. In most of your classes, your instructor will ask for only a final draft—by forming good drafting and revision habits now, your work will be much better in the future.

Writing, reading, and thinking are deeply intertwined: Writing is not just a form of communication, but often the best way to discover what you think about something. Writing regularly, not just when required, will help you to understand difficult ideas, develop your beliefs, and your reasons for them. Reading what others have written about a topic or question is often the best way to begin to develop your own thinking. But it serves this purpose only when you read actively, not as a passive spectator. When I ask you to “read” something this is what I mean: that you should read it multiple times, with pen in hand, marking important claims, writing questions in the margins, and so forth. If you’ve really read something, you should be able to summarize its main claims and arguments, and have questions and possible objections, having begun to develop your own view. In the long term, one of the best ways to improve your writing is to read as much as you can. Reading works within a particular discipline helps you learn the argumentative, rhetorical, and stylistic moves of that discipline. More generally, reading good writing allows you to internalize more complicated grammar, syntax, and idioms, and to develop your own style and voice.

Writing is a conversation: Most writers don’t develop their views in isolation. They talk to others—literally, figuratively by reading, and rhetorically by discussing others’ views in their own writing. All the writing you do in our course is public: you will share it with me and your peers and, especially in workshop, we will use some of your drafts as our central texts of discussion. If, at any point in the semester, you submit a piece of writing that you would prefer other students not read, let me know—such a request should be rare, however.

Required Texts:

-- Hannah Arendt, *Eichmann in Jerusalem* (Penguin, 2006). ISBN: 9780143039884
-- *Essays on Civil Disobedience*, edited by Bob Blaisdell (Dover, 2016). ISBN: 9780486793818
Should be available at [The COOP](#). All other readings will be posted on Canvas.

Technology:

As part of the aim of learning to concentrate on and engage more deeply with our course materials, I don't allow laptops, tablets, or other devices in class, and phones should be turned off and put away. I will try to distribute printouts of readings not in our required texts, but you will sometimes need to print materials to have in front of you for class. Our meetings will be grounded in discussion, requiring your full presence and attention. Note-taking will include marking up handouts and jotting down a few ideas, never extensive transcription. If you need to use a device for reasons of access, please talk to me right away at the beginning of the semester.

Communication:

You should check your Harvard email at least daily, and are responsible for updates I send you there, as well as announcements I make on Canvas. If you email me, I will almost always get back to you within 24 hours, but don't count on a faster response than that (especially at night and on weekends), so don't wait until the last minute with important questions (and check the course website, syllabus, and unit packet too).

Harvard College Writing Program Policy on Attendance:

The Writing Program attendance policy is intended to make sure that you get everything you can out of your Expos course. Because Expos has fewer class hours than some other courses; because the course is largely discussion-based; and because instruction in Expos proceeds by sequential writing activities, your consistent attendance is essential to your learning in the course.

While I of course encourage you to be present every day in class, you are allowed two

unexcused absences for the semester with no consequence. Some absences (religious holidays and medical situations) are automatically considered excused; some family circumstances may also be counted as excused absences. If you miss two unexcused classes, I will ask you to meet with me to discuss any issues that may be keeping you from attending, and to advise you on your plan for catching up on the missed work. If you miss a third class, you will be required to meet with your Resident Dean about those absences, so that your Dean can give you any support you may need to help you get back on track in the class. Missing four classes—the equivalent of two full weeks of the semester—puts you at risk for missing crucial material necessary to complete your work. Unless there is a medical or other emergency issue preventing consistent engagement with the class, students who miss four classes will receive a formal warning that they are eligible to be officially excluded from the course and given a failing grade.

In the case of a medical problem, you should contact me before the class to explain, but in any event within 24 hours; you should also copy your Resident Dean on that message. In the case of extended illness, you may be required to provide medical documentation. Absences because of special events or extracurricular involvement are not excused absences. If such circumstances lead you to want to miss more than two unexcused absences, you must petition the Associate Director of the Writing Program for permission.

Submission of Work:

You will often be asked to bring a physical copy of a completed exercise, response paper, or draft to class. Additionally, you will submit your major drafts and revisions (and some smaller assignments) electronically by uploading them to the course website. It is your responsibility to make sure your files upload correctly, and are not corrupted. (N.B.: please don't upload work directly from Pages, as it only uploads a link, not a copy that I can comment on directly within the Canvas interface.) If I cannot open or read the file, it is subject to penalties for lateness. Computer problems are not a valid excuse for late work. Get into the habit of regularly backing up your work. Do you count on me to remind you to upload or print work; due dates are all on the course schedule and Canvas.

Late Work:

Late revisions will be docked a third of letter grade per day. Late response papers and drafts will affect your participation grade. Our assignments build on one another, so it is very much in your own interest not to fall behind.

Harvard College Writing Program Policy on Completion of Work:

Because your Expos course is a planned sequence of writing, you must write all of the assigned essays to pass the course, and you must write them within the schedule of the course (not in the last few days of the semester after you have fallen behind). If you are unable to complete your work on time due to medical or family issues, please contact me before the deadline to discuss both the support you might need as well as a possible new arrangement for your deadline. Communication about your situation is essential so that we can determine how best to help you move forward. If we have not already discussed your situation and you fail to submit at least a substantial draft of an essay by the final due date in that essay unit, you will receive a letter reminding you of these requirements and asking you to meet with me and/or your Resident Dean to make a plan for catching up on your work. The letter will also specify the new date by which you must submit the late work. If you fail to submit at least a substantial draft of the essay by this new date, and if you have not documented a medical problem or been in touch with your Dean about other circumstances, you are eligible to be officially excluded from the course and given a failing grade.

Accommodations for Students with Disabilities:

If you think you will require some flexibility in deadlines or participation in the course for reasons of a documented disability, please schedule a meeting with me early in the semester so we can discuss appropriate accommodations. (To be eligible for such accommodations, you need to have provided documentation to the Accessible Education Office ahead of time. Please let me know if you are unfamiliar with that process.) The Accessible Education Office works closely with Expos courses, and we will develop a plan that is appropriate for your needs. Please note that it is always your responsibility to consult with me as the need for those accommodations arises.

Policy on Collaboration:

The following kinds of collaboration are permitted in this course: developing or refining ideas in conversation with other students and through peer review of written work (including feedback from Writing Center tutors). If you would like to acknowledge the impact someone had on your essay, it is customary to do this in a footnote at the beginning of the paper. As stated in the *Student Handbook*, “Students need not acknowledge discussion with others of general approaches to the assignment or assistance with proofreading.” However, all work submitted for this course must be your own: in other words, writing response papers, drafts or revisions with other students is expressly forbidden.

Policy on Academic Integrity:

Throughout the semester we’ll work on the proper use of sources, including how to cite and how to avoid plagiarism. You should always feel free to ask me questions about this material. All the work that you submit for this course must be your own, and that work should not make use of outside sources unless such sources are explicitly part of the assignment. Any student submitting plagiarized work is eligible to fail the course and to be subject to review by the Honor Council, including potential disciplinary action.

Policy on Course Materials:

The work we do together in class—discussions, exercises, workshopping essays—is intended for the members of our class. Students are not allowed to record class and are not allowed to post video or audio recordings or transcripts of our class meetings. (Students needing course recordings as an accommodation should contact the [Accessible Education Office](#).) While samples of student work will be circulated within the course (and all work you do may be shared with your classmates), you may not share fellow students’ work with others outside the course without their written permission. As the *Handbook for Students* explains, students may not “post, publish, sell, or otherwise publicly distribute course materials without the written permission of the course instructor. Such materials include, but are not limited to, the following: video or audio recordings, assignments, problem sets, examinations, other students’ work, and answer keys.” Students who violate any of these expectations may be subject to disciplinary action.

The Writing Center:

At any stage of the writing process – brainstorming ideas, reviewing drafts, approaching revisions – you may want some extra attention on your essays. The Writing Center (located on the garden level of the Barker Center) offers hour-long appointments with trained tutors. Regardless of its strength or weakness, any piece of writing benefits from further review and a fresh perspective. Visit the Writing Center's web site at <https://writingcenter.fas.harvard.edu/> to make an appointment. Tutors also hold drop-in office hours at other campus locations; see the Writing Center website for details. If you are especially interested in working on grammar, syntax, and other sentence-level issues, see

the English Grammar and Language tutor: <https://writingcenter.fas.harvard.edu/pages/egl-tutor>.

Grades:

For each essay, you will receive the particular goals of that assignment in the unit packet. Common to all three essays, however, is a fundamental goal: that your work *expresses an original idea in a way that engages, enlightens, and educates your readers*. It will help you reach that goal if you envision your work as intended not simply for your fellow students in this class, nor simply for me, but rather for a broader audience of educated, interested readers. It is a minimum expectation that your essays will be free of grammatical, spelling, and formatting errors (since such errors distract your readers, making it harder to focus on your ideas). Essays consistently exhibiting such errors may be penalized. In addition, grading becomes more stringent as the semester goes along, since you will have mastered certain skills and techniques from earlier essays. On the meaning of the letter grades themselves:

A: Work that is excellent (which is not to say perfect) and complete. It has a fully realized beginning, middle, and end, and addresses (which is not necessarily to say definitively answers) the questions that it raises. Such work is ambitious and perceptive, skillfully expresses an argumentative thesis, grapples with interesting and complex ideas, and explores well-chosen evidence revealingly. It pays attention to alternate interpretations or points of view, avoids cliché, and engages the reader. The argument enhances, rather than underscores the reader's and writer's knowledge; it does not simply repeat what has been taught or what someone else has said. The language is clean, precise, and often elegant.

B: Work that is good and succeeds in many significant ways, but has one or more important areas still in need of work. Often this means that while the essay is an engaging and intelligent discussion, certain aspects don't yet live up to the rest of the essay, or to the promise the essay offers. The evidence is relevant, but it may be too little; the context for the evidence may not be sufficiently explored, so that a reader has to make the connections that the writer should have made more clearly. The language is generally clear and precise but occasionally not.

Or: Work that reaches less high than A work but thoroughly achieves its aims. Such work is solid, but the reasoning and argument are nonetheless rather routine. The argument's limitations are in its conception rather than its execution.

C: Work that possesses potential, but in its current form is flawed. Such work has problems in one or more of the following areas: conception (it has at least one main idea, but that idea is usually unclear); structure (it is disorganized and confusing); evidence (it is weak or inappropriate, often presented without context or compelling analysis); style (it is often unclear, awkward, imprecise, or contradictory). Such work may repeat a main point rather than develop an argument or it may touch, too briefly, upon too many points. Often its punctuation, grammar, spelling, paragraphing, and transitions are a problem.

Or: Work that is largely a plot summary or an unstructured set of comments on a text, rather than an argument about a text.

Or: Work that relies heavily on opinion rather than reason and argument.

D and below: Work that fails to meet the expectations of the assignment in a significant way.

Revision of Paper 1: 20%

Revision of Paper 2: 30%

Annotated Bibliography: 5%

Revision of Paper 3: 35%

Participation: 10% (Participation includes contributions to class discussions, workshops, and conferences, and sincere efforts on exercises, response papers, and drafts. Chronic tardiness, failure to come prepared, and distractions caused by electronic devices will lower your participation grade.)

Class Schedule (subject to slight revisions):

Monday, Jan. 24

- course introduction
- hand out Syllabus
- discussion of [Vicky Osterweil, "In Defense of Looting"](#)

for our next meeting:

- read Syllabus and come with any questions
- read Plato, "Crito"

Wednesday, Jan. 26

- Syllabus questions
- discussion of Plato, "Crito"
- hand out Unit 1 Packet

for our next meeting:

- read Unit 1 packet and come with any questions
- read Gandhi, from *Hind Swaraj*
- complete Analytical Questions exercise (bring to class)

Monday, Jan. 31

- Unit 1 questions
- discussion of Gandhi, from *Hind Swaraj*

for our next meeting:

- read Kant, "What Is Enlightenment?"
- complete get-to-know-you questionnaire (under "Assignments" on Canvas)
- digital signup for get-to-know-you conferences

Wednesday, Feb. 2

- introduction to the "Elements of Academic Argument"
- discussion of Kant, "What Is Enlightenment?"

get-to-know-you conferences Wednesday, Feb. 2 -Friday, Feb. 4

for our next meeting:

- read Rawls, from *Theory of Justice*
- complete Isolating Claim exercise (bring to class)

Monday, Feb. 7

- discussion of Rawls, from *Theory of Justice*
- discussion of stance and orienting your reader

for our next meeting:

- **write Response Paper 1** (bring a printout to class)
- read *Harvard Guide to Using Sources* (<http://usingsources.fas.harvard.edu/>): “Introduction,” “Why Use Sources?” (and subsections), “Avoiding Plagiarism” (and “What Constitutes Plagiarism?” and “The Exception” subsections), and, under “Using Sources,” the section “Integrating Sources” (“Summarizing, Paraphrasing, and Quoting” and “The Nuts and Bolts of Integrating” subsections)
- I recommend you learn and use Chicago Notes and Bibliography style in our class: http://www.chicagomanualofstyle.org/tools_citationguide.html. If you would prefer to learn MLA or APA style, that is fine, just use one consistently.

Wednesday, Feb. 9

- **Response Paper 1 due**
- discussion of sources, citation, quotation, paraphrase, summary and exercise on plagiarism
- peer feedback on response papers

for our next meeting:

- on Harvard Writes (<http://harvardwrites.com/>), watch the “Writing an Argument” video and look at the “Common Ways to Establish What’s at Stake”
- go through Introductions handout
- read models for Draft 1: “Aristotle’s Problem with Incontinence” and “The Reality Constraint and the Problem of Observability”
- start working on Draft 1

Monday, Feb. 14

- discussion of thesis statements and Introductions handout
- discussion of models for Draft 1
- introduction to cover letters

for our next meeting:

- **finish Draft 1 and cover letter** (upload both with honor code affirmation to Canvas before class and bring a copy)
- digital signup for conferences

Wednesday, Feb. 16

- **Draft 1 due** (upload with cover letter to Canvas before class and bring a copy)
- exercise using Draft 1 on counter-argument
- introduction to conferences, workshops

Conferences Friday, Feb. 18-Friday, Feb. 25

for our next meeting:

- read workshop papers
- complete workshop feedback (upload to Canvas before class and either bring a copy to class or email to the author of each workshop paper)
- start revising

Monday, Feb. 21: Presidents Day, No Class

Wednesday, Feb. 23

- workshop on Draft 1
- discussion of editing and final steps

for our next meeting:

- read Arendt, from *Eichmann in Jerusalem*, pages 21-27, 134-150, 240-252, 276-279, 287-298
- on Harvard Writes (<http://harvardwrites.com/>), watch the “Evidence” video
- continue revising

Monday, Feb. 28

- discussion of Arendt, from *Eichmann in Jerusalem*, pages 21-27, 134-150, 240-252, 276-279, 287-298
- hand out and go over Unit 2 packet

for our next meeting:

- read Thoreau, “Civil Disobedience”

Wednesday, Mar. 2

- discussion of Thoreau, “Civil Disobedience”

Friday, Mar. 4

- **Paper 1 Revision Due by 9pm** (upload to Canvas with new cover letter that reflects on the work you’ve done in revision, how you might improve your process for the next paper, and how you might transfer skills you’ve practiced in this paper to other classes and writing)

for our next meeting:

- read MLK, “Letter from Birmingham City Jail” and Malcolm X, “The Ballot or the Bullet”

Monday, Mar. 7

- discussion of MLK, “Letter from Birmingham City Jail” and Malcolm X, “The Ballot or the Bullet”

for our next meeting:

- **write Response Paper 2** (bring a copy to class)

Wednesday, Mar. 9

- **Response Paper 2 due**
- peer feedback on response paper

Spring Break

for our next meeting:

- read models for Draft 2: “*Force Majeure’s* Meta-Criticism of Globalism” and Simon, “An Unsuspected Ideal”
- on Harvard Writes (<http://harvardwrites.com/>), watch the “Stakes” video; watch the “Structure” video and do the exercise on our model papers (instead of the ones on the website)
- start working on your draft

Monday, Mar. 21

-- discussion of models for Draft 2

for our next meeting:

-- **finish Draft 2 and cover letter** (upload to Canvas before class and bring a copy)

Wednesday, Mar. 23

-- **Draft 2 due** (upload with cover letter to Canvas before class and bring a copy)

-- reverse outline exercise on Draft 2

-- hand out and go over Unit 3 packet

Monday, Mar. 28: Class cancelled so I can comment on Draft 2, and you can think about Paper 3

for our next meeting:

-- read workshop papers

-- complete workshop feedback (upload to Canvas before class and either bring a copy to class or email to the author of each workshop paper)

-- start revising

Wednesday, Mar. 30

-- Draft 2 workshop

-- discussion of research questions/hypotheses, Gaipa moves

for our next meeting:

-- read Delmas, "In Defense of Uncivil Disobedience"

-- keep revising

Monday, Apr. 4

-- discussion of Delmas, "In Defense of Uncivil Disobedience"

for our next meeting:

-- read *Harvard Guide to Using Sources* (<http://usingsources.fas.harvard.edu/>): Under "Using Sources," "Locating Sources" (and subsections), "Evaluating Sources" (and subsections)

-- start thinking about your topic

-- bring your laptop to class for library introduction!

-- **finish Revision 2** (upload with new cover letter before class)

Wednesday, Apr. 6

-- **Paper 2 Revision Due** (upload with new cover letter to Canvas before class)

-- discussion of how to evaluate potential sources

-- library introduction (bring your laptop)

for our next meeting:

-- read Oluo, "Go Fucking Play"

-- keep thinking about your topic

Monday, Apr. 11

-- discussion of Oluo, "Go Fucking Play"

for our next meeting:

- continue thinking about your topic and start looking for sources
- **complete Response Paper 3a** (upload to Canvas before class)

Wednesday, Apr. 13

- **Response Paper 3a due** (upload to Canvas before class)
- topic speed dating
- discussion of annotated bibliographies

for our next meeting:

- read models for Paper 3: Wang, "Martin Luther King Jr.'s Troubled Attitude Toward Nonviolent Resistance," Caplan, "Sound Reasoning," Hagan, "*Being John Malkovich*, Being Inauthentic"
- complete "Critical Thinking: Modeling Our Sources" handout for Caplan
- complete Hagan Map for Hagan
- keep looking for sources

Monday, Apr. 18

- discussion of models for Draft 3
- discussion of topics and research

Wednesday, Apr. 20: office hours on Zoom instead of class

- **Annotated Bibliography Due** (upload to Canvas before normal class time)

for our next meeting:

- **complete Response Paper 3b** (bring a printout to class)
- continue working on full draft
- fill out availability poll for group conferences

Monday, Apr. 25

- **Response Paper 3b due** (bring printout to class)
- exercise on flow

for our next meeting:

- skim Chenoweth and Stephen, "The Success of Non-Violent Resistance Campaigns"
- bring one or two paper prompts (for response papers too) from your other courses
- bring your laptop to class for course evaluations!

Wednesday, Apr. 27

- discussion of Chenoweth and Stephen, "The Success of Non-Violent Resistance Campaigns"
- discussion of different disciplines
- discussion of assignment prompts, transferability
- course evaluations (bring your laptop)

Friday, Apr. 29

- **Draft 3 and sources due** (upload with cover letter to Canvas by 9pm)

before your group conference:

- read your partners' papers and be prepared to lead the discussion on them
- complete Group Conference Feedback sheet for each paper

group conferences during Reading Period, May 2-4

TBA:

- **Paper 3 Revision Due by 9pm** (upload to Canvas with final cover letter reflecting both on this revision and your progress over the entire semester)
- upload any additional sources you've added since draft to Canvas by 9pm

Civil and Uncivil Disobedience
Spring 2022
Roth

**Unit 1: Philosophical Reasons for Obeying or Disobeying the Law
Analyzing an Argument**

In our first unit, we will consider ideas from four influential historical thinkers—of very different political views—about what we should do when we think a law is unjust. Can we break it? Why or why not? If so, must we abide by other certain conditions like avoiding violence or being willing to accept punishment in order to act morally? Furthermore, our sources show how these questions are intertwined with other issues. In the “Crito,” Plato considers what obligations we have to the society that raised us. In *Hind Swaraj*, Gandhi contrasts violent and non-violent forms of resistance. In “What Is Enlightenment?” Kant offers a distinction between private and public speech, arguing that one can be heavily restricted, whereas the other should be free. And in *A Theory of Justice*, John Rawls lays out what has become the orthodox view of civil disobedience, contrasting it from lawful protest and individual conscientious objection. Your first job will be to understand these sources—only then will you be able to analyze and respond critically to them. For your first paper, you will isolate a particular but important claim from one of our sources, explain the author’s argument for that claim, and analyze that argument, defending your own thesis. The last stages will require you to make an argument of your own that identifies a problem or issue with the source, or helps a reader understand it more deeply than they would on their own.

Primary Assignment (~5 pages): *Isolate* a key claim from one of our sources, *explain* the author’s argument for it, and *analyze* that argument, defending your own thesis about their reasoning.

Further Guidelines for the Essay:

You can think of this essay as involving three parts: isolating, explaining, and analyzing.

Isolate a Claim: As you read and re-read, you will notice that even when our sources defend an overall thesis, they are based on many smaller, constitutive claims. In theory-heavy disciplines like philosophy, political theory, cultural studies, and sociology (among others), readings will often claim many more things than you could possibly examine in one paper. In this paper you won't have room to make a compelling case for or against one of our authors’ overall theses—after all, it takes them more than five pages to explain and defend their claims. Instead, you will need to focus on a smaller claim that one of them makes. This claim should still be important, and connected to their main point, but something that you can defend or criticize in the space allowed. As a reading-task, you will need to isolate a manageable claim on which to focus. As a writing-task, you will need to concisely explain why you are focusing on this claim and how it is related to the author's larger project, work that is usually done in the introduction and conclusion of an essay. You will also need to be careful to not waste space, or distract your reader, by discussing other parts of the reading not strictly relevant to your focus.

Explain the Claim and the Argument for It:

Something that makes sense to you can often seem self-explanatory—but it rarely is. You need to explain the claim you've chosen and the argument for it to your reader, someone who doesn't yet understand them. Can you translate the author's language into your own? Can you offer a precise example that makes clear the more difficult or abstract parts of what is said? Can you distinguish

what is claimed from what might, to a less careful reader, seem to be? What evidence is put forward in support of the claim? Can you tease out unstated assumptions? Unstated consequences? If the position seems to entail something obviously untrue, might there be another way to understand it, one that avoids those problems? Such moves often start as explanation (“this is what is claimed”) and become analysis (“notice this particular aspect about what is claimed”), which in turn forms the basis for your own argument.

Analyze the Author’s Argument, and Make Your Own:

Once you have isolated an important but manageable claim, and explained the author’s argument for it, you can then make your own argument. The thesis of your paper will concisely state your argument. *It is essential that your thesis encapsulate real argumentative work of your own.* Demonstrating that the author's claim is false, or that the argument for it fails: these are clear, but far from the only ways, of making your own argumentative contribution. You might think that the author's claim is true, but the argument is missing a piece that you can provide. You might think the argument is successful, but relies on an unstated assumption that itself needs defense. You might think that, without clarification, confusion concerning a key point endangers the argument. Or you might think that the author ignores a glaring counter-argument—one that you can make, and show that they can rebut. There are many different types of arguments that can be made, *but they all go beyond mere summary.* Throughout, you'll want to take into consideration possible counter-arguments to your own. Suppose someone scrutinized your writing as closely as you are scrutinizing your chosen source. If they could easily show that your argument fails, it isn't strong enough yet.

Purpose: The purpose of this kind of paper is to contribute to an understanding of the claims in the examined reading, the reasons put forward in defense of them, and whether those reasons are convincing. Good papers usually make small but pointed contributions. Very few things are definitively proven in philosophy. Instead, a good argument is one that the philosopher criticized would feel compelled to respond to—not shrug off as based on an obvious misunderstanding or misrepresentation of what they wrote, or as having changed the subject. A good defense of an existing position goes beyond what an author has said or clearly implied, providing novel insight into the position and reasons to think it is true.

Sources: You do not need to (indeed should not) consult any outside sources for this paper. I want to see *your* explanation and analysis of one of our shared sources.

Transferability: In other classes, a professor might simply ask you to “analyze” or “critically examine” an author’s view, or “offer a critique of the argument that...” when assigning this sort of paper. While we're looking specifically at some philosophical arguments here (and philosophers are (in)famous for scrutinizing arguments with extreme care), the general form is relevant to examining any sort of argument, whether it is made by a philosopher, political theorist, literary critic, anthropologist, physicist, lawyer, journalist, or anyone else.

Major Due Dates:

February 9: Response Paper

February 16: Draft

March 4: Revision

See the syllabus for full class-to-class schedule.

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Response Paper 1: Explain an Isolated Claim and the Argument for It

Choose a specific claim from one of our sources. In a page or two, explain what it means, and what argument, based on what evidence and reasoning, is put forward in support of that claim. Quote, paraphrase, and summarize where appropriate. (Reread “Isolate a Claim” and “Explain the Claim and the Argument for It” above.)

FAQ:

How do I pick a claim?

Pick something that you can explain, and explain the argument for, in a couple pages. While you are not bound by what you choose now, that is about how much space you'll have in a five-page paper for this part of the overall task. Pick something that plays a significant role in the larger discussion, and something that interests you, not something trivial or said merely in passing. If you go on to write your fuller draft about this claim, it could be useful to pick something that seems wrong, or problematic, or that you're not sure you fully understand—since those are all signs that you might want to criticize or need to clarify the claim.

Should I explain how the claim relates to the rest of the reading?

At this stage, you should *not* do this, and you won't have space to. Just jump right in: state the claim, explain it, and explain the argument for it. Later, in your draft, you'll work on orienting your reader and on situating the claim (or another one, if you change focus) in the larger theory.

Should I say whether I agree with the claim, or what I think about the argument?

No. At this stage, just explain the author's view. Your assessment doesn't matter yet, and by withholding it you can present the source more objectively.

When should I quote?

We'll talk about this, but some initial guidelines: Quote when the author's specific language matters, or they say something more concisely or elegantly than you can, or when you need to provide evidence that this really is what's claimed (essential to do if you are later going to attack it). Don't quote when the language doesn't matter, when you can explain more concisely, when what you want to explain is mixed together with other things you don't, and as part of the process of translating the author's words into your own explanation.

What if I think I've done what I'm supposed to do, but I only have half a page?

Mostly likely, you have only stated what the source says, but haven't explained it, or the argument for it. Suppose a friend read your paper (you can actually do this): what questions would they ask, and what would you explain further?

What if I think I've done what I'm supposed to do and I have four pages?

It could be that you haven't yet isolated one claim, but are instead trying to explain the whole reading. It could also be that you've started analyzing, or even evaluating, rather than just explaining. Focus on a specific claim, and on explaining it, paring away everything else.

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Unit 2: Theory and Practice
Putting Ideas and Particular Cases into Conversation

We will consider three actual situations from history in our second unit. In the nineteenth century, Henry David Thoreau was arrested for failing to pay his poll taxes and spent a night in jail. In “Civil Disobedience,” he explains the moral obligation he felt not to be complicit with the United States’ support of slavery and imperial war. In the middle of the twentieth century, Adolf Eichmann, one of the chief architects of the Holocaust, was found by Israeli agents in Argentina and taken to Jerusalem. In her coverage of his trial, the political theorist Hannah Arendt describes how Eichmann defended himself: he had merely obeyed orders, and obedience is a virtue, not something he should be punished for. Finally, writing from a jail cell in Alabama after being arrested during a demonstration for civil rights, Martin Luther King, Jr. describes his method of protest and his commitment to non-violence. In his speech “The Ballot or the Bullet,” Malcolm X expresses far more skepticism that Blacks fighting for liberation are obligated to avoid violence. Do the questions of civil disobedience look differently when we turn from theory and hypothetical examples to the messy complexity of the real world? If so, how? Why?

For your second paper you'll put one of these concrete historical cases into conversation with some bit of theory—an idea or claim—from another source: most likely Plato, Kant, Gandhi, or Rawls from Unit 1, but it can also be a more theoretical bit from a Unit 2 source different from the case that is your focus. You will either test the plausibility/truth of the theoretical idea against the specific case (what is called a “test a theory essay”) or interpret the specific case with the help of the bit of theory (what is called a “lens essay”).

Primary Assignment (7-8 pages):

Test a philosophical idea against a concrete case

Defend an argumentative thesis about whether and why a theoretical idea from one of our sources is plausible/true or not, based on evidence from and analysis of the case of Thoreau, Eichmann, or the struggle for civil rights by Black Americans. Your ultimate focus should be on the theory, but you will analyze and interpret the specific case to provide justification for your assessment of it.

Or

Interpret a concrete case through the lens of a theoretical idea

Defend an interpretive thesis about Thoreau, Arendt’s presentation of Eichmann, MLK, or Malcom X through the lens of a theoretical idea (most likely from a Unit 1 source, but it could also be from a different Unit 2 source). Your focus should be primarily on the concrete case, but you should examine it by looking through the theory—and make clear why we should look at this work through that theory, and how doing so helps us see the work more clearly, or differently.

N.B.: It is not uncommon for papers to combine the two forms. For example, scholars often interpret a specific instance in light of theory, but then go on to use that interpretation to clarify or revise the theory. You are welcome to combine the lens and test-a-theory approaches, just make sure that the end result is a coherent whole, and the kinds of evidence and analysis you are presenting at different moments is appropriate.

Further Guidelines for the Essay:

Using a Theoretical Lens: In the first paper, you wrote about one source. In this essay, you'll be bringing two sources—of different kinds—together. Though this makes your task more complicated, in some ways it actually makes it easier. Faced with just a source, it might seem that you can write about anything. By looking at it through another source, a more limited set of themes comes into focus, in much greater detail. Suppose I ask you to write a paper about *Star Wars*. Many—perhaps too many—kinds of papers would be possible. But suppose I ask you to write about *Star Wars* through the lens of Freud's Oedipal Theory—suddenly certain things (Luke's relationship to Darth Vader, for example) come into focus. Do you see particular instances of the claims from our Unit 1 sources in one of the concrete historical cases? That resonance can be a good place to start thinking about how the philosophy helps you understand the film. Alternatively, when realized in the real world, do those theoretical ideas look false or too simplistic? That dissonance can likewise be a good place to start.

A Potential Pitfall: Resonance between a theoretical concept and a historical particular can be a good place to start, but you don't want to stop there. A thesis like “Y is a perfect example of Kant's claim that...” isn't yet very interesting. Likewise, a thesis such as “what so and so did disagrees with Rawls” isn't yet very interesting. But both are good places to *start*, inviting you to then look more closely at your sources, developing your analysis and interpretation in detail. Within *general* alignment, it is often a *specific* point of friction that allows you to get an interesting argument going; or within general disagreement, a specific point of overlap.

Think about Less Obvious Pairings: Certain resonances between our Unit 2 sources and the theoretical ideas from Unit 1 will be obvious, and you can certainly develop these. But there are many less obvious pairings possible as well, which might prove even more interesting because you can show readers how they work.

Structure: It was probably easier to see how to structure your first paper. You introduced your question/topic, stated your thesis, stepped back to explain the claim you were analyzing, then made your argument. The structure for this paper isn't obvious, giving us greater opportunity for thinking about how to organize papers as they get longer, more complicated, and draw on more sources. In particular, think about when and how to introduce your two sources, and how you bring them into conversation with each other.

Purpose: The purpose of this kind of paper is to reveal interesting ideas and insights that come into focus when you put your two sources side by side, instead of looking at one in isolation. Beyond introductory courses, you won't be asked to write about just one work as often. Scholars usually build up complicated networks of different kinds of sources that mutually illuminate one another.

Transferability: The general form of this paper is that of looking at something particular through the lens of a theory or set of abstract concepts, or testing an abstract theory against a particular thing as a kind of case study. Here that particular thing is a historical case. But it could just as well be data from a psychology experiment, or people's economic behavior, or a set of field observations. And lots of disciplines, not just philosophy, offer general theories.

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Response Paper 2: Put Two Works in Conversation and Raise a Question

Write a couple pages in which you bring your two chosen works into conversation. Focus on some aspect or event in Thoreau's account of his experience, Arendt's of Eichmann, or MLK's or Malcolm X's of the fight for civil rights, and on some theoretical idea or claim from Plato, Gandhi, Kant, or Rawls (or in a different one of our Unit 2 sources). Work your way toward, and then raise, a question: using the specific case to ask about whether the theory is right or using the theory to ask about how to understand something about this case. Aim to articulate a question, not yet a thesis, as the culmination of this response paper. Figuring out and defending your answer will require the fuller work of the draft.

FAQ:

How do I choose something?

Are there specifics in one of the historical cases that reminded you of parts of our more theoretical readings? Those are great places to start. Now try to pinpoint your focus: what exactly in the historical case or theory reminds you of the other?

What if I don't see any connections?

You could start simply by choosing a theoretical concept or claim. Now try explaining it by using an example from one of the historical cases. Alternatively, you might start by choosing an event from one of the historical cases. It might be something central, but might also be more peripheral, yet still interesting—something that might turn out to be more important on close interpretation. Having chosen something, imagine what one of our philosophers might say about it.

How do I organize this response paper?

You might start by pointedly summarizing the relevant parts of the historical case, transition to the theory, explaining the relevant claim or concept and how it seems to bear on these events, then conclude by articulating a question. Alternatively, you might start by explaining the theoretical claim or concept, but only in as much detail as necessary, then transition to the historical case, explaining how it is an apparent example or counterexample of the abstract theoretical idea, then conclude by articulating your specific question. Don't feel constrained, however—test your own sense of what works. We'll discuss structure quite a bit during this unit.

What does a good question look like? Should I know the answer?

A good question is one that forces you to think carefully about your two sources, and to go back to them looking for specific evidence. If the answer is straightforward, then it probably isn't very interesting. You might have a hypothesis now, but a good question will force you to go back and look carefully in order to prove it. It's really important that you *don't* skip over the question. Asking a genuine question ensures that your paper has real stakes, that there is a reason for writing (and reading) it. A genuine question can be answered in different ways.

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Unit 3: The Research Paper
Defending a Nuanced Thesis in Conversation with Outside Sources

This final unit will introduce you to the basics of scholarly research: how to find sources in the library and online, and how to make use of them as you develop your own ideas. At the beginning of the unit, we will read and discuss together a number of sources about more contemporary events, and the question of whether *uncivil* disobedience, or even violence, is ever justified as an act of political protest. Your topics won't necessarily (probably won't) relate to these specific sources or even issues. Instead, these new sources will complete the arc that we started with more historical and law-and-order-favoring sources like Plato and Kant, as well as show us how scholars in different fields, more recently and not just in philosophy, approach evidence and argument.

You will then have a great deal of freedom in choosing your topic, what you want to research and develop an argument about in your final paper. You might focus on a specific protest movement or action, whether historical or more contemporary, on a theorist or school of thought, or a film or other work of art about—or that itself is an act of—civil disobedience. Start mulling over possible topics now, doing a bit of pre-research in spare moments, and running ideas by each other and me. Your first response paper in this unit will be a research proposal, which I will give you feedback on.

The goal of this paper is to start breaking down the arbitrary parameters we have previously set: instead of forcing you to write, in isolation, about one or two provided sources, you will now have the entire Harvard Library System to draw on, so more freedom and therefore responsibility to follow your own interests. That said, this is still an apprenticeship work: we do not expect you to exhaustively read everything connected to your topic. We just expect you to find some good sources that allow you develop a fuller and more nuanced argument. The quality of your argument remains the most important thing (as, indeed, it does for professional scholars even when they are expected to know the relevant literature exhaustively).

While this is a “research paper,” don't be misled by what that means. In the past, you might have been asked to write a research paper in which you found sources, then reported back, having synthesized what they said in a well-organized summary. In this paper, it is essential to go further. Your task is not merely to understand, combine, and report what others have said. Rather, your task is to understand those sources so that you can enter into conversation with them—by making your own, original argument. By drawing on other sources, you will be able to raise a much more specific question, and defend a much more nuanced thesis, than if you were to proceed wholly on your own. This is the main reason scholars conduct research: not simply so they can understand what others have already said, but to use what others have said in order to see new questions, and as a background against which to defend more nuanced answers.

Primary Assignment (~10 pages): Make an Argument Shaped by Outside Research.

Make an argument about the topic that you have developed and run by me. Guided by a research question, find sources (and carefully document them, as described below) that will help you deepen your understanding and analysis, and integrate those sources into your paper. Against the background of your research, defend a nuanced thesis about the best answer to your question.

This paper might take a few different forms:

An argument about a specific protest or movement. Now that research is encouraged, you might take a more historical approach than we have in our papers so far, drawing on sources that document and interpret one protest action, or a wider or longer-term movement. Here it is important that you focus your research and writing into an argument, summed up by a contentious thesis. Don't just assemble a lot of information; rather, shape it into an argument about how we should understand something about the protest or movement.

If your topic is more **historical**, then you can develop your argument in conversation with academic sources that already offer interpretations and arguments about your topic.

If your topic is more **contemporary**, then there might already be some academic sources—online even if not yet in the library—but there might not be. In such a case, your research might draw more on news sources and primary documents like the literature protestors (and counter-protesters who disagree with them) distribute, their accounts of events, and so forth. Here too, however, you should make sure to go beyond just gathering and documenting such sources, focusing your engagement with them into a contentious argument.

A film or other artwork. You might interpret a film or other artwork that is about, or itself is an act of, protest. Your research here could be both into the artwork and into the events (if real, rather than fictional) that it represents, and what existing sources say about each.

A lens essay. In a more expansive version of our Unit 2 papers, you might focus your argument by looking at either a protest movement or a work of art about civil disobedience through the lens of a specific theoretical idea—whether one we read together or one you find in your research.

Test a theory. Or, in the other version of our Unit 2 papers, you might test a specific theory with the case study of a real protest or a work of art.

A theoretical argument. You could also return to the more philosophical approach of our Unit 1 papers, researching a specific theorist or school of thought about civil disobedience, finding a place to make an objection, develop someone's ideas in a new direction, or put ideas that haven't been sufficiently discussed together into fuller conversation. Here you can engage not only with a major thinker (like Plato, Kant, Gandhi, or Rawls), but later scholars who have already offered interpretations of, arguments about, and objections to their work.

Further Guidelines for the Essay:

Put Sources in Conversation: In your Unit 2 essay, you got some practice putting two sources into conversation. You can now take that further, creating a network of sources in conversation with each other on different points that help you make your argument.

Think of Your Paper in Parts: As papers get longer, they often aren't guided by one simple claim. Instead, they are often a *sequence* of claims that unify into one larger argument. Your thesis might be a sequence of claims that unify into a larger argument, and, if so, it could be useful to think of your paper as a series of sections, even little papers, each arguing for part of the sequence in turn.

Documenting and Uploading Your Sources: I will not be familiar with many of the sources that you use for this last paper, but I need to be able to check that you are using them in a responsible manner, since that is one of the things we aim to practice with this last, research-based paper. As a Program-wide policy, **you are required to upload digital copies of all of your sources (including scans or photos of any physical sources)** along with your draft and final paper. This will force you to keep track of your research, and it will allow me to quickly check, should I have any worries about the way you are citing or representing a source. As you are doing research, you should download and save copies of any online resources you consult (whether through Hollis or otherwise) and scan or photograph any physical sources you consult (you needn't scan entire books, just whatever sections you draw on). We realize that this will add some time to your research process, but it would take us an impossible amount of time to track down the sources for all of our students. Do not wait until you are finished with your paper to document your sources; do it right from the start, as you are finding them.

Purpose: The purpose of a research paper is to enter into an existing scholarly conversation, or help to start to establish one. By conducting research into what scholars have already argued about it, or bringing new events and documentary sources into conversation with them, you can offer a much more detailed argument of your own, and push the conversation a little deeper, or in a slightly new direction, or make a connection no one has before. In turn this could help future scholars make more detailed arguments, and continue the conversation yet further.

Transferability: Your wider aim is to enter into a conversation that scholars have already begun, or to set one up yourself. Biologists, economists, and other scholars, just as much as philosophers, (and historians, political theorists, sociologists, and other academics concerned with civil disobedience) have debates and conversations in which they criticize, attack, draw on, and develop each others' views.

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Response Paper 3a (Due April 13):

Propose a Research Project, Guided by a Question or Hypothesis

Write a short paragraph proposing your topic, centered on the question or hypothesis that will motivate your paper. What do you seek to better understand? What sort of research, into what sort of sources, might you do? This first response paper can be fairly informal, if you prefer, but should still be rich in content—the point is to get your thinking going and then to give me an idea of what it is, so that I can offer you some feedback and guidance, and perhaps point you to some relevant sources.

Annotated Bibliography (Due April 20):

Prepare an annotated bibliography of six sources that you expect to draw on in your final paper. Use one established bibliographical style consistently throughout, then annotate each entry with a short paragraph explaining what the source is about and how you expect to use it in your paper. You will almost certainly need to consult more sources to find six relevant to your project. You shouldn't include ones that you quickly decide will be completely irrelevant (though you should keep a record of what you are reading, in case you change your mind). Include your prompt—Response Paper 3a, revised to reflect any changes in your topic—at the top. Between your prompt and source annotations, I should have a decent sense of the general shape you are planning for your paper. This assignment is graded, though only for a very small percentage (5%) of your overall grade.

Response Paper 3b (Due April 25):

Introduction and Thesis

Write an introduction, ending in a thesis statement. Ideally, you will have done significant work on your draft by this point. At a minimum, you should have a solid idea of what your topic is, what question, problem, or hypothesis motivates the paper, what some of the major sources from your research you will engage with are, and what your central claim will be. Introduce the topic you are writing about, your more specific focus and motivation, set up the most important sources that you will be entering into conversation with, and try to state your thesis as clearly as possible. As in our model papers, it is possible that your introduction will be more than one paragraph. And as we saw in those models, a good introduction already reveals a clear map of the entire paper. If you do not yet have a solid sense of where you are going with your draft, what you write in this response paper might be more provisional, but hopefully will help you catch up by moving your ideas forward significantly.