

HOW TO WRITE A READING RESPONSE

A reading response is a 1-2 page explanation of and reflection on an argument from the reading *in your own words*. It is an integral part of the course because it serves multiple functions:

- It helps you **prepare** for class by requiring you to understand and explain a crucial argument from the reading.
- It allows me to make sure that you are **on track** in the course and understand the reading material.
- Finally, it allows you to **develop your own** question, objection, or idea.

I expect reading responses to be short (350-600 words) and focused (no introductions or preliminaries, just jump right into it). I will post a question or prompt on Blackboard to help you focus on a crucial part of the reading a few days before the response is due. I expect most of your reading response (80%) to focus on addressing that question or prompt. Once you have addressed the prompt, I want you to ask a question, raise an objection, or elaborate on an idea from the reading in the final 2-3 sentences of the response.

The purpose of the reading response is to prepare you to **participate** in class. Since late reading responses will not serve this goal, I will **not** accept them after they are due UNDER ANY CIRCUMSTANCES.

Reading responses will be assessed on a simple scale.

- ✓+ Outstanding (Roughly equivalent to an A)
 - You thoroughly address the prompt by giving a **succinct and focused** explanation of the argument/passage in your own words.
 - Your writing is **clear, grammatical, and organized**.
 - You demonstrate that you read the assignment **carefully**.
 - You ask an **insightful** question, raise an **interesting** objection, or **thoughtfully** develop an idea from the reading.
- ✓ Satisfactory (Roughly equivalent to a B)
 - You address the prompt and give an adequate explanation of the argument/passage in your own words.
 - Your writing is clear, grammatical, and organized for the most part.
 - You demonstrate that you read the assignment.
 - You demonstrate that you have given the reading some thought by asking a question, raising an objection, or developing an idea.
- ✓- Unsatisfactory (Roughly equivalent to a D)
 - You fail to address the prompt.
 - Your reconstruction is unclear, inaccurate, or not in your own words.
 - Your writing is sloppy, full of typos, or disorganized.
 - You demonstrate that you read the assignment hastily.

Some useful guidelines on how to read philosophy:

- Jim Pryor's How to Read Philosophy <http://www.jimpryor.net/teaching/guidelines/reading.html>
- Chapters 1-2 of Lewis Vaughn's Writing Philosophy: A Student's Guide to Writing Philosophy Essays (Oxford University Press, 2006).