

Honors 112 Final Essay Exam – Spring 2020

General Instructions

For the final exam, write a five to seven page essay, double spaced and properly formatted, that

- Asserts a claim and develops an argument for it;
- Draws from at least six texts* (three from HON 111 and three from HON 112)**, with at least one direct quote or specific visual example from each text integrated into the analysis;
- Addresses *one* question selected from the list below. Write the complete question and its corresponding number at the top of your essay.

* Text is broadly defined to include reading material, art, music, material culture, etc., as relevant to individual preceptorials.

**Students who are taking 112 out of sequence will draw on 6 texts from the 112 curriculum.

GENERAL SUGGESTION FOR SUCCESS IN KATIE QUIRK'S PRECEPTORIAL SECTIONS: Though you are required to reference multiple texts from both Hon 111 and Hon 112, please note that I am looking for depth in your analysis and in your framing argument. Aim to center your paper around a thesis that is *narrow enough* that you will really have to probe to find the right textual examples. By the end of your essay, you want to feel that you have said nearly all that needs to be said about the topic. Some of the essay questions below might feel like they are pointing you in the direction of composing a very general thesis about which you could--if pressed--write thousands of pages. Don't allow yourself to head in this direction. Throughout the term, you folks have been writing interesting theses with narrow topics, unique arguments, and statements of true significance. The final essay is no different--that is the type of deep thinking I will be looking for. Best of luck!

Question options

1. Alternative final exam topic in response to the *New York Times* column "Screw This Virus." I strongly encourage you to consider choosing this question. It involves a blend of personal narrative and textual analysis. Details for this question are below.
2. How is the concept of the divine portrayed in our texts?
3. In what ways do our texts show the inherent relationship between the human condition and violence?
4. How have the texts in HON 111 and 112 shaped your understanding of what it means to be human?
5. How do the texts address the problem of human suffering and the possibility of attaining happiness?

6. How do the texts reflect the possibility of free will?
7. How do our texts grapple with whether or not earthly desires are reconcilable with spiritual life?
8. How does love motivate characters in the texts?
9. Discuss the roles of faith and reason as pathways to understanding.
10. What do the texts convey about the human impulse to create rules and structures?
11. How do our texts reflect different understandings of a just society?

Instructions for the alternative final exam topic, question #1*

- Read “Screw this Virus,” by David Brooks, from *The New York Times*, March 19; <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/03/19/opinion/coronavirus-isolation.html>. Brooks is a regular columnist at *NYT* and commentator on *National Public Radio*.
- Pick one or two insights/statements from this opinion piece. Place these, in quotes, at the top of your paper, as a “focus statement.” Start your paper with a one page personal narrative about your experience of the Covid 19 virus, closures, social distancing, etc. As always, specifics are encouraged. Tie these in with Brooks’ insights; you can either agree or disagree with Brooks.
- Then proceed with a discussion of six texts, per the general exam instructions, exploring how they provide insights or perspectives relevant to the one or two insights you have chosen. You don’t have to apply each insight to every text. Two of the texts could be relevant to one insight, four to the others, etc.
- Bottom line of this prompt: how do texts we have studied this academic year shed light on the challenges of our current human experience?

Permission requested: Honors is considering running a story in a future issue of *Minerva* about how the pandemic has affected our students. If you choose to write this paper, please advise at the bottom of the paper whether we have permission to excerpt some of your paper for this purpose, and whether it’s OK to use your name (this would be preferable). We will advise you if we are using your material in this way.

* Credit goes to fellow preceptor Sharon Tisher for developing this alternative final exam question.