

### ALTERNATIVE FINAL PROJECT INSTRUCTIONS

**Topic:** Write a personal essay about what you learned in this class. This term paper is like a response paper on steroids. Basically, **I am inviting you to use your personal reflections as a frame for a rigorous analysis of how at least three of our texts deal with the same issues.** You can quote from your reflection journal. You can summarize and briefly quote from your research paper and from your response papers. You can cite class discussion. You will definitely need to quote the books on the syllabus.

You should begin by reviewing your reading journal from this semester and identifying one or two related themes that have resonated with you in your responses to the reflection questions, then choosing three to five relevant texts from our syllabus that respond to the themes that have been on your mind, even if those authors respond differently.

At least two-thirds of your essay should consist of rigorous literary criticism of how several of the texts we have read this semester approach these issues; the other one-third (or so) of your paper is your space to give a personal frame to your analysis, including liberal quotations from your reading journal. As with the short reflection papers, an anecdote would be a strong way to open your essay; I encourage you to draw connections between your own experience and our readings throughout your essay and not just in the opening and closing.

**Length:** No less than 8-12 full pages of well-polished text, double spaced, plus an accurate Works Cited page, all following MLA format precisely. An MLA template is still available at <http://censored.obenauf.net> so that you can focus on the content of your project.

**Due:** Wednesday, May 7, 2025, in hard copy at the start of class AND by email to [obenauf@unm.edu](mailto:obenauf@unm.edu) as a MS-Word document (.doc. or .docx) unless we have agreed on another format.

**Notes:** This final project should be your masterpiece, showing off your learning this spring. You should write for an audience who is not in our class and who doesn't know about our course themes or anything about the books we read.

Obviously, your paper must be original work. That means you should not use AI technology, even for inspiration, brainstorming, research, or revision. That means you should not repeat major portions of earlier essays. That means you should not merely summarize texts (beyond giving necessary context). That means you should cite textual evidence for every assertion you make—and you should explain the relevance of each quotation to your topic/thesis to generate your analysis.

I encourage you to review the syllabus, my Guide to Writing, and my Revision Triage Checklist for help meeting the basic expectations of college writing. I also urge you to review my typed comments and handwritten notes on your earlier papers. Repetitions of issues I've pointed out in your previous work will impact your grade on this paper, which is supposed to demonstrate your growth this semester.

An outline might look something like this. Your introduction to this paper could be one very beefy paragraph or it might span two paragraphs. You should open with a relevant personal **anecdote** drawn from your own experience (perhaps about a time you were silenced?), then either in the same paragraph or in a second, provide your reader with key context about the paper that follows, ending your introduction with a **thesis statement** about what you found in the other works and what they suggest about the societies for which they were written.

The body of your paper should offer substantial analysis of the literature and the society for which each text was written, but this is still a personal essay and so you will need to artfully interject yourself as the author to form transition paragraphs to take your reader from section to section. I recommend quoting from your reflection journal for your transitions to show your progression of thought over the semester as you read and reacted to each text. You can explain how you changed as a result of a reading and discuss whether each author handle the topic in the assigned text in the same way that you did in your journal.

For your conclusion, you will need to wrap up not only the analytical discussion but also your personal frame. Your last paragraph should tie up all the loose threads, ideally by resolving issues you have raised in your personal narrative beginning with the opening anecdote. The paper should come full circle.

In this way, you have will an opportunity not only to explore philosophical concepts as they develop in literature over time, but also to trace your own understanding of these ideas as they have affected you personally, and, perhaps, as your perspective on them has changed over time.

While your paper does not have to be primarily about censorship, you must draw some connections to the idea of censorship in your understanding of the philosophical problem you are investigating. As with all your writing in Honors, you must cite evidence for every assertion you make, whether it is a personal anecdote, a quote from your reading journal, or meticulously cited evidence from the assigned reading so as to avoid speculation, broad generalizations, and other unsubstantiated claims. Above all, your final paper should be intellectually honest, academically rigorous, and gracefully constructed.

You have the tools and the practice to succeed! Now, show me what you've discovered and how you've grown since January!