

# Micro-Assignments (PHIL 194W)

*due by 12 noon before each class meeting*

Before each class you are to complete an exercise in response to the day's required reading – a “micro-assignment”. The purpose of these micro-assignments is: (a) to deepen your appreciation of the readings; (b) to enhance our classroom discussions of the readings; and (c) to help you develop ideas for your term paper.

## *Guidelines*

Each of your micro-assignment should consist of the following three components:

1. **reading notes**, summarizing whatever you take to be the most important points from the day's reading
2. **reading reactions**, noting whatever thoughts and questions you have as you do the day's reading
3. **one “animating question”** about the day's reading, to pose to the class for discussion in the day's seminar

Your animating question is the most important part of your micro-assignment. Your animating question is your chance to shape the course of the day's discussion, and get us to talk about what you take to be the most pressing or perplexing or fascinating issue about the day's reading. A good animating question should...

- be **open-ended** (not yes/no or factual)
- be **directed & specific** (not simply “What do you think about...”)
- be **motivated** (providing whatever background information is needed)
- **incite discussion & elicit different opinions**

Your reading notes and reactions can be written in whatever manner suits you best. (Your notes and reactions do not even need to be clearly distinguished, so long as your micro-assignment includes both; but you may find it helpful to write them down separately, say, in two separate columns or two separate tabs.)

Obviously, the nature of your notes will differ considerably between the days when our reading is a philosophical article and those when it's a literary work. But do not think that your notes on our literary readings need to be plot summaries. Rather, as much as possible, you should always be focusing on what is philosophically significant in the readings.

### *Turning it in*

**Micro-assignments must be submitted on Canvas by 12 noon before each class meeting.** Micro-assignments submitted after this deadline will receive no credit.

**Your animating question should be typed into the assignment textbox on Canvas,** so that I can quickly and easily see it in advance.

**Your reading notes and reactions can be submitted in whatever manner suits you best.** You may paste them into the assignment textbox; you may submit them as an attached file, in any format; if you're taking handwritten notes, you may take a photo of your notes and attach that. **Don't worry about making your notes and reactions legible or understandable to an outside observer** like me; all I want is some record that you are indeed taking notes and reactions while you read.

**Each micro-assignment counts for 1% of your final grade, up to 15%.** You will have, in total, seventeen opportunities to submit micro-assignments over the course of the term (there is no micro-assignment for the first or the final two classes). This means that **you can skip two micro-assignments without penalty.** (You do not need to tell me when you're choosing not to submit a micro-assignment.)

### *Bringing it in*

Since these micro-assignments are essentially your personal notes on the readings, **you should bring a hard copy of your micro-assignment with you to class as well,** so that you can refer to it in class discussion.

### *Grading*

Full credit will be awarded when the student has made a honest attempt to complete the task; determination of this criterion is at the discretion of the instructor.