

12th Grade Rhetoric II Summer Reading and Assignment

- Read the list of “101 Starter Questions for Senior Thesis” below to generate some ideas surrounding your possible topic. You will need to choose three different topics (not necessarily from this list) and work with them for the purpose of your summer reading and assignment.
- Purchase *A Rulebook for Arguments* (Fifth Edition) ISBN-13: 978-1624666544. Read chapters 1-6 and complete the corresponding exercise for each chapter below. The remaining chapters will be covered in class.
- Contact Mrs. Arensman with any questions: sarensman@covenantclassical.org

Read the Introduction

Chapter 1

After reading chapter 1, write a one-paragraph “short argument” for each of your three different topics. Use the example on page 3 as a model to follow.

Chapter 2

After reading chapter 2, revisit the three short arguments you wrote for chapter 1. Write a list of counterexamples for each argument. Try to come up with as long a list as you can, but three counterexamples are the minimum for each argument (9 total).

Chapter 3

After reading chapter 3, create an original analogy for each of your three topics.

Chapter 4

After reading chapter 4, develop a list of possible “authorities” that would be appropriate for each of your three topics. This list can be general, as in the type of people or organizations that would be appropriate authorities; or it can be more specific, as in exact names of people or organizations. Try to come up with as long a list as you can, but three authorities per topic is the minimum (9 total).

Chapter 5

After reading chapter 5, brainstorm a list of possible correlations or cause and effect relationships related to each topic. Try to make the list as long as possible, but three each is the minimum (9 total).

Chapter 6

After reading chapter 6, create a formal syllogism for each of the 5 deductive forms listed in the book (Modus Ponens, Modus Tollens, Hypothetical, Disjunctive, and Dilemma). Use everything that you have compiled up to this point about your three topics/arguments as source material for the syllogisms.

101 “Starter” Questions for a Senior Thesis

1. Are all individuals morally obligated to save another person’s life if they are able?
2. Are beliefs and superstitions the same?
3. Are highly intelligent people less happy than individuals with average intelligence?
4. Are humans obligated to better themselves and will that make them happier?
5. Are intentions or outcomes more important when judging whether actions are moral?
6. Are people in this current generation less or more sensitive than people from past generations?
7. Are there limitations on free speech?
8. Are we losing our right to privacy?
9. At what point is a technologically enhanced human not a human anymore?
10. At what point is overthrowing a government ethical, considering all the violence a revolution usually entails?
11. Can a society exist without laws?
12. Can achieving nothing make a person happy?
13. Can morality ever be objective or is it always subjective? If it can be objective, in what instances? If it’s always subjective, how do we decide whose concept of morality is correct?
14. Do atheists make their own gods?
15. Do business owners have the right to refuse service to customers?
16. Do knowledge and understanding make you content and happy as a person?
17. Do people in wealthier countries have a moral obligation to help those in poorer countries?
18. Do we change when we have power?
19. Do we love ourselves more in the virtual world and less in the real world?
20. Does anonymity encourage people to misbehave or does it reveal how people would choose to act all the time if they could?
21. Does evil come from within, and if so why?
22. Does hardship make a person stronger? If so, under what conditions and at what point is it too much hardship? If not, what makes a person stronger?
23. Does jealousy have value in driving humans to improve themselves or is it a purely negative emotion?
24. Does knowledge have intrinsic value or does it need to have a practical use to have value?
25. Does the study of philosophy ever lead to answers or simply more questions?
26. How far should governments go to prevent its citizens from causing harm to themselves?
27. How much effort should an individual put into not offending others?
28. How much privacy are you willing to sacrifice for safety?
29. How would humanity change if all humans’ life expectancy was significantly increased (ex: 500 years)?
30. If a child somehow survived and grew up in the wilderness without any human contact, how “human” would they be without the influence of society and culture?
31. If death is inevitable, why bother doing anything?
32. If doing something good for others makes us feel good, can there ever be such a thing as pure altruism?
33. If everyone spoke their mind would this world be a better place?
34. If freedom is simply being able to do what you want, are animals freer than humans?
35. If it was discovered that personality traits were partly genetic and could be removed with gene therapy, would it be ethical to edit out negative character traits that harm others like extreme aggression, compulsive lying, or cruelty?
36. If scientists could accurately predict who was more likely to commit crimes, what should society do with that information?
37. If we live in a civilized world why do we see so many distinctions between rich and poor?
38. If you can save another’s life and don’t because doing so would break the law, are you ethically justified in your decision?
39. If you could become immortal on the condition you would NEVER be able to die or kill yourself, would you choose immortality?
40. If you could teach everyone in the world one concept, what concept would have the biggest positive impact on humanity?

41. In an ideal government, what should a good citizen provide to their government and what should that government provide that good citizen?
42. Is being obsessive about someone or something a good thing?
43. Is having a big ego a negative trait or positive trait?
44. Is human potential capable of anything?
45. Is humanity doomed to head in a destructive direction?
46. Is intelligence or wisdom more useful?
47. Is it better for a person to have a broad knowledge base or a deep knowledge base?
48. Is it better to be a big fish in a small pond or a small fish in a big pond?
49. Is it easier to love or to be loved?
50. Is it more important to be respected or liked?
51. Is it more important to help yourself, help your family, help your society, or help the world?
52. Is it more or less difficult to be successful in the modern world than it was in the past (100, 500, 1000 years ago)?
53. Is justice a human construct or is it independent of humans?
54. Is limiting immigration to developed countries right?
55. Is living life to the fullest possible?
56. Is peace the only way to stop war?
57. Is poverty in society inevitable?
58. Is privacy a right?
59. Is some degree of censorship necessary?
60. Is suffering a necessary part of the human condition? What would people who never suffered be like?
61. Is the human tendency to create groups and hierarchies an overall positive or a negative trait in terms of general human flourishing?
62. Is the most important purpose in life to find happiness?
63. Is there such a thing as a good death?
64. Is true beauty subjective or objective?
65. Should euthanasia be legal? Why or why not?
66. Should full access to the internet be a fundamental human right?
67. Should tax payers have the option to explicitly say what they don't want their tax dollars spent on?
68. Should there be limitations on the right to free speech?
69. Some people believe that if life has no purpose, then there is no reason for living. While others think that if life has no purpose, that frees a person to find/create and follow their own personal purpose. Which is a more valid point of view or are they both equally valid?
70. Under our government are there any rights that you have but shouldn't? How about rights you don't have but should?
71. What actions in your life will have the longest reaching consequences? How long will those effects be felt?
72. What activities cause you to feel like you are living life to the fullest?
73. What are the benefits and drawbacks of diversity in society?
74. What benefits does art provide society? Does art hurt society in any way?
75. What causes the most harm in the world, but is completely avoidable?
76. What harsh truths do you prefer to ignore?
77. What is the biggest threat to the social contract in our country?
78. What is the biggest waste of human potential?
79. What is the extent of freedom human beings should have?
80. What is the most fertile soil for hatred? Fear, ignorance, jealousy, or something else entirely? Is it possible that some people are genetically predisposed to hatred?
81. What is the most important goal every person should have?
82. What is the most important right our government allows for?
83. What life-altering things should every human ideally get to experience at least once in their lives?
84. What rights does every human have? Do those rights ever change?
85. What two questions would you ask to get the most information about who a person truly is?
86. What's more Important: doing the right thing or doing things right?
87. What's the difference between justice and revenge?

88. When, if ever, is taking a human life justified?
89. Where is the line between art and not art?
90. Why do humans often associate beauty with morality?
91. Why do we do things we do not like to do?
92. Why do we judge ourselves by our intentions but judge others by their actions?
93. Why do we strive for perfection if it is not attainable?
94. Why have many societies begun to place such a high value on emotions and being emotional?
95. Will a world without reliance on modern technology make any progress?
96. Will artificial intelligence help increase human lifespan in the future?
97. Will racism cease to exist?
98. Will stricter laws make a better world?
99. With no laws or rules to influence your behavior, how do you think you would behave?
100. Without religion would people become more, less, or be equally morally corrupt?
101. Would this world be better or be worse without formal education?