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HUM 3306: History of Ideas--The Age of Enlightenment to the Age of Anxiety
Fall 2008
Prof. Harvey

ESSAY#1 INSTRUCTIONS: DUE SEPTEMBER 25 (due September 30 if writing on Equiano)

General instructions:

--The paper should be about 1200 words long or longer. Please single-space it (the norm is double-spacing, but I find it easier to reading single-spacing!).

--You may draw upon information/perspectives gleaned from the "Prof" lectures and associated links, but the main ideas and particular approach should be yours. Do NOT use web sample papers, SparkNotes, etc. to get ideas or for phrasing. Do NOT do secondary research via the internet or elsewhere.

--Refer to the Checklist at the end of this file; you are expected to take care, to the best of your ability, to meet the criteria established on the Checklist. Note the grading scale.

--Do not provide a cover page; put your name/classname/date turned in/option#/your title at the top of the first page.

--Be prepared, should it be requested, to supply a draft stage of the essay (if you're wondering; this helps discourage plagiarism!). This means you must remember to permanently save a draft at some point as you are composing. P.S. It is extremely easy for me to detect plagiarism... don't be tempted!

--Organization, quality of analysis, and style will all be factors in determining your grade, worth 33% of the course grade. Be sure to make a computer-disk backup.

Choose one of the options below for the topic of your essay--these options are not intended to box you in, but to provoke insightful and original analysis (do not just "answer" the questions below):

OPTION ONE: One might make the argument that the most key passage in Locke is section 50, near the end of Chapter V, in which he concludes his discussion of gold (money) and the obtainment of a "disproportionate and unequal possession of the earth." Read this passage very carefully. Do you agree that "men have agreed to a disproportionate and

unequal possession of the earth" through a "tacit and voluntary consent"? Or was this imposed upon most men by the strongest among them? Can "a man fairly possess more land than he can use "without injury to anyone"? Does the fact that money (i.e. gold and silver) does not spoil or decay also mean that it is essentially worthless? Or does it, in a very real way, represent real wealth in goods and services? *To what extent is this, indeed, the key or core of Locke's Second Treatise*? This option invites, perhaps, critique of Locke or discussion of wider political-philosophical issues raised by or in the Second Treatise. (Remember: just don't answer the previous questions... use them to brainstorm, not to organize your essay!)

OPTION TWO: A careful reading of Locke's notions about property development, spoilage, and so on, might lead you to conclude that he would be opposed to "excessive" capitalist development of real estate (i.e., say a Donald Trump tower on Miami-Dade wetlands), or perhaps the reverse. Explore to what extent you think Locke's ideas in The Second Treatise are significant for arguments for or against large-scale real-estate development. This option provides an occasion to apply Locke's ideas (especially in Chapter V) to the contemporary reality of land development that we see all around us in South Florida. Is development always "industrious and rational," as Locke seems to imply, or can it sometimes represent "the covetousness of the quarrelsome and the contentious"? (Section 34). Does development always serve the common good or does it sometimes, or often, serve only the wealthy?

OPTION THREE: To what extent does Equiano's awareness of his lowly status as a slave impel him to turn to a European religion; adopt European (capitalist) business practices; and become an 'individual' in the European and/or Enlightenment sense of that term? Do you think Equiano abandoned his 'roots,' by participating enthusiastically in European wars, religion, and commerce (including the slave trade), etc? Did he 'sell out' to some extent? Obviously, Equiano is a complex character. He was an abolitionist but he also participated in the slave trade and advocated the colonization of Africa (at the end of his memoir). Try to explain some of the contradictions in his character, by looking both at his psychology and at some of the social forces at work in the Eighteenth Century. It's up to you to devise a main point about Equiano that gets at his complexity without being meandering!

Tips for analytical essay writing:

TITLE: Your title is the first chance to make an impression. A vague title (e.g., "John Locke's Ideas") that could fit any other paper written on the same author gives a vague impression, indicating that the essay to follow likely lacks a focused main point.

AUDIENCE: Assume an audience much like your fellow students--familiar with the work, but unfamiliar with your particular approach, and therefore requiring specific examples (textual evidence) to understand, appreciate, and accept your analysis and argument. Avoid plot summary or tedious repetition of an author's points without higher level analysis, however.

IDEAS: Good ideas come not from your abstract memory of a text, but from your close reading and paying attention to details that might radiate out into larger patterns of meaning. I do not expect you to come up with something "new" from my perspective, but something "new" from your perspective. If you don't make a discovery in the process of writing the paper, it probably will not be very satisfactory.

DEVELOPMENT: Good essays unfold a major idea or argument stage-by-stage, in a manner that will be compelling and convincing to the reader. This means that the old, boring high-school strategy of breaking down your basic idea into three (more or less disconnected) subpoints may not be the most suitable arrangement. Instead, for example, an essay (depending upon the thesis, of course) could in the first fourth highlight some intriguing contradiction or tension in a text; the next fourth might frame the tension in terms of a larger moral, literary, philosophical, religious, or historical debate or issue; and the last two fourths would illustrate the ramifications of the tension for the text you're exploring (tensions resolved? and if so, by what means? tensions not resolved? and if so, how does the author/narrator cope with irresolution?). An essay can be thoughtful and well-organized, and yet still be confusing to the reader. Most often this occurs because the essay writer needs to provide clearer sign-posts to the overall argument. At crucial junctures (the topic sentence for a paragraph introducing a new stage of your argument), try to foreground analytical points rather than just something about character or the plot or the page-by-page sequence of a text's ideas.

There are two basic patterns of development:

Deductive: here, you state the thesis of your argument (your main point) directly up front and proceed to provide evidence for your main point. For example: you could make your main point "Equiano's obsession with status is not defensible" or "Equiano's obsession with status is justified." And then the subsequent paragraphs would present aspects of your position and your evidence for those aspects.

Dialectical/inductive: here you proceed to make successive more complex discoveries through a thesis--antithesis--synthesis pattern. For example: the first third of your paper would explore how "Equiano is obsessed with status"; the second third would explore "how Equiano is in fact filling in a void with status seeking"; and the last third would pull the two ideas together through a more complex observation, that "Equiano fills in his grief of being exiled from his native country by seeking to emulate the status values of European

culture" (note how what seems to be a negative point about Equiano--that he is a sell out by seeking status--ends up to be a more complex positive point). Rhetorically, in your introduction you may want to state your overall point as "Equiano fills in his grief..." or you might want, without being vague, to state the thesis as a problem that your paper in effect solves, but without giving the solution immediately: "Clearly, Equiano's eagerness to obtain status makes his character a vexing one if we assume he should remain consistently loyal to his native country or identity."

INTRODUCTIONS: Keep us focused on the text or author or main idea. Do not start off with weighty generalities about morality, the human condition, and so on. Avoid the "funnel" opening paragraph if possible. If your introduction is more than a single paragraph (it might be two paragraphs if, for instance, you were setting up an author in terms of especially pertinent historical or cultural background), give an extra line space between the introduction and paper proper.

QUOTES: Depositing too many long quotes in a paper wastes space. Too few or no quotes, however, suggest inattention to the text or texts. You should probably have one or two longer, inset quotes, which you set up and analyze; the purpose here is to indicate that there are especially key or symptomatic passages that warrant lingering over because they are so revelatory. Quotes, besides helping to anchor/prove your points, often lead to analytical discoveries as you ponder/unpack them.

Grading scale:

A = focused, interesting main idea suggesting that you read, re-read, and probed around. Prose is not merely correct: it is compelling and sophisticated. Organization makes sense given the topic and argument of the paper. The paper is of sufficient quality that it could be put online as a sample paper.

B = Main idea and development are clear, but the organization is weak in a section or two, or there are a few sentence or punctuation glitches that suggest careless editing.

C= Paper has a main idea, but not thought through by attending to the text actively. Organization falls apart at key moments. Sentence construction, although usually correct, is imprecise or wordy. Nearly every page shows signs of careless editing.

D = The thesis is vague, and the organization is chaotic. Or the prose/grammar suggests the need to go to the Learning Center.

No Grade = The paper goes astray so far or is so half-hearted that it cannot be read.

Use the checklist below to help you edit/revise your paper before you submit it:

Three tips for effective revising:

- Revise with "fresh eyes": revise at least a day after you've completed a substantial draft.
- Use a printed copy and revise at a different locale than your computer.
- Revise in four "loops," using the revision checklist below.

Yes	No	CONTENT
_____	_____	sharply focused: no extraneous material
_____	_____	complex aspects of issue thoughtfully examined
_____	_____	judicious use of supporting specifics/quotes
		ORGANIZATION & DEVELOPMENT
_____	_____	unified paragraphs, with clear topic sentences
_____	_____	transitions between ideas and sections of essay
_____	_____	essay unfolds stage-by-stage, no unnecessary "back-tracking" or repetition of sections
		PROSE STYLE
_____	_____	straightforward and precise phrasing, without sentence fragments or run-ons
_____	_____	few boring "is" verbs
_____	_____	appropriate use of transition words
_____	_____	varied sentence length and patterns
		CORRECT GRAMMAR, ETC.
_____	_____	correct use of possessives and punctuation
_____	_____	correct match between verbs and subjects
_____	_____	no typos/misspellings