Introduction to Philosophy

✏️ Social Annotations

Most weeks will have assigned reading that you are expected to read and think about. To assist you in this process, you will work with your classmates on Perusall to collaboratively annotate the readings, which are due by 11:59PM (midnight), Buffalo (Eastern Standard) Time, the Sunday *after* we have talked about them in class.

Here's What I Want You to Do

Unless you are told otherwise, make at least 4 annotations to each week's reading.

Substantive responses to the annotations of your classmates will count as annotations of your own. Indeed, this is meant to be a real social experience for us, so **I would strongly prefer that at least half of your annotations are in response to those of a classmate**.

Here's Why I Want You to Do It

The purpose of social annotating is pretty straightforward: it has you practice with your classmates the skills necessary for critically reading texts while also connecting that material to your own interests and experiences.

As such, social annotating will continually push you towards achieving these learning outcomes for this course:

2.   Explain and summarize arguments within philosophical texts.
3.   Apply important philosophy concepts and theories to various hypothetical and real-world situations.
4.   Assess competing claims concerning how pressing social problems ought to be addressed.
5.   Connect philosophy with your own lived experiences.
7.   Reflect on your own assumptions and form more considered judgments on how you may address social issues.

To these ends, work with your classmates connecting the readings to current events and your experiences, assessing the positions those texts try to establish, and reflecting on what it is *you* believe about all of this.

Here's How to Do It

In general, each of your annotations must *do at least 1* of these 4 tasks:

1.   Highlight text that **resonates with your own *personal* experiences**—and then explain what in that highlighted text connects to your own experiences.
2.   Highlight text that **relates to *current* events**—and then explain what in that highlighted text connects to current events.
3.   Highlight text that **you *personally* find controversial**—and then explain why *you personally* find that highlighted text controversial.
4.   **Respond to annotations** made by your classmates, expanding in a *substantive* way on whatever it is they are saying by connecting it to *your own perspective.*

Your annotations may do any combination of those tasks. The choice is yours.

No matter what task you choose, though, all your annotations must be…

•   Relevant,
•   Substantive, and
•   Respectful.

✏️ Social Annotations (Continued)

By *relevant*, I mean that your annotations are clearly doing at least 1 of the 4 tasks above while making clear connections to the topic of the readings, their arguments, or the themes of philosophy and this class.

By *substantive*, I mean more than generic commentary, simply repeating whatever the text or a classmate says, or giving a thoughtless "I agree". No matter which task(s) you choose, **I want to see you presenting your own careful reasoning by substantiating your claims and providing concrete examples**.

By *respectful*, I mean that you critically assess the claims the readings and your classmates are making while not attacking the person(s) making those claims. It is fine to disagree with the reading and your classmates—*and even with me!*—but it is disrespectful to besmirch the integrity or character of another person. Indeed, personal attacks suggest it is your position that is weak and unsound. So please no flame wars, no bullying, and **no being a jerk**!

Here's How You'll Earn Philosophy Experience Points

You will earn up to 200 philosophy experience points for each week's social annotations.

The number of points you earn will be based upon the Perusall autoscoring algorithm. This works by first evaluating each of your annotations as "deficient", "improvement needed", or "meets expectations".

After that, Perusall takes into other considerations for determining your score. For instance, Perusall gives a penalty if your annotations are not distributed throughout the reading. The idea is that **you should be reading the whole text** and not just one small part of it. Your score will also be slightly modified by other considerations as well, such as how many people are responding to your annotations.

The good news is that Perusall itself will encourage and help you make better annotations to improve your score. Because of that, I have found that this autoscoring algorithm works quite well. Even so, I will still regularly check its results, making sure that the points it awards are reasonable. Of course, **if you feel that your annotations are not being fairly scored by Perusall, let me know and I'll gladly assign your points myself**!

For more on Perusall's autoscoring algorithm, please see:

https://public.perusall.com/downloads/scoring-examples.pdf

https://ph.ucsd.edu/resources/scoring-details.pdf

Philosopher's Stones

For every 400 points you earn from your social annotations, you will earn 1.00 philosopher's stone.

Meanwhile, 1.00 philosopher's stone may be exchanged for a 48-hour extension on any social annotations activity. Multiple stones may be used for longer extensions.

Considerations for Your Perusall Account

This means that you need a Perusall account. The good news is that this should be set up automatically when you start clicking on the Perusall links I have posted on the course website.

The first time you use Perusall, please be sure that you are using your real first and last name, so I can identify you. I also recommend making sure that it is linked to your UB email. (When someone tags you on Perusall, you get an email message letting you know.) You may also need to enter your student ID. To keep things simple, please use either your UB Student ID Number or your UB email for that ID. I am glad to help if you are having issues setting all this up.

Keep in mind that **you cannot be anonymous** on Perusall. However, only people enrolled in the course will see your annotations. No outsiders are allowed!