**SYS Sp 2025 Essay #1 Prompt**

**DUE DATES** - NOTE: Due Dates are non-negotiable – plan well and use your time- management skills – no extensions will be given.

**PW due Feb 20** by 23:59 for no late penalty – by email, Microsoft Word only

**1st Draft due March 6** by 23:59 for no late penalty – email, Microsoft Word only

1st draft – 2,000 words

**Final Draft due March 27** by 23:59 for no late penalty – on eCourse only, in Word only

Final draft – 2,000 words

Using SOME (‘some’ is NOT ‘none,’ nor is it ‘all’) of the texts we have used in class – AND NO OTHERS – no external researchincluding AI is allowed - **define religion**.

Not *a* certain religion, not *my* religion, not *his* or *her* religion – DEFINE RELIGION.

You MUST use one or more of the citations in the doc on the eCourse called ‘Definitions.’ Which one(s) you use and how you use it (them) depends on your argument.

But that’s not all. You must also use SOME of the written, assigned texts we have read for class – more than one. Which ones? How? That depends on your argument – as you should have learned in FYS. Cite properly in MLA only. Since the essay’s 1st draft is due March 6th, you *can* use texts (course readings) from class up to Course week VIII, ‘Buddhism I.’ But think (you are, after all, a university student…), ONE of the tasks of homework in a class is to see IF the student is doing his or her work, right? One of the things you are required to do is read texts, right? If your essay shows familiarity with the texts, that will be good, right? And the greater familiarity with MORE texts will be better than less, right?

But that, too, is not all. An essay is NOT a summary. It is a marriage of YOUR ideas and ‘their’ ideas – the texts required. You need an argument, which you should have learned in FYS. So, the determination of which texts from class you use and how you use them is determined by the argument, right?

**Since this class is a description of pre-Islamic religions, not a normative, theological course, no polemic or apologetic essays are allowed** (see doc called ‘Definitions’ on eCourse if you are unclear about these terms).

MLA citation ONLY. See eCourse ‘Writing Aids’ for tips on that.

**No AI is allowed. None. At all. For anything**.

(HERE – ‘NONE’ does not mean ‘SOME,’ nor does it mean ‘ALL.’)

No AI is allowed for ideas, not for text. Not for grammar and punctuation check (apparently, **Grammerly’s grammar and punctuation check is AI based** – don’t use it or any other AI-based grammar or punctuation check – if you tell me ‘I only used it for grammar and punctuation,’ I won’t believe you and your essay will be an F for AI use. Don’t risk it.)

**Any and all use of AI on any part of an essay will result in a F for that assignment and NO chance to rewrite it for a grade**.

Like in a math class – show your work. Like in a math class, if you DON’T show your work, I will assume you cheated in some way – AI, plagiarism, or some other way.

PREWRITING

**Brainstorm** – **provisional claim** – **outline** – anything less than that is NOT a PW –

See docs on eCourse under ‘Writing Aids’

**Claim** – must be arguable and focused – see doc on eCourse called ‘the Claim’

**Outline** - **EVERY single paragraph must be outlined for your PW** – ALL of them. (Usually, when students DON’T do this, there is some AI or plagiarism involved.)

Remember – and this is basic FYS writing process – every body P must have a topic sentence that supports and develops your claim, every body P must have evidence that supports your topic sentence, and every body P must have some kind of explanation of why and how the evidence supports the topic sentence.

The more attention and work you put into your PW, the better. The task of a PW is get your ideas on paper and in order – it is about THOUGHT and argumentation.

FIRST DRAFT

THIS is an ENGLISH thing – once you are happy that you are making a good argument (the PW) in a good order, the task is to put it into coherent words with good vocabulary and grammar. This is drafting.

**A revised PW MUST be INCLUDED with your 1st draft**. Students who don’t submit a revised PW are usually cheating in some way. Your revised PW must include a revised outline – again – with EVERY SINGLE body P outlined.

There can and should be some changes between your PW and 1st draft in structure, outline, maybe citations, etc… You might even want to incorporate something from the class reading that you read after you submitted the PW… that’s OK, but I am on the lookout for AI, and radical changes will be suspect. This is one of the reasons why a revised PW is required.

The more attention and work you put into your 1st draft, the better. If you do a superior job on your 1st draft, you might have very little to do to polish it up for your final draft. That would be a good use of time, wouldn’t it?

Final Draft

Polish up your 1st draft. There should be NO changes between 1st draft and final draft except what I, the instructor, tell you to do on your 1st draft. Students that do that are usually cheating (including using AI, which is cheating in this class).

Useful stuff is available for you on the eCourse under the section called ‘Writing Aids.’ Don’t be afraid to use them. WARC is also an option available to you. I have office hours as well (and email for that matter), but YOUR essay is YOURS, I will not give you ideas – that’s your job.

An essay is an exploration of ideas – you must take in data (texts) and THINK about that data. How you think about it is specific to you – idiographic – unique – and involves a great deal of creativity. This creativity includes making some connections to other things (ideas, events, texts, etc). But then, you have to test your ideas by comparing your hypothesis to available data. You *might* have a good idea, but if you find no support for it, you will not convince another of it, so you have to drop it, save it for a work of art. An essay is NOT an opinion. Opinions are undefended, subjective reactions. Essays are rhetorical, ‘social’ attempts at convincing another of your claim – NOT your opinion. This is ONE of the reasons you need to write in the objective voice (as again, you should have learned in FYS).

Writing without thinking is copying.

Critical thinking is courageous and creating thinking.

Thinking is linking.

GRADING

A = EXCELLENT (not just ‘good,’ better than ‘good’)

B = GOOD (silver medal)

C = Average (all requirements fulfilled and on time – but nothing creative, new or interesting)

D = Poor (something, but not much…)

F = Fail