

## Annotating Texts in Philosophy

Homework, in this class, involves reading and thinking about philosophical philosophical writings. Each assignment given throughout the year has the following goals:

- To get you to explore a perspective on a philosophical question
- To inspire you to ask further philosophical questions of the text
- To provide you the raw materials to participate in class discussion by: asking questions, making observations and constructing arguments
- To provide you with the raw materials to write effective philosophical arguments
- To make you think

An annotation is generally a single page of notes on a reading. Your notes should be keyed to the document handed out in class (note down where in the document each note applies).

Generally annotations should include the following:

- A. What questions do you have about the document? Are there concepts or ideas that you don't understand?
- B. What passage, quote or idea stands out most to you? Why?
- C. What is the argument being made by the writer and how is this argument supported? Try to identify the parts of the argument and the examples used to demonstrate the writer's point (this section will often make up the bulk of your annotation).

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- D. From your perspective, is the writer's argument sound? What are the potential weaknesses of the writer's argument?
- E. Which other writings is this document similar to and with which would it disagree?
- F. How does the philosophical issue that this writer tackles relate to issues in the concrete world?

Philosophy is about grappling with hard concepts. Don't be discouraged if you read a document and say to yourself, "I don't get it," rather view your annotation as a way to ask series of questions that you think would help you to understand. Every document you read should include at least responses to A, B and C. As the class progresses it should be increasingly easier to address D, E and F as well.

You may format your annotations any way you wish - paragraphs a series of bullet points, notes keyed to the document or whatever works for you.

When I check annotations I will be looking only for a full page of notes written in a reasonable size, and some evidence of interaction with the document itself (underlining, notes, keyed notes, etc). If all of these things are done, you will receive a 10. If there is something missing you will receive a 7.

Please use the annotations process to help you participate in class discussions and to build a bank of idea and examples that can be used on exams. Remember, the credit you get for each annotation is minor. The real value lies in grappling with, thinking about and exploring philosophical ideas.