Take-Home & In-Class Analytical Writing Exercise

This assignment is intended to help you write your first analytical paper and to develop your analytical reading and writing skills more generally.

Write a 1.5-page minimum - 2-page maximum paper (double-spaced, 1” margins, 12-point font [e.g., Times New Roman]) on the topic below. DO NOT USE OUTSIDE SOURCES (including editors’ introductions, etc.), even for interpretative purposes. This assignment is to be done individually, meaning that you should not work with classmates or others on its content. This assignment may NOT be turned in late.

Bring TWO COPIES to class, one for peer evaluation and one for self-evaluation. Make sure each copy’s pages are stapled together BEFORE class.

Analyzing:
You should sit down with the primary text and your notes, and go through the text and find (and take new notes on) the relevant arguments for answering the question. You shouldn’t write your paper from your class notes (it won’t be based on a close reading if you do so), but you may want to use class notes to find where in the text certain issues are discussed (that’s one reason why I mention page numbers in our class discussions). Do NOT just summarize the theorist’s conclusions about an issue; explain how s/he gets to her/his conclusions, how s/he defines political concepts, and how her/his different ideas fit together, i.e., explain the assumptions behind and the LOGIC of/rationale behind her/his arguments. This is what is meant by ANALYZING the theorist’s arguments. You need to do this AT EACH STEP in the theorist’s argument and for EVERY point you make about the author. In other words, don’t take the theorist’s arguments for granted, as obvious, or as self-evident/self-explanatory (because, e.g., other theorists disagree with these arguments, assumptions, and definitions or make different arguments, assumptions, and definitions). Do NOT just repeat back what the theorist says; demonstrate that you thoroughly understand the concepts, terms, details, and logic of the theorist’s arguments. If the theorist is not explicit about some of her/his logic, assumptions, and normative standards, you will need to reconstruct what they most likely are, attempting to be as faithful as possible to her/his various arguments. The analytical papers are NOT OPINION PAPERS; stick to explaining, and refrain from positively or negatively commenting on, the author’s arguments. Your task is to explain the theorist’s arguments even more clearly and thoroughly than the theorist does.

In order to keep on topic and to ensure you’re addressing it, jump immediately into the EXACT topic by making your first SMALL, DISCRETE POINT about the exact topic and then IMMEDIATELY, THOROUGHLY, AND FULLY ANALYZING that first point, step-by-step (see above), before moving on to your second small, discrete, point about the exact topic (do NOT try to make all your points all at once or all at the beginning). This is a better strategy than starting with background information that may or may not be necessary and won’t be specifically on topic. Each paragraph should have a clear, EXPLICIT connection to the specific topic (i.e., it should be clear in each paragraph why you are talking about a particular issue and how it relates to the paper topic). Only introduce points that are necessary for analyzing the author’s assumptions and logic insofar as the latter relate to the paper topic.

Citations, quotations, and paraphrasing:
Be sure to give a citation for EVERY claim you make about a theorist’s definitions, arguments, assumptions, etc. Proper citation means that BOTH DIRECT QUOTATIONS AND PARAPHRASED IDEAS MUST BE CITED. (If you are missing too many, you will be counted off and/or I will return the paper to you and require that you add them if you want credit for the assignment. This is serious matter and potentially a plagiarism issue.) If in doubt about when to cite, err on the side of providing too many citations. I should be able to look up your citations and confirm that this is what in fact the theorist was arguing.

For your citations, use the following method for the FIRST citation in EACH paragraph: at the end of the sentence for which you need a citation, put a set of parentheses before the period, containing the author’s last name, the text’s publication date (this is NOT the date the text was written, but the date this particular edition of the text was published), colon, and (in the case of Locke) the PARAGRAPH number(s) of the PRIMARY source you’re citing, e.g., (Locke 2019: 6). After the first citation in a paragraph, you can just put the PARAGRAPH number(s) in parentheses at the end of the sentence, e.g., (4). SEE ME IF YOU ARE USING A DIFFERENT EDITION OF THE READING.
Because your paper should be based on a close reading of the primary text, keep your arguments firmly grounded in the text. Your paper should not consist, though, of a bunch of direct quotes strung together (you do NOT even need to use any direct quotations): do not use too many direct quotes or overly long quotes (ONE LINE MAX and only a few, if any, quotes this long), because you ALWAYS need to explain/interpret the quote and to indicate its relevance to your argument, both of which usually end up taking up too much space. Use quotation marks to indicate when you are borrowing more than 3-5 exact words of the author; otherwise, it’s plagiarism. (What appears within the quotation marks should be a verbatim replication of the author’s exact words, with brackets ([ ]) inserted for any words or parts of words you need to add for grammatical purposes.) When you paraphrase the author’s ideas, you should SUBSTANTIALLY reword the author’s words; otherwise, it’s plagiarism.

**Mechanics:**

Be sure to logically organize your paper so that there is a clear argument and the steps in this argument are easy to follow. Because 2 pages isn’t much space for an in-depth analysis, you should skip the typically vacuous introduction and conclusion and instead BEGIN WITH A 2-4 SENTENCE THESIS THAT CLEARLY STATES THE ARGUMENTS/CONCLUSIONS—NOT just the topic—of your paper, which should be very specific about what your paper shows about the theorist. You will likely want to (re)write your thesis after you’ve actually written your paper and know what it specifically argues about the topic. Organize your supporting paragraphs so that each one addresses a separate point: every sentence in the paragraph should clearly relate to the paragraph’s introductory sentence, which should clearly and explicitly address the EXACT TOPIC. Because your thesis at the beginning of your paper will summarize your paper, you do NOT need to have a concluding paragraph.

Be sure to PROOFREAD your paper, not just spell check it, to catch grammatical and organizational problems; I highly recommend slowly reading it out loud to make sure it sounds like coherent English. This is obviously not an English composition class, but analyzing texts and making political arguments requires organizing your thoughts coherently so that others can follow your analysis or argument. For help with your writing, you’re encouraged to utilize the WMU Writing Center, [http://wmich.edu/writingcenter](http://wmich.edu/writingcenter).

Because I know what specific source you’re using, a bibliography is not necessary (see me if you’re using a different edition, in which case you will need a bibliography). A title page is not necessary either; just put your NAME, your section time, AND THE TOPIC NUMBER at the top of the first page (single-spaced and preferably in the header).

As the syllabus mentions, you are responsible for making yourself aware of and understanding the policies and procedures in the Undergraduate Catalog that pertain to Academic Integrity.

Feel free to come by my office hours or to make an appointment to see me if you want to discuss your ideas for the paper.

**Important reminder:**

If you find yourself short on space, in-depth analysis is to be preferred over a cursory or superficial analysis of more issues (i.e., depth and detail matter more than quantity of points covered). You may or may not have space to address all the issues mentioned in the question, so be sure to analyze in depth, even if it means not answering each of the sub-questions.

**Grading:**

Approximately 75% of your grade will be based on the typed paper you bring to class, and approximately 25% will be based on the thoroughness of your self-evaluation (how thoroughly you mark up your paper with comments, corrections, and additions while we are collectively re-writing the paper together in class). Points will be deducted if you do not bring two copies, don’t staple each copy, are missing too many citations, and do not follow the other instructions.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grading criteria:</th>
<th>(circle the appropriate level of performance)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Does the writer stay on topic &amp; address the EXACT topic?</td>
<td>yes</td>
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<tr>
<td>Does the writer accurately interpret the theorist’s arguments?</td>
<td>yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Does the writer provide citations (PARAGRAPH numbers) for EVERY claim (whether quoted or paraphrased) made about the theorist’s arguments?</td>
<td>yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>If the writer uses any direct quotes, does the writer explain EACH quote?</td>
<td>yes</td>
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<tr>
<td>Does the writer sufficiently paraphrase/ reword the theorist’s arguments?</td>
<td>yes</td>
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<tr>
<td>Does the writer define ALL of the theorist’s relevant key terms?</td>
<td>yes</td>
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<tr>
<td>Does the writer analyze the theorist’s logic at EVERY step?</td>
<td>yes</td>
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<tr>
<td>Is there a proper thesis?</td>
<td>yes</td>
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<tr>
<td>Are the citations in the correct format?</td>
<td>yes</td>
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<tr>
<td>If quotations are used, are they kept within the maximum length?</td>
<td>yes</td>
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Topic: **Analyze Locke’s account of the law of nature.**

For the take-home & in-class writing exercise, don’t bother with an introduction, conclusion, or thesis—just jump into your analysis.

Hint: here would be a logical, systematic way to go about breaking down and addressing the exact topic:
- state the first small, discrete point you want to make about the EXACT topic; keep it narrow/manageable/small
- define and thoroughly explain EVERYTHING mentioned in this first point
- the topic is NOT about the *state of nature*, so there is NO obvious reason you need to discuss it
- explain one or both DEFINITIONS of the *law of nature*
- explain the source of the law of nature (i.e., how do individuals know it?)
- explain the LOGIC of one or both versions of the law of nature (i.e., WHY should individuals follow the law of nature?)
- if you discuss individual *equality, freedom, and/or independence* in terms of the logic of the law of nature, DEFINE and EXPLAIN each of the characteristics of human nature you discuss