

## Central Themes: Six Questions

You can use the six questions below in either of two ways:

1. towards the start of the learning period, pick a question to research, do some further thinking and reading, and write a short essay on the topic of up to 750 words; or
2. towards the end of your learning period, set yourself two hours in which to answer any two questions as if in an exam (but typed instead of hand-written).

I recommend the first option. But you can choose.

In either case, send me what you have done by email before Week 10 of this term. If, as I hope, I am completely overwhelmed by the enormous response, I will send you each a thumbs up emoji. If I'm less overwhelmed, I may provide slightly more informative feedback.

I'm not going to give any numerical marks. I dislike having to place students' work on a one-dimensional scale, and I'm doubtful this helps you. If enough people request it, I may consider, as an alternative to numerical marks, awarding motivational badges like 'outstanding use of sources', 'great independent research', 'most compelling argument', 'painfully bad formatting', 'unbelievably turgid prose', and 'unnecessary use of Oxford commas'. (Do let me know if you want badges.)

## Support This Term ...

In normal times there would be my office hours, which (based on past experience) few would attend until just before the exam, only to find that I'm not on campus then. I would also be expecting a couple of panicked emails late into the night before the exam asking me to explain the distinction between sense and reference. I'll miss those emails.

I think we can do better. But it depends on your contribution.

Lively discussion among diverse students on sources, arguments and objections is the key.

This week (Week 3 of term), I want you to (a) post a message saying hi on the Central Themes team (on Microsoft Teams), and (b) post a message greeting another student using @NAME from your seminar group, where this is a student whose personal contact details (mobile, facebook, whatever) you do not have. Can you do that?

If enough people join in, I'll continue to suggest simple tasks along the way. I do think you can learn more if you can find time to discuss themes with other students on the module. For most people, written discussion should be especially helpful.

I'm a bit doubtful this will work. Let's see if I'm wrong.

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## The Six Questions

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- 1      What are the functions of perceptual awareness?

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  - 2      Why, if at all, do we need to distinguish sense from reference?

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  - 3      To what extent are citizens of rich countries personally responsible for inflicting the ongoing harm of world poverty?

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  - 4      Is it metaphysically possible for a person to survive the complete and sudden loss of her body?

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  - 5      How, if at all, is the causal history of an event relevant to whether it is an action?

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  - 6      Is there a fundamental right to choose between one's own life and death?
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