

WRITTEN EXPLANATIONS

Purpose: The purpose of this assignment is to provide you with the opportunity to clarify, communicate and make tangible their understanding of various ideas, concepts, and procedures that arise through reading chapters from the assigned textbook.

Rationale: Learning is an active endeavor involving the processing of knowledge and experience. This processing enhances learning when it involves (a) the retrieval of the new knowledge (not just re-experiencing the new knowledge), (b) the meaningful use of the new knowledge (not just a rote application of new knowledge), (c) the retrieval and use of the new knowledge over time (not just a one day or one week experience), and (d) the self-generation of understanding and use (not just a reception of ideas). Thus, written explanations are designed to motivate you to read a chapter and organize the ideas and concepts in a meaningful (to you) way in order to create and deliver the written explanation. This approach should result in significant learning.

Format: The Written Explanations should result in a clear, concise, and coherently organized explanation and application of the assigned reading, not to exceed 400 words (single spaced, double spaced between paragraphs). *The written explanation should focus on the readings indicated on the Tentative Course Calendar.* This discussion should include sufficient details and examples (your own examples, not examples from the reading) to make the concept under discussion clear to someone not familiar with the reading.

The content of each written explanation should reflect *your understanding* of the reading. **Do not try to “cover” everything in a reading so that the explanation is simply a content dump.** The written explanation should be constructed (a) to **explain** the reading to an audience that is unfamiliar with the concept(s), and (b) to **apply** the concept(s) to a current problem, issue, or situation. Both explanation and application are essential.

Grading of Written Explanations: Each written explanation is worth 100 pts and graded thusly:

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| 1. Organization | 15 pts |
| a. are introductions and conclusions used effectively? | |
| b. do the expressed ideas follow a logical progression? | |
| c. are explanations and applications provided? | |
| 2. Clarity of Thought and Expression | 25 pts |
| a. are the ideas expressed well, well thought out, and integrated? | |
| b. are there clear and logical transitions between ideas/components? | |
| c. are correct grammar and syntax used? | |
| 3. Essential Content Explanation | 30 pts |
| a. does the explanation address the concepts addressed? | |
| b. does the explanation explain, rather than just list, the concepts in the reading? | |
| c. does the explanation include clear examples of the concepts addressed? | |
| 4. Essential Content Application | 30 pts |
| a. is a problem, issue, or situation explained clearly? | |
| b. are concepts from the reading used to address the cited problem? | |
| c. is the application thorough, meaningful, and appropriate? | |
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Process: The written explanations should be submitted using the course website.

Pragmatics:

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| 1. Be thoughtful | • think before you create. |
| 2. Be concise | • there is a lot to include in a short explanation. |
| 3. Be creative | • as long as the central tenets of the explanation are addressed. |
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Timeline:

See the Syllabus.

Honor Code: The Graduate Honor Code will be strictly enforced on this assignment. Any suspected violations of the Honor Code will be promptly reported to the Honor System. Students are allowed to discuss with other students the nature of this assignment, their understanding of the readings, and the general concepts they will be discussing in the oral explanations. Students should not, however, share their completed explanations with other students in the class. Beyond that, the Honor Code's general principles of cheating, plagiarism, falsification, and sabotage are still applicable (see <http://ghs.grads.vt.edu/>).
