

NOTE: This assignment was given for an online course taught during the COVID pandemic, as an attempt to encourage student interaction with one another and to facilitate Socratic methods in the online classroom. After the assignment, videos were edited using Adobe Premiere and fused together then shared with the class, so that students could watch other group's reactions to the material.

**Philosophy of Human Nature PHIL 1000
Fordham University, Spring 2021
Professor Smith**

Due Date: 5/1/21, @ 11:59 PM

Presentation

Task: Your group is to record a group discussion regarding a speech from the film *Network*. You will define it, relate it to other texts studied this far, and finally evaluate it. Your discussion should last at least 25 minutes, and *your goal is to provide a stimulating conversation in which all members contribute equally.*

Roles: **Each group member will be assigned a role within the group and must strive both to take part in the group discussion itself, as well as fulfill the obligations of his / her role.**

Everyone is expected to contribute to the group discussion equally for this project. The role you have been assigned (scheduler, creator, etc.) is an additional task you are expected to take on in addition to your contribution to the discussion itself. All members of the group are required to take part in the discussion and contribute intelligently to it.

The roles are as follows:

Scheduler: who is responsible for organizing your group to meet outside of class time to prepare for your presentation, and who will ensure that everyone is clear about what venue your group will be meeting on to record the session. The scheduler will also take notes about what was stated during the group's discussion and relay them at the end of the video.

Leader: One person will lead the group discussion, ensuring that all of the content required for this assignment is covered over the course of the group's discussion in a timely fashion.

Moderator: One person will moderate the conversation, trying to ensure that everyone in the group contributes equally. The moderator should attempt to prevent any one group member from monopolizing the conversation or any one group member from not participating at all.

Creator: The rest of the group members will be required to prepare in advance for the group discussion by writing down their own answers to the questions of this group exercise in advance of the discussion itself. These answers should be saved by the creator, available to be distributed to the professor after the presentation, should the professor so request.

Value: 10%

Criteria: The **presentation** will be assessed according to 3 criteria:

1. The extent to which your presentation is a *conversation*, such that you interact and respond to what each other says.
2. The extent to which all members of the group *contribute equally* to the conversation.
3. The degree to which participants in this conversation are legitimately attempting to have a conversation with real philosophical depth and relevance

I am guided by the principle that **philosophical discussion is best when its co-operative, not competitive**. This doesn't mean you have to agree with each other, far from it, but that its best to see your disagreements as an occasion to explore the issue you are discussing at a greater depth. Following this principle, **my assessment criteria are thus designed to encourage you to (1) actually attempt to have a meaningful and interesting conversation, (2) work hard in making sure that you really are listening and responding to what each other is saying, (3) and that you are mindful of making sure that everyone is included in the conversation**. This means keeping a check on yourself – making sure you yourself don't speak too much, or too little – as well as keeping an eye on others – making sure no one else is dominating or being left out. The moderator obviously has a particular role to play here, but it is everyone's responsibility to ensure an equity in your contributions.

Assignment:

Your group is responsible for the following three objectives:

- (1) Rephrase or paraphrase the ideas which come up in the speech which your group has been given from the film, drawing out the most important philosophical elements of it. Here you are only concerned with defining the ideas which come up in this speech.
- (2) Relate the ideas which come up in this speech to any philosophical ideas we have encountered earlier in the course. Does anything we studied earlier in the semester make a similar point or help you to better understand what's being said in this speech?
- (3) React to the speech. To do this, I want you to first ask the question: how might what this speech is saying be more or less relevant today (the age of the internet and social media) than it was when the film was first made? After considering this, I'd like your group to take a position: is the speech right or wrong, or somewhat right and somewhat wrong? Finally, assuming that there is some degree of truth to the speech, I want your group to ask a final question: is there anything we can do to free ourselves from the criticism this film is making of us? Or, in other words, given that the film is correct in its criticism, what can we do to prevent ourselves from becoming the sort of mindless human beings the film indicates that we are becoming?

During approximately the first 20 minutes of your video, I'd like you to work through these three points as a group. During approximately the last 5 minutes, I'd like you to go back through each of the three discussion points and discuss which of the ideas or points that came up in your discussion were the ones you thought most important or most interesting, and which you would like to share with the rest of the class. The scheduler will have taken notes on the most important points that came up during the

discussion in case you need help recalling what was discussed. Please make it clear when you transitioning to the recap of your most important points at the end of the video.

Final Product:

I will compile a video of each group's final recap of their discussion and share it with everyone else in the class.

Groups:

Group 1 – Speech 1

Leader:

Scheduler:

Creator:

Creator:

Moderator:

Group 2 – Speech 2

Leader:

Creator:

Creator:

Moderator:

Scheduler:

Group 3 – Speech 3

Moderator:

Creator:

Creator:

Leader:

Scheduler:

Group 4 – Speech 4

Scheduler:

Leader:

Creator:

Creator:

Moderator:

Sample speeches: There were four of these, but I'm only providing two here for the sake of brevity

SPEECH 1

HOWARD

Edward George Ruddy died today!
Edward George Ruddy was the Chairman
of the Board of the Union Broad-
casting Systems -- and woe is us
if it ever falls in the hands of
the wrong people. And that's why
woe is us that Edward George Ruddy
died. Because this network is now
in the hands of CC and A the
Communications Corporation of
America. We've got a new Chairman
of the Board, a man named Frank
Hackett now sitting in Mr. Ruddy's
office on the twentieth floor. And
when the twelfth largest company in
the world controls the most awesome
goddamned propaganda force in the
whole godless world, who knows what
shit will be peddled for truth on
this tube? So, listen to me!
Television is not the truth! Tele-
vision is a goddamned amusement
park, that's what television is!
Television is a circus, a carnival,
a travelling troupe of acrobats and
story-tellers, singers and dancers,
jugglers, side-show freaks, lion-
tamers and football players. We're
in the boredom-killing business!
If you want truth, go to God, go
to your guru, go to yourself because
that's the only place you'll ever
find any real truth! But, man,
you're never going to get any truth
from us. We'll tell you anything
you want to hear. We lie like hell!
We'll tell you Kojack always gets
the killer, and nobody ever gets
cancer in Archie Bunker's house.
And no matter how much trouble the
hero is in, don't worry: just look
at your watch -- at the end of the
hour, he's going to win. We'll
tell you any shit you want to hear!

We deal in illusion, man! None of
it's true! But you people sit there
-- all of you -- day after day, night
after night, all ages, colors, creeds
-- we're all you know. You're
beginning to believe this illusion
we're spinning here. You're be-
ginning to think the tube is reality
and your own lives are unreal. You
do whatever the tube tells you. You
dress like the tube, you eat like
the tube, you raise your children
like the tube, you think like the
tube. This is mass madness, you
maniacs! In God's name, you people
are the real thing! We're the illu-
sions! So turn off this goddam
set! Turn it off right now! Turn
it off and leave it off. Turn it
off right now, right in the middle
of this very sentence I'm speaking
now --

At which point, HOWARD BEALE, sweating and
red-eyed with
his prophetic rage, collapses to the floor in a pro-
phetic swoon.

SPEECH 2

JENSEN

You have meddled with the primal forces of nature, Mr. Beale, and I won't have it, is that clear?! You think you have merely stopped a business deal -- that is not the case! The Arabs have taken billions of dollars out of this country, and now they must put it back. It is ebb and flow, tidal gravity, it is ecological balance! You are an old man who thinks in terms of nations and peoples. There are no nations! There are no peoples! There are no Russians. There are no Arabs! There are no third worlds! There is no West! There is only one holistic system of systems, one vast and immane, interwoven, interacting, multi-variate, multi-national dominion of dollars! petro-dollars, electro-dollars, multi-dollars!, Reichmarks, rubles, rin, pounds and shekels! It is the international system of currency that determines the totality of life on this planet! That is the natural order of things today! That is the atomic, subatomic and galactic structure of things today! And you have meddled with the primal forces of nature, and you will atone! Am I getting through to you, Mr. Beale?

(pause)

You get up on your little twenty-one inch screen, and howl about America and democracy. There is no America. There is no democracy. There is only IBM and ITT and A T and T and Dupont, Dow, Union Carbide and Exxon. Those are the nations of the world today. What do you think the Russians talk about in their councils of state -- Karl Marx? They pull out their linear programming charts, statistical decision theories and minimax solutions and compute the price-cost probabilities of their transactions and investments just like we do. We no longer live in a world of nations and ideologies, Mr. Beale. The world is a college of corporations,

inexorably deter- mined by the immutable by-laws of business. The world is a business, Mr. Beale! It has been since man crawled out of the slime, and our children, Mr. Beale, will live to see that perfect world in which there is no war and famine, oppression and brutality -- one vast and ecumenical holding

company, for whom all men will work to serve a common profit, in which all men will hold a share of stock, all necessities provided, all anxieties tranquilized, all boredom amused. And I have chosen you to preach this evangel, Mr. Beale.

HOWARD

(humble whisper)

Why me?

JENSEN

Because you're on television, dummy. Sixty million people watch you every night of the week, Monday through Friday.

HOWARD

I have seen the face of God!

JENSEN

You just might be right, Mr. Beale.
