

relativism and multiculturalism essay sample



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

- What should our response be to behavior in other cultures that are disturbing or seem morally wrong?
- What are examples of behaviors that might pose a strong challenge to cultural relativism?
- What are examples of behaviors that might pose a strong challenge to absolutism or universalism?
- Are there behaviors that should be regarded as obligatory or prohibited regardless of time, place, culture, or any other contingent circumstance?
- Should people be held responsible for immoral behavior when most of their community or culture also behaves that way?

Thesis Construction

Please read these assignment instructions before writing your paper, and re-read them often during and after the writing process to make sure that you are fulfilling all of the instructions.

Overview

The following assignment is an exercise designed to help you write your Final Paper. In this exercise, you will do the following: Identify a topic of interest from the list, and narrow it down to a particular, concrete ethical problem or question. Provide an introduction in which you briefly explain the topic and the particular question on which you will focus your paper. Explain three ethically significant issues pertaining to this question that would need to be considered when addressing it. Use the Thesis Generator in the Ashford

<https://assignbuster.com/relativism-and-multiculturalism-essay-sample/>

Writing Center to construct a thesis statement that articulates your position on the topic as you have defined it. (<https://awc.ashford.edu/writing-tools-thesis-generator.html>) Instructions

The exercise must be at least 400 words in length (excluding title and reference pages) and formatted according to APA style as outlined in the Ashford Writing Center. Be sure to including a title page and reference page as necessary. Your exercise must be organized to address each of the five parts below. Number each part accordingly. 1. Part One: Thesis Statement

Use the Thesis Generator in the Ashford Writing Center to construct a thesis statement that articulates your position on the question as you have defined it. This will likely be the last thing you do in this exercise, but your thesis should be placed at the top of the first page after the title page.

Your thesis should clearly state your position and provide a concise statement of the primary reason(s) drawn from the three issues you raise in Part Two. For example, having identified three important issues that need to be considered, you may find that two of them support your view, and while one may present a challenge to it, that challenge can be overcome.

2. Part Two: Provide a Brief Introduction to the Topic

Your introduction must make clear to the reader exactly what ethical problem or question you are addressing within this topic, and what you consider to be the boundaries of the question.

For example, a paper on criminal punishment might consider whether capital punishment should be used as punishment for certain types of crime, or it

might consider the broader question of whether the criminal justice system should favor retribution over rehabilitation. If you were writing on this topic, you would need to specify which of these (or some other) specific question you intend to discuss. (Note: You may not write on criminal punishment, this is just an example. More examples are given in the “ Notes and Advice” section.) You should aim to focus your question as narrowly as possible.

The final sentence of this paragraph should provide a brief summary of the three ethically significant issues pertaining to this question that you intend to address.

3. Parts Three, Four, and Five: Explain Three Ethically Significant Issues Pertaining to This Question An “ ethically significant issue” is a feature of the topic and circumstances that must be taken into account when reasoning about the question. For example, if you were writing on criminal punishment and focusing on the question of whether drug users should be imprisoned, ethically significant issues might include the monetary costs, the social costs, the impact on the person, the effect on the drug trade, and so on. And each of these, in turn, would have sub-issues, negative and positive sides, etc. Your task is to be as specific as you can in explaining the ethically significant issue. See the Instructor Guidance for further information.

The first sentence of each paragraph must be a topic sentence that clearly states what issue you will be considering. The remainder of the paragraph should address the relevance and import of the ethically significant feature of the situation. Each paragraph should be focused on a distinct issue.

There are many kinds of relativism. Ultimately, the main tenets of relativism are that: a) There are no objective truths

a. 1) Objective truths are those truths which are true even if no one wants to believe it. a. 2) Relativism says that because all truths are determined by themselves, their cultures, language, etc. that objective truths are actually an illusion a. 3) Therefore, even truths such as $2+2=4$ isn't necessarily truth, other than the fact that we have all agreed historically that it is true.

b) Because of this, man is the measure of all things. No one's person's ethics is better than another's. But with this we have to mean that my ethics is no better than someone who lived 1500 years ago in another country. One is no better than the other, just different. A Buddhist's ethics are equal in merit to an American atheist.

c) Culture is responsible for the way we see and experience the world, including our morality. Thus, we never really see things as they really are, we always place our interpretation on reality. No absolute standard for how we should act can be given because we are not in a position to know (because knowledge of universal truths is impossible) which system is "better." There is no "better", only different.

d) As we will see, many ethical systems refer to some sort of absolute "yardstick" to ground the correctness of their view. As we have seen, relativism rejects any yardstick altogether. In relativism, we are not burdened with trying to defend any sort of ethical system. Instead we look at a common practice within a society.

e) However, we should not conclude that just because there are no moral absolutes, that therefore we should never make moral judgements. For order and stability in our lives, we need rules, and we life is best when we work together. This is why, for example, it is okay in one culture to cut off the hand of a thief, while in another, to simply issue a fine.

f) Yet again, just because we can make moral judgements, we must be very careful to no impose our morals on others. D. Z. Phillips says, “ If I hear that one of my neighbors has killed another neighbor’s child, given that he is sane, my condemnation is immediate...but if I hear that some remote tribe practices child sacrifices, what then? I do not know what sacrifice means for the tribe in question, what would it mean to say I condemned it when the “ it” refers to something I know nothing about. If I did condemn it I would be condemning murder, but murder is not child sacrifice.

Some difficulties with Relativism:

Principles vs. Action-While someone would have to live a very sheltered life to think that there is no variation in how moral practices are carried out from culture to culture, perhaps we need to look at the deeper question of how such principles come about.

Consider a culture where it is wrong to eat cows. This may even be a poor culture where there is not enough food; still the cows are not to be touched. Such a society would appear to have very different values than our own. But does it? We have not yet asked why these people do not eat cows. Suppose it is because this society believes that when humans die they inhabit the bodies of animals, especially cows, and therefore this cow may be someone’s

grandmother. Now do we want to say that their values are different than our own? No, the difference lies elsewhere. The difference is in our belief systems, not in our values. We all agree that we do not want to eat grandmother, but we may disagree as to whether or not that cow is grandmother.

Basically, perhaps we need to look past what a culture does, and ask the deeper question to why they do it. The why question concerns the principles behind the action. The what question only deals with how the principles are carried out.

No Moral Progress: According to relativism, there is no better or worse off cultures, just different. But does that put all of us on par with Roman executioners or slave owners prior to the civil war? Well, yes. But this makes effort for moral progress of those like Abraham Lincoln and Martin Luther King Jr. Not to mention everyday heroes that seek to stop chinese foot binding, child labor, not to mention child prostitution rings, mutilation and so forth, simply futile, saving Tibet, saving species or the environment. These efforts aren't done in the name of what is right, because we cannot know what is right for other cultures.

Self-Refuting-Relativism works off of two very problematic principles: a) There is no universal Truths, and b) Intolerance is wrong. Well, let's say that there is an absolutist society, a society that believes that its ethics are not only universally true, but should be followed by everyone. And let's that one of their rules is that everyone should abstain from food on Tuesdays. If someone breaks that law, the punishment is death.

What is the relativist to do about this?

a) They cannot condemn the society because there is no universal standard to judge this society b) On the other hand, this society can be condemned by the relativist because this society is imposing its ethics on everyone. c) It must tolerate this society because Intolerance is wrong d) Yet, the relativist can call them wrong because they are an intolerant society

Propositionally, relativism collapses: "There is no universal truths" is not a culturally supported ideal. But even if it were, the claim is being stated as a universal truth that the relativist is trying to convince us of. As well, "Intolerance is wrong" is being intolerant against those who are intolerant.

What is right in one person's culture is always relative to what is right in another person's culture. Multiculturalism should be respected in relation to relativism where each person's cultural traditions are concerned because cultural acceptance promotes education about and tolerance of other people's cultural values, acceptance of another person's culture promotes unity across cultures and what is right in one person's culture might not be right or accepted in another person's culture. Multiculturalism should be respected in relation to relativism where each person's cultural traditions are concerned because cultural acceptance promotes education about and tolerance of other people's cultural values. As an example, in Japanese cultures, it is customary to bow when greeting someone in business.

However, in America, the cultural norm is to offer a firm handshake. Just because the Japanese bow and Americans shake hands, that does not mean that one culture is right or wrong. Acceptance is important to the relativism

of the cultural differences. Acceptance of another person's culture promotes unity across cultures. If Americans accept that Japanese people bow and Japanese people accept that American people shake hands, this can promote unity across cultures. Although unity can be promoted, sometimes what is relative in another person's culture might not be relative in another person's culture.

Finally, what is right in one person's culture might not be right or accepted in another person's culture. A good example of this is cultures that accept cannibalism as a way of life. In American society, it is not customary to eat people. However, in some cultures, cannibalism is fine as long as you do not eat close relatives. Another example is in some parts of Indian culture, the cow is sacred, whereas, a main staple of American diets is hamburgers made from cows or beef. In closing, what is right in one culture is always relative to what is right in another person's culture. Multiculturalism opens the door to respect in relation to relativism where each person's cultural traditions are concerned.

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