

CORE 405 CAPSTONE: The Human Costs of Inequality

Assignment Guidelines for Reflective Essay

At Mount St. Joseph University, like all liberal arts institutions, your studies are distributed into three categories: Core Curriculum (required liberal arts and sciences courses for everyone earning a bachelor's degree), your chosen academic major, and free electives. The Core Curriculum begins with CORE 115 and includes Our Social World (SOC 103), courses in writing, speech, ethics, justice and the common good (JCG), history, religion, natural sciences, etc., and a culminating Capstone course. All Core courses share a common purpose: to hone your skills in communication and critical thinking, to help you integrate learning across disciplines and methods, and to develop your passion for lifelong learning and social justice.

This assignment, the Reflective Essay, is different from the carefully-researched papers you've been writing this semester because it relies on your understanding and personal synthesis. Your task is to identify a significant real-world question, and reflect on how the Mount's liberal arts (Core Curriculum) courses have helped you to understand that question more thoroughly. Think in terms of questions that are important for people of all ages—overarching questions that are national or global in scope—this might involve a current or historical issue like genocide, immigration, climate change, voting rights, LGBT rights, racial/ethnic or religious tensions, human trafficking, access to education or healthcare, etc. The only requirement in choosing a “big question” is that it be significant, universal in scope, and related to the common good.

In your Reflective Essay, **identify your “big question”** and explain the following:

1. How did your liberal arts education change or enrich your understanding of this issue? Did particular courses or experiences challenge/modify/confirm your beliefs and perspective? If so, which ones and how? Contrast your current and previous opinions to demonstrate whether or not you reached a new understanding because of your liberal arts education. [Question 1 addresses the Mount's baccalaureate learning outcome, Integrative Learning 3: Self-reflection.]
2. Do you or your community (local or national) bear any responsibility for the larger world? If so, what? Think back to the readings for Week 1 about the common good. Is your life diminished by the suffering of others? Are you and members of your “community” (religious/cultural group, state, US) responsible in some way for global welfare, or should we look out only for ourselves? (One example: If children are dying of preventable diseases in developing countries, do developed nations have any moral obligation to help?) Using the “big question” you selected above, comment on whether and why human beings are interdependent on one another or a community and global scale. [Question 2 addresses MSJ learning outcome Social Responsibility 4: Global interdependence.]

Write your essay in Standard English, observing conventions of spelling, usage, grammar, and organization. Papers that violate this expectation will not be accepted. Develop/revise until your final essay is around two typed pages, single-spaced. Microsoft Word (.doc, .docx) or Adobe Acrobat (.pdf) format only. See the syllabus/calendar for point value, submission requirements, and deadline.