

Position Paper No. One

Assignment:

Each position paper involves answering a direct question, usually keyed to a topic in *Mortal Questions*. The papers will be submitted in two drafts: the first draft will be subjected to peer evaluation. Both drafts should be submitted to me at cjishields@nd.edu. (All of my ND e-mail addresses come to the same place; so, if the ND system generates another address, like cshield3@nd.edu, don't worry about it. I'll receive it all the same.) After it has been submitted and recorded, I'll forward your draft to one of your peers, along with an evaluation form.

Your paper will then be evaluated and you will turn to the task of evaluating the paper you receive. That paper, along with the completed evaluation form, should then be submitted to me; I will record and return the evaluated drafts to their authors for final revisions. If you wish to write electronic notes on the draft you evaluate, that's fine, though it's not required. What is required is that you address all the questions set on the evaluation form.

First Question: Is life absurd?

Your position paper should comprise two parts: (i) exposition of an argument or arguments offered by Nagel, or by me in lecture; (ii) an evaluation of the cogency of that argument. You should state your thesis clearly and overtly in your first paragraph. That thesis should encapsulate your final evaluative conclusion. So, e.g.: 'Although the vastness of the universe has inclined many to believe that life is absurd, there is no reason to conclude on that basis alone that life is in fact absurd.' Or: 'The inescapable fact that we shall all die one day shows that life is absurd.' —Along the way, in either case, you should take care to explain what is meant by the claim that life is absurd.

Please use a mainstream word-processing program for your draft. If you prefer to submit your draft as a .pdf document, that is fine as well.

Due Dates (all not later than 17.00):

First Draft: 18 February

Returned Evaluation Form: 20 February

Final Draft: 23 February