

Skepticism, Atheism, and Religious Faith (Religious Studies 2LL3) – Fall 2017

TEXT SUMMARY 1

Assignment due in class on September 19 from students with last names beginning in A–L

This assignment consists of attendance of the full class session on September 19, plus completing the written assignment below, to be submitted in class on September 19 only.

(*Rationale:* Text Summary assignments are designed to help you prepare the reading assignment for a particular class meeting, in conjunction with your participation in that class meeting, when we go over the reading selection together.)



If you cannot come to class on September 19, please plan to complete Text Summary 2 for September 26 instead.

1.

Before beginning this writing assignment, please read:

- Descartes, *Meditations* 1 and 2

(Be sure to use the print editions of the texts selected for this course, i.e., in this case: [René Descartes, *Discourse on Method and Meditations on First Philosophy*, trans. Donald A. Cress \(Hackett\). ISBN 978-0872204201](#), available for purchase at the Campus Store.

- Hugo Bedau, *Thinking and Writing About Philosophy*, 2nd ed., pp. 7–10 top [coursepack], on writing summaries to understand reading.
- Gordon Harvey, *Writing with Sources* [purchase book/consult on reserve], pp. 15–19, on quoting, especially item (f) on p. 17, on “reasons to quote a source directly.”

You might also find it helpful to have a look at:

- *They Say/I Say* [coursepack], pp. 38–40, on “signal verbs”

(We are also discussing this assignment in class on September 12; and be sure to bring your questions about it to tutorial on September 14.)

2.

Please prepare a written summary (1–1.5 pages long, approximately 500 words) of:

Descartes, *Meditation 2*, from the beginning (AT 23) up until the paragraph ending “...a thinking thing” (AT 27)

Detailed Instructions:

The summary should lay out what the text says, in roughly the order in which it is said, but with a focus on the aspects that you think are most important or interesting. Given the brevity of the assignment, this means that there are some aspects you will want to discuss in some detail, others you will choose to mention briefly, and still others that you won’t want to mention at all.

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Your summary should highlight key concepts and describe the main argument(s). (Please draw on what you learn at the September 14 tutorial meeting about “describing arguments.”)

Your observations about the text should be backed up with references that allow your reader to see what they are based on; for this purpose, please use in-text parenthetical page references – for an example of these, see Harvey, *Writing with Sources*, p. 51, under “MLA Basic Rules.” For your writing on Descartes, your parenthetical references should be not to the regular page numbers in the book, but to the marginal “Adam-Tannery” page numbers (see “Note on the Translation” at the beginning of the book), e.g., “(AT 41).”

Please include in your summary at least one quoted phrase (e.g., embedded into a sentence of your own) that helps you convey a point more effectively or vividly (see e.g., the list of reasons to quote in Harvey, p. 17 item (f)). Since this summary is short, quote only a phrase or a short sentence at a time, and be sure to make clear in your own words what the quoted phrase/sentence is supposed to illustrate.

Please print your assignment double-spaced and with one-inch margins, using an 11–12-point font. Please number and staple the pages you hand in. Please write “Text Summary 1” at the top, and indicate the total word count at the end.

Note: Since this is your first reading of this text, and since we have not yet discussed it in class, the summary assignment is simply a first effort at figuring out what it says, and doing it will help you get the most of our in-class work on it. The assignment is not evaluated for whether it demonstrates a good understanding of the reading, but for evidence of your having worked in detail to understand the reading. Your fuller understanding will develop in the course of our class meetings, and with successive re-readings.

Plagiarism Warning: This assignment is designed to be completed by means of independent work on Descartes’s *Meditations*, aided by the guidance you have received in class/tutorial and by consulting the instructor: I am always available to discuss the questions you encounter as you read and re-read the texts for this class. It is neither necessary nor desirable that you consult outside sources in order to complete this assignment. Please remember that unacknowledged use of such sources constitutes plagiarism and is a violation of the university’s [Academic Integrity policy](#).

Please keep a copy of your summary to refer to in our class discussions of Descartes over the next couple of meetings.

posted/distributed September 12, 2017