

AP Seminar Performance Task 2: Individual Research-Based Essay and Presentation

Student Version

Weight: 35% of the AP Seminar score

Task Overview

This packet includes a set of stimulus materials for the AP Seminar Performance Task 2: Individual Research-Based Essay and Presentation.

You must identify a research question prompted by analysis of the provided stimulus materials, gather information from a range of additional sources, develop and refine an argument, write and revise your argument, and create a presentation that you will be expected to defend. Your teacher will give you a deadline for when you need to submit your written argument and presentation media. Your teacher will also give you a date on which you will give your presentation.

Task Components	Length	Date Due (fill in)
Individual Written Argument	2000 words	
Individual Multimedia Presentation	6–8 minutes	
Oral Defense	Respond to 2 questions	

In all written work, you must:

- ▶ Acknowledge, attribute, and/or cite sources using in-text citations, endnotes or footnotes, and/or through bibliographic entry. You must avoid plagiarizing (see the attached AP Capstone Policy on Plagiarism and Falsification or Fabrication of Information).
- ▶ Adhere to established conventions of grammar, usage, style, and mechanics.

Task Directions

1. Individual Written Argument (2000 words)

- ▶ Read and analyze the provided stimulus materials to identify thematic connections among the sources and possible areas for inquiry.
- ▶ Compose a research question of your own prompted by analysis of the stimulus materials.
- ▶ Gather information from a range of additional sources representing a variety of perspectives, including scholarly work.
- ▶ Analyze, evaluate, and select evidence. Interpret the evidence to develop a well-reasoned argument that answers the research question and conveys your perspective.

- › Throughout your research, continually revisit and refine your original research question to ensure that the evidence you gather addresses your purpose and focus.
 - › Identify opposing or alternate views and consider their implications and/or limitations as you develop resolutions, conclusions, or solutions to your research question.
 - › Compose a coherent, convincing and well-written argument in which you:
 - Identify and explain the relationship of your inquiry to a theme or connection among at least two of the stimulus materials prompted by your reading.
 - Incorporate at least one of the stimulus materials.
 - Place your research question in context.
 - Include a variety of perspectives.
 - Include evidence from a range of sources.
 - Establish an argument that links claims and evidence.
 - Provide specific resolutions, conclusions and/or solutions.
 - Evaluate objections, limitations or competing perspectives and arguments.
 - Cite all sources that you have used, including the stimulus materials, and include a list of works cited or a bibliography.
 - Use correct grammar and style.
 - › Do a word count and keep under the 2000-word limit (excluding footnotes, bibliography, and text in figures or tables).
 - › Remove references to your name, school, or teacher.
 - › Upload your document to the AP Digital Portfolio.
- 2. Individual Multimedia Presentation (6–8 minutes)**
- › Develop and prepare a multimedia presentation that will convey your argument to an audience of your peers.
 - › Be selective about the information you choose for your presentation by focusing on key points you want your audience to understand.
 - › Design your oral presentation with supporting visual media, and consider audience, context, and purpose.
 - › Prepare to engage your audience using appropriate strategies (e.g., eye contact, vocal variety, expressive gestures, movement).
 - › Prepare notecards or an outline that you can quickly reference as you are speaking so that you can interact with supporting visuals and the audience.
 - › Rehearse your presentation in order to refine your design and practice your delivery.
 - › Check that you can do the presentation within the 6- to 8-minute time limit.

Have You Renounced Pleasure?

From *The Book of Joy: Lasting Happiness in a Changing World*
by His Holiness the Dalai Lama and Archbishop Desmond Tutu,
with Douglas Abrams

Most religions have a strong conviction that we cannot discover lasting happiness through our senses. So while temporary enjoyment can come through our senses, it is inevitably fleeting and not the source of enduring satisfaction. There is a Buddhist saying that trying to seek happiness through sensory gratification is like trying to quench your thirst by drinking saltwater. But what exactly is the relationship between joy and pleasure and between what the Dalai Lama has called happiness at the physical level and happiness at the mental level?

"Your Holiness, many believe that as a monk you have renounced pleasure or enjoyment."

"And sex," the Dalai Lama added, although that was not exactly where I was going.

"What?" the Archbishop said.

"Sex, sex," the Dalai Lama repeated.

"Did you just say that?" the Archbishop said incredulously.

"Oh, oh," the Dalai Lama said with a laugh, noticing the Arch-

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bishop's surprise, and then reached over to reassure him, which caused the Archbishop to erupt in a gleeful cackle.

"So aside from sex," I said, trying to bring us back, "have you renounced pleasure and enjoyment? I sat next to you at lunch, and it looked like you were really enjoying the wonderful food. What is the role for you of enjoying the pleasures of life?"

"I love food. Without food, my body can't survive. You also," he said, turning to the Archbishop, "can't just think *God, God, God*. I cannot just think about *compassion, compassion, compassion*. Compassion will not fill my stomach. But, you see, each meal we have to develop the ability to consume the meal without attachment."

"Huh?" the Archbishop asked, not quite following how the Dalai Lama was using the Buddhist term *attachment*, and perhaps also not quite following how anyone could not be attached to one's food.

"Not eating out of greed," the Dalai Lama explained. "Eating only for the survival of the body. One must think about the deeper value of nourishing the body."

At one of our meals the Dalai Lama had showed me his bowl of Tibetan rice and yogurt pudding and said, "This is typical Tibetan monk's food—I love this." He was eating with relish. There was something deeply relieving about knowing that holiness didn't require a rejection of the simple joys of life, like a good meal and especially pudding.

I felt pretty sure that he had gotten some significant amount of pleasure out of eating that dessert. He was clearly experiencing some joy through his senses. I wondered about the boundary between enjoyment and greed. Was it the second or third helping, and therefore a matter of portion size, or was it a matter of attitude

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toward each bite? Jinpa shared with me a well-known Tibetan Buddhist prayer that often is said before a meal: "Viewing this meal as a medicine, I shall enjoy it without greed or anger, not out of gluttony nor out of pride, not to fatten myself, but only to nourish my body." Perhaps the Dalai Lama was saying that eating to nourish the body did not require one to deny the enjoyment and satisfaction of the experience.

"So now to your question," the Dalai Lama said. "When we speak of experiencing happiness, we need to know that there are actually two different kinds. The first is the enjoyment of pleasure through our senses. Here, sex, the example I cited, is one such experience. But we can also experience happiness at the deeper level through our mind, such as through love, compassion, and generosity. What characterizes happiness at this deeper level is the sense of fulfillment that you experience. While the joy of the senses is brief, the joy at this deeper level is much longer lasting. It is true joy."

"A believer develops this deeper level of joy through faith in God, which brings inner strength, inner peace. For a nonbeliever or a nontheist like me, we must develop this deeper level of joy through training the mind. This kind of joy or happiness comes from within. Then the pleasures of the senses become less important."

"Over the last several years, I have discussed with scientists this distinction between the sensory level of pleasure and pain and the deeper level of mental happiness and suffering. Now if we look at today's materialistic life people seem mainly concerned with sensory experiences. So that's why their satisfaction is very limited and brief, since their experience of happiness is so dependent on external stimuli. For example, so long as the music is playing, they feel happy." He tilted his head to the side with a smile as if appreci-

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ating the music. “When something good is happening, they are happy. Good food, they are happy. When these things stop, then they feel bored, restless, and unhappy. Of course this is nothing new. Even in the time of the Buddha, people would fall into the trap of thinking that sensory experience would bring them happiness.

“So when joy arises at the level of your mind and not just your senses, you can maintain a deep sense of satisfaction for a much longer period of time—even for twenty-four hours.

“So I always say to people, you have to pay more attention to the mental level of joy and happiness. Not just physical pleasure, but satisfaction at the level of mind. This is true joyfulness. When you are joyful and happy at the mental level, physical pain doesn’t matter very much. But if there is no joy or happiness at the mental level, too much worrying, too much fear, then even physical comforts and pleasure will not soothe your mental discomfort.”

“Many of our readers,” I said, “will understand what physical pleasure is, or the physical dimension of joy and happiness. They know how a good meal or a good song makes them feel. But what is this mental happiness or mental pleasure that you’re talking about that lasts for twenty-four hours?”

“A genuine sense of love and affection,” the Dalai Lama said.

“Do you wake up with this joy?” I asked. “Even before coffee?”

“If you develop a strong sense of concern for the well-being of all sentient beings and in particular all human beings, this will make you happy in the morning, even *before* coffee.

“This is the value of compassion, of having compassionate feelings for others. Even, you see, ten minutes or thirty minutes of meditating on compassion, on kindness for others, and you will see its effects all day. That’s the way to maintain a calm and joyous mind.

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"Everyone has had the experience of being in a good mood and some trouble comes, and you feel okay. When your mood is really bad, even when your closest friend comes, you still feel unhappy."

"Did you feel that way when I came?" the Archbishop said, playfully.

"That is exactly why I came to the airport to receive you—so I could feel more unhappy . . . and make trouble for you!"

Science has a term for the unsatisfactory nature of pursuing pleasure alone: the *hedonic treadmill*, named for the Greek school of thought that believed pleasure to be the ultimate good. Throughout history, hedonism has had its advocates, back to the birth of written culture. In the Gilgamesh tale, Siduri, the female divinity of fermentation (in other words, alcohol), admonishes, "Fill your belly. Day and night make merry. Let days be full of joy. Dance and make music day and night . . . These things alone are the concern of men." Even in the deeply spiritual culture of ancient India, the source of much of the Dalai Lama's Tibetan tradition, there was a hedonistic school known as Charvaka. In many ways, hedonism is the default philosophy of most people and certainly has become the dominant view of consumer "shop till you drop" culture.

Yet scientists have found that the more we experience any pleasure, the more we become numb to its effects and take its pleasures for granted. The first bowl of ice cream is sublime, the second bowl tasty, and the third causes indigestion. It is like a drug that must be taken in ever-greater quantities to produce the same high. But there does seem to be one thing in the literature that powerfully and lastingly changes our sense of well-being. It is what the Dalai

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Lama and the Archbishop had been advocating throughout our first day: our relationships, and specifically, our expression of love and generosity to others in our life.

Richard Davidson, the neuroscientist with whom I had lunch in San Francisco, has drawn together the neuroimaging research into a unified theory of the happy brain. I was so fascinated by what he was saying that I could not pay attention to my spring rolls, and those spring rolls were really good, at least on the physical level.

There are four independent brain circuits that influence our lasting well-being, Davidson explained. The first is “our ability to maintain positive states.” It makes sense that the ability to maintain positive states or positive emotions would directly impact one’s ability to experience happiness. These two great spiritual leaders were saying that the fastest way to this state is to start with love and compassion.

The second circuit is responsible for “our ability to recover from negative states.” What was most fascinating to me was that these circuits were totally independent. One could be good at maintaining positive states but easily fall into an abyss of a negative state from which one had a hard time recovering. That explained a lot in my life.

The third circuit, also independent but essential to the others, is “our ability to focus and avoid mind-wandering.” This of course was the circuit that so much of meditation exists to develop. Whether it was focusing on one’s breath, or a mantra, or the analytic meditation that the Dalai Lama did each morning, this ability to focus one’s attention was fundamental.

The fourth and final circuit is “our ability to be generous.” That was amazing to me: that we had an entire brain circuit, one of four, devoted to generosity. It is no wonder that our brains feel so good

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when we help others or are helped by others, or even witness others being helped, which Ekman had described as the elevation that is one dimension of joy. There was strong and compelling research that we come factory equipped for cooperation, compassion, and generosity.

John Bargh, one of the world's leading experts on the science of the unconscious, describes it as one of three innate (and often unconscious) goals: to survive, to reproduce, and to cooperate. In lab experiments where eighteen-month-old children were shown dolls facing each other, they were more cooperative than those who were shown dolls who were facing away from each other. This unconscious prime, which can be turned on or off, Bargh argues, is one interesting example that cooperation is a deep evolutionary drive that exists from our earliest development.

Perhaps more sobering, it has also hardwired us to cooperate with and be kind to those who look like our caregivers, who presumably kept us safe. We are more wary of others who look different: these are the unconscious roots of prejudice. Our empathy does not seem to extend to those who are outside our "group," which is perhaps why the Archbishop and the Dalai Lama are constantly reminding us that we are, in fact, one group—humanity. Nonetheless, the ability and desire to cooperate and to be generous to others is there in our neural circuits, and it can be harnessed personally, socially, and globally.

From being a means to happiness, it has come to be itself a principal ingredient of the individual's conception of happiness. The same may be said of the majority of the great objects of human life: power, for example, or fame; except that to each of these there is a certain amount of immediate pleasure annexed, which has at least the semblance of being naturally inherent in them—a thing which cannot be said of money. Still, however, the strongest natural attraction, both of power and of fame, is the immense aid they give to the attainment of our other wishes; and it is the strong association thus generated between them and all our objects of desire, which gives to the direct desire of them the intensity it often assumes, so as in some characters to surpass in strength all other desires. In these cases the means have become a part of the end, and a more important part of it than any of the things which they are means to. What was once desired as an instrument for the attainment of happiness, has come to be desired for its own sake.

In being desired for its own sake it is, however, desired as part of happiness. The person is made, or thinks he would be made, happy by its mere possession; and is made unhappy by failure to obtain it. The desire of it is not a different thing from the desire of happiness, any more than the love of music, or the desire of health. They are included in happiness. They are some of the elements of which the desire of happiness is made up. Happiness is not an abstract idea, but a concrete whole; and these are some of its parts. And the utilitarian standard sanctions and approves their being so. Life would be a poor thing, very ill provided with sources of happiness, if there were not this provision of nature, by which things originally indifferent, but conducive to, or otherwise associated with, the satisfaction of our primitive desires, become in themselves sources of pleasure more valuable than the primitive pleasures, both in permanency, in the space of human existence that they are capable of covering, and even in intensity.

Virtue, according to the utilitarian conception, is a good of this description. There was no original desire of it, or motive to it, save its conduciveness to pleasure, and especially to protection from pain. But through the association thus formed, it may be felt a good in itself, and desired as such with as great intensity as any other good; and with this difference between it and the love of money, of power, or of fame—that all of these may, and often do, render the individual noxious to the other members of the society to which he belongs, whereas there is nothing which makes him so much a blessing to them as the cultivation of the disinterested love of virtue. And consequently, the utilitarian standard, while it tolerates and approves those other acquired desires, up to the point beyond which they would be more injurious to the general happiness than promotive of it, enjoins and requires the cultivation of the love of virtue up to the greatest strength possible, as being above all things important to the general happiness.

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