

## Paper 1 Review

### Overview/General Comments:

#### 1. Ideas/Quality of Arguments:

- a) The first thing I noticed when glancing over your paper was that it lacked a bibliography. Every assertion you make in your body paragraphs should be backed up by evidence from a text we have read in class or from a credible outside source. Set up the context of a piece of evidence, quote that evidence, and then analyze it. Many of your claims are factually incorrect or simply not convincing because you have no sources with which to support them. Ground your arguments in the text, and your ideas will be far more persuasive and credible.
- b) The second biggest thing I think you can do to improve the arguments of your essay is to develop a clear, precise, assertive thesis. I honestly do not know what exactly you are trying to prove. Craft a thesis that asserts the claim of which you are trying to persuade readers and demonstrates the methodology with which you will do so. The ideas in every paragraph should connect directly back to proving your thesis. It helps me to make an outline of my paper before I start writing so I know what exactly I am trying to prove and how (with what quotes and arguments) I am going to prove it.
- c) When reconsidering your thesis, go back to the original prompt. You don't have to answer every question, but I think your essay would benefit from looking beyond just Gosse and considering if, based on the history we have been discussing in class, a synthesis between science and religion is possible, necessary, or even desirable. This would make your central idea more meaningful and supportable than trying to draw a parallel between politics and the conflict between science and religion.

#### 2. Organization:

- a) Again, making an outline could greatly help you organize your thoughts and make it easier to see how best to present them. As a reader, I often became confused— guide me through your essay with a strong, assertive thesis, clear topic sentences, and smooth transitions.
- b) Follow the context, quote, analysis model (described above) in your body paragraphs.
- c) Your conclusion should be the link between your thesis, the claim you made at the beginning of your paper, and your body paragraphs, the evidence through which you proved that claim. It should not merely summarize the content of your essay or, on the other extreme, present an entirely new idea. This is one of the most difficult parts of an essay to do well, but if you take the time to refine your conclusion, you leave your reader (or professor) with a much stronger impression of your paper as a whole.

#### 3. Sentence Structure:

- a) Eliminate the passive voice (The dog was walked instead of I walked the dog) and linking verbs (is, was, were, to be, could be, etc.) as much as possible. Because

they are so pervasive, they weaken your writing. It can be tricky, but go through your paper and highlight them, and then revise to get rid of them.

- b) You do a good job of varying your sentence beginnings with clauses, prepositions and so on. Keep this up. Reading your paper out loud can help you determine if your sentences flow well.
4. Tone/Word Choice:
    - a) There are places in your essay that are a little too informal. For instance, you should avoid using contractions (won't, don't, etc.) in formal writing. Also, "him/her" or "he/she" should be written out as "him or her" or "he or she."
    - b) There should not be political commentary in your thesis statement, especially political commentary wholly unrelated to your argument.
    - c) Use "must have," "seemed," and "appeared" and other noncommittal words sparingly. Assert statements clearly and directly in order to be persuasive.
  5. Mechanics:
    - a) There are several noticeable spelling and grammar errors. No one is perfect, but take the time to read your essay out loud or carefully proofread or ask a friend to look your paper over to avoid problems with mechanics, which make readers feel as though you did not put very much time or effort into your essay.
    - b) Make sure to use the appropriate tense, and try to avoid using first person ("we") in formal writing.

### Specific Commentary:

#### 1. Title, Introduction, and Thesis:

- a) Your title is nice and specific, but again, I would hesitate to involve politics in your essay as more than a passing comparison. While religion and science may be battling for influence, they are not governing bodies. Keep the exactness, but make your title relate directly to your thesis.
- b) The Roman Catholic Church was not the only religious group that came into conflict with science. Unless you want your essay to focus just on the relationship of the RCC to science, do not single out this single branch of Christianity.
- c) Has "whether God exists" divided "these two sides in history?" Galileo and others were strong believers, like Collins is today. I do not know if it is accurate to assert that all scientists do not believe in a higher power.
- d) Was Gosse's explanation "completely logical?" Go back to Russell. He makes an interesting point about this. He also describes how scientists and religious groups disregarded Gosse's theory. Based on the evidence from Russell, is it fair to assert that the reception of Gosse's theory was "a classic example of fearing what one does not understand?"
- e) Was Gosse attempting to explain the "origin of the earth" or the earth's age? Go back to the text.
- f) Based on the evidence from Russell, I would also argue that Gosse was attempting to reconcile science and religion, not challenge either entity. Maybe his effort would, in your analogy, be a bipartisan effort rather than a third party challenging the status quo.

- g) See above notes on your thesis. What are you trying to prove? How are you going to prove it? Why does it matter? Why should a reader care?

## 2. Body Paragraph 1:

- a) Follow context, quote, analysis structure in all body paragraphs.
- b) Eliminate linking verbs as much as possible throughout essay.
- c) This is more of a subtle point, but the Supreme Court usually only rules on whether something is constitutional or unconstitutional. It does not have the power to imprison anyone, though its verdict could result in someone's imprisonment. The Supreme Court upheld Debs' conviction and sentence by a lower court as constitutional because he interfered with the distribution of mail during a strike, not because "...his political views were far deviated from the two-part opinion gap." That, to me at least, is an opinion, not a fact.
- d) How does the example of Debs relate to your thesis? You say "...his ideas did in fact resonate with some people," yet, according to Russell, Gosse's idea was dismissed by almost everyone. You say it was "impossible for Debs to express his ideas," yet Gosse was free to propose and advocate for his theory. How did Debs' ideas "...resonate with some people" if it was impossible for him to express them? Gosse's idea was not "explosive," it was an attempt at reconciling science and religion. Nor did his theory "...scare...the church and the scientific community," since, at least according to Russell, both groups basically ignored it. Where is the parallel between Gosse and Debs? What are you trying to prove by establishing it? How does that relate to the prompt?
- e) To what exactly would you have "...swing voters...change their belief systems?" Should they turn away from science and religion like turning away from a political party? What do you mean? Why does it matter?

## 3. Body Paragraph 2:

- a) Make sure your topic sentences guide the reader by letting him or her know what you are about to talk about. This one seems more like context. What are you trying to prove in this paragraph, and how does it relate to your thesis?
- b) Again, when you say the Church, you are singling out Catholicism. Using "menacing" might be overly-negative.
- c) Go back to the text. If you do not present your readers with any evidence, they have no reason to believe your claims. I would argue that Gosse's theory was not "...very threatening to church doctrine at the time" because no one believed it. How do you know that "...people were becoming more likely to accept new scientific ideas?" Would religious groups of the time really have described God as "amicable?" Why would an attempt at reconciling science and religion be "...catastrophic for Christians to hear?"
- d) Check your grammar ("could creates" and "be also be"). Try to stick with third person (no "we").

## 4. Body Paragraph 3:

- a) What is the greater significance of why scientists rejected Gosse's claims? How does this paragraph relate to your thesis?

- b) Repeating the types of scientists in sentence two is a little repetitive— try to revise for simplicity.
- c) Avoid vague, informal phrases like “...or the like.”
- d) Check spelling (“physisists”).
- e) Why would it matter if scientists or religious groups lost influence?

5. Body Paragraph 4:

- a) What are “...all the right ingredients for success?” Did Gosse’s theory really have them? Was his assertion logical? Why or why not? Again, how does that relate to your thesis and how will you support it?
- b) Try not to use “very” in formal essays. More precise language will strengthen your writing.
- c) Careful with tense (for instance, “Darwin proves”).
- d) Did people readily accept Darwin’s ideas, or did it cause debate in the scientific as well as the large community? Either way, back up this assertion with evidence.
- e) Avoid “seemed.” Be assertive in a persuasive essay.
- f) Was Gosse talking about “The origin of humans?” Check with Russell. Is there really “no room for middle ground,” or do societal conditions force people to pick a side?
- g) Maybe use “supporters” instead of “bases” at the bottom of page three.
- h) Avoid contractions and slashes.
- i) Is this your central idea, that synthesis between science and religion is impossible? Or is it that because the general public would never support a synthesis between the two, even a good synthesis would not be accepted? You could expand on and support an idea like one of these for a more meaningful essay.
- j) The last sentence of this paragraph was a bit confusing. Try to trim it down for clarity and directness.

6. Conclusion:

- a) See note above about conclusions. What have you proved? What is the link between the claim in your thesis and the evidence you presented in your body paragraphs?
- b) If Gosse’s idea was truly “not inferior,” even if scientists and theologians rejected his claim, why did the general public also dismiss it?
- c) They are always tempting, but try to avoid clichés like “...got out of the gates.”

A Final Word:

I would strongly recommend revising your paper and then scheduling an appointment online with the Writing Center to make sure you’re on the right track. I struggled a lot with this paper when I was writing my draft, and they were incredibly helpful.

I hope I have been constructive and helpful rather than overly harsh. I can tell that if you put in the time and effort, you have the ability to make this a great paper. Good luck!