Topics for Paper #1. Due Thursday, March 6.
Choose one of the following topics and respond to it in a paper of no less than 4 pages and no more than 6 pages. Your paper should be typed, 10- or 12-point, double-spaced and spell-checked. It should conform to the guidelines for writing essay papers handed out in class. ***Make Absolutely Certain that you have read and understood these guidelines before you attempt to begin writing your paper.*** Please submit a hardcopy of your paper in class on the due date, as well as an e-version to SafeAssign (see intructions on reverse).

1. Hobbes argues that people in the state of nature should form a commonwealth in which the sovereign has near-absolute power. Evaluate this claim by critically examining the steps used to establish it: Hobbes' view of human nature and human motivation; why life in the state of nature would, as a result, be entirely unsatisfactory; how life under a sovereign with near-absolute power would be free of these invonveniences; and why giving near-absolute power to a sovereign wouldn't be a cure worse than the disease. At each step in the argument, charitably represent Hobbes' view and evaluate its merits.

2. Rousseau purports to explain the origin of moral and political inequality. Give a well-organized account of Rousseau's explanation, criticizing any part(s) of it you find dubious or weak and evaluating its plausibility as a whole.

3. Rousseau offers judgments about the goodness and badness of life as a savage and of life in society. For instance, he claims natural humans are healthier than civilized humans, hence the State of Nature is to be preferred. Furthermore, any benefits modern medicine might accrue in terms of prolonging life-spans implicitly assume societal fears (*eg*, fear of death) that natural humans do not have. Evaluate these and similar judgments by identifying them in the text, explaining what arguments Rousseau provides in support of them, and assessing the soundness of these arguments.

4. Both Rousseau and Marx agree that contemporary society (or at least the society of their time) is characterized by inequality and oppression. Both believe that it prevents humans from realizing their true natures. How are their views similar? How are they different? (In answering these questions, be sure to touch on their views concerning the division of labor, private property, oppression and dependence, and their approaches towards formulating their positions.)

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