Your final essay for this class should be at least 1000 words (about 5 pages). One thing I’ll be looking for this time is how well you articulate a thesis, and how clearly and cogently you work to establish the truth (or at least plausibility!) of that thesis. So please don’t forget to give me a statement of your thesis at the beginning of your paper (preferably in the first paragraph) along with a few lines sketching for me, in rough outline, how you plan to go about defending it. Finally, after you’ve finished doing all your writing in defense of your thesis, it certainly doesn’t hurt to restate your thesis (if only to remind me at the end what it was you thought you were arguing for along!).

Here are a few topics that have suggested themselves over the course of the past few weeks. As you can see, they tend to share a common structure. Take some particular topic addressed by at least two of the readings we’ve done, and compare, contrast, and evaluate the treatments given. If you’d like to pursue some different topic (based, of course, on our assigned readings!) let me know beforehand.

1. Evaluate Menand’s discussion of pragmatism in section 4 of Chapter 13 of *The Metaphysical Club*. How well does it square with what you’ve read of the classical pragmatists (Pierce, James, and Dewey)?

2. What are some of the respective deficiencies that either Brandom or Menand find with classical American pragmatism. Discuss and evaluate the merits of these criticisms. To what extent are they supported by the readings we’ve done by Peirce, James, and Dewey. (If you like, you may also focus on just one of these authors)

3. Compare and contrast Menand’s and Brandom’s respective views about the place of classical American pragmatism with respect to the sweeping history of philosophy. What are their significant points of contention? How do their respective views square with what you’ve read so far by the pragmatists?

4. Identify and comment on the various pragmatist influences upon Holmes’ “The Path of the Law.” [You might well wish also to look at the early sections of Chapter 13 of *The Metaphysical Club* for background.]

5. Present and assess Posner’s “pragmatic” theory of adjudication. How does it differ from legal positivism? Why does Posner claim that it is logically independent from philosophical pragmatism?

6. Compare and contrast Dewey’s discussion in “Democracy – The Task Before Us” with Emerson’s comments about the duties of the American Scholar.

7. How does Price go about criticizing pragmatist views such as Rorty’s? What, according to Price, is the pragmatic value of truth talk?

8. In what respect or respects may we consider Price and Brandom “neo-pragmatists?” What are the significant differences between Brandom’s and Price’s respective accounts of truth-talk? In what respects do they agree with one another?

9. According to Misak, what does Price’s account of truth talk have to do with deliberative democracy?
As always, the most important thing is not to regard this so much as a chore, but as a learning endeavor, and a chance to hone your skills at written expression. I hope you have fun with it and ultimately end up with a sense of satisfaction in your accomplishment. If you do, chances are that a decent grade will follow. Good luck, and happy writing!