Here are a few topics that you can use for your reading essay due in class on Thursday, 10/1, if you’d like. Please select your own if you’d prefer—that is generally the better course of action. The topics below are not necessarily written in a way that lines up with the structure of the essays I want. These statements are meant to get you thinking—simply answering the questions in order will not result in an adequate essay.

1. What is Locke's view of meaning, in a paragraph? Run a communication-based argument against this view. Do you find this objection compelling?

2. Extract an argument for the public nature of meaning from the exchange between Alice and Humpty Dumpty involving use of the sentence, "There's glory for you!" Do you find this particular point of view compelling?

3. In Gulliver’s Travels, Swift attributes to the language professors the view that we can “shorten discourse by cutting polysyllables into one, and leaving out verbs and participles”. This is justified by the idea that “in reality, all things imaginable are but nouns” (234). Evaluate this justification. What does he mean? Is this reasonable?

4. Provide Chomsky’s analysis of the nature of linguistic knowledge. How does he defend this? What is your view of his claims concerning knowledge?

5. Reconstruct one of Grice’s arguments against Stevenson. How does this argument work? How might Stevenson respond to Grice?

6. Grice develops an analysis of meaning in several stages. In doing this, he makes arguments at the early stages designed to establish the insufficiency of the analysis so far. Reconstruct one of these arguments and analyze it. Do you agree that the argument established the need for a new condition? Why or why not?