

Interview with an Extraterrestrial

The day you've dreaded (or hoped for, or ignored, or dreamed about) has come. Intelligent extraterrestrials have [arrived](#). Just like in the movie *Independence Day*. Their gigantic ships are hovering over the major cities of the world but have yet to communicate with us. They seem to be waiting...

The United Nations quickly assembles a high-profile team to make first contact. Among those gathered: a linguist (who is confident she can communicate with the extraterrestrials...make up any backstory you like), a politician (you wonder...*why?*), some military brass, two former ambassadors, an anthropologist...and you. Your role? You're an investigator for the State Department who has background in both science and ethics and are well-known for your ability to ask good questions.

Your assignment: come up with three questions to ask the extraterrestrials. You won't have much time, and your interpreter has not *quite* mastered the language, so you only get three. The questions you ask should let you and your team (and the world!) know as much as possible about the recent arrivals: who they are; what drives them; how they are similar to (and different from) us; what their motives are; what their morality consists in. What's most important? That's for you to decide. You're the expert.

Your team, of course, isn't willing to just let you ask *any* questions you decide on. Instead, they have asked you to prepare a document in which you propose your questions and explain your rationale for asking them. This is, of course, your assignment. Your proposal should contain the following items:

1. Your three questions.
2. An informed explanation of WHY you will ask these questions. Sure, there is a lot we'd like to know. But why *these* questions? Why do you think they will be especially crucial to learning about our visitors?
3. At least two possible answers you might receive from the extraterrestrials, and what these answers might mean. For example, suppose you ask, "how do you reproduce?" or "how do you determine the morally right thing to do?" What are two possible answers you may receive to these questions, and what would these answers tell us about them?
4. A reference to at least one reading or resource we have covered in class.
5. A reference to at least one reading or resource from outside class. This could be something you've read for another class; something you've stumbled on recently; a relevant novel or movie...really, it could be anything, as long as it is relevant.

Length: the reflection should be approximately three pages double-spaced. That is, around one page per question.

Due: Tuesday, November 9th at 11:55pm (to folder in Sakai)