

Math 115F: Cryptography, Fall 2010
Essay #1 – Opinion Paper

In this paper, you'll be asked to share your opinions on one of the following three questions (your pick):

1. Should the public (private citizens, businesses, etc.) have access to advanced encryption techniques, even if that means that law enforcement and national security efforts become more difficult to implement?
2. During wartime, what sacrifices might be justifiable in order to keep the fact that a code is broken secret from the enemy? Who has the authority to make those decisions? And how can they be held accountable to make good decisions?
3. Why do people find cryptography so interesting (in novels and movies, for instance)? Why do some people enjoy cracking codes themselves (either individually or collaboratively)? Why do some people not enjoy such endeavors?

Your paper should draw primarily on your personal experiences and perspectives. This is an opportunity for you to surface your opinions about one of the “big questions” in this course and take some ownership of those opinions. This is also an opportunity for you to practice your argumentation skills without having the added complexity of integrating and responding to multiple sources and references. (That will come later, in your “big questions” essay.)

You are not required to do research for this paper, but you should appropriately cite any sources you use. If you cite any sources, it does not matter which formatting style you use (APA, MLA, etc.), but you should be consistent in your formatting. Be sure to format your citations (footnotes, endnotes, etc.) correctly according to the formatting style you choose. See the “Academic Integrity” section of the course syllabus for more information and links to relevant resources.

Your paper should be about 3 pages long (typed in 11 or 12 point font, double-spaced) and will be graded primarily on clarity, appropriateness of voice, and mechanics (grammar, punctuation) with content (strength and complexity of the argument and such) factored in to a lesser degree. See the rubric for this assignment for more details on my expectations. Please consider this rubric as a guide to my expectations and not a binding contract on my grading. I reserve the right to make changes to the rubric during the grading process.

A first draft of your paper is due at the start of class on Thursday, September 23rd. Bring a paper copy since you'll spend that class session providing feedback on each other's papers. Failure to do so will reduce your grade on this assignment by two letter grades.

Your opinion paper will contribute 10% of your overall course grade. The final draft (in print or as an email attachment) is due at the start of class on Tuesday, September 28th.

If you have any questions about this assignment or its rubric, please don't hesitate to ask.