

Making the Most of Longer Lives: A Summary/Response Assignment

(A Tri-C Common Reading Program Assignment)

Total Points Possible: _____

Due: _____

Required Reading:

- *The Postmortal*, pages 193 - 255
- “How to Make the Most of Longer Lives”
Marc Freedman (*The Wall Street Journal*, May 31, 2015)

[Please access this article on our class Blackboard site, in the _____ folder.]

Optional Readings:

- “The Promise and Challenge of Aging Research” (Staff Background Paper written for the President’s Council on Bioethics in 2002.)

<https://bioethicsarchive.georgetown.edu/pcbe/background/agingresearch.html>

- “Medicine Shows Growing Potential to Repair and Regenerate Body Parts”
Diane Cole (*The Wall Street Journal*, May 31, 2015)

[Access the first optional reading through the above-referenced link. The second optional reading is available on our class Blackboard site, in the _____ folder.]

Background:

MaGary’s novel is, of course, a work of fiction. However, as Justin Halpern notes, *The Postmortal* is so compelling because it is “filled with eerily realistic portrayals of what the future could look like.” Indeed, Magary appears to have done his research. Scientists are currently conducting studies aimed at (1) identifying genes involved in the aging process, (2) extending the life of cells, and (3) regenerating organs. (If you’re interested in such developments, please see the two optional readings noted above.)

In 2002, the President’s Council on Bioethics grappled with the inevitability of longer lives, probing what they called “questions regarding the effect of extended lifespans on society.” The Council asked, ‘How will social and political institutions – like the education system, the retirement system, the healthcare and insurance systems – deal with such changes?’ These are the very types of questions Magary beckons his readers to grapple with as well.

In a recent non-fiction article entitled “How to Make the Most of Longer Lives,” Marc Freedman takes on the same types of questions posed by the President’s Council on Bioethics and by *The Postmortal*. Freedman’s article forms the basis of this assignment.

Whether the opening line of Freedman’s article is true or not, we’re certainly extending the human life expectancy, albeit in small, steady increments. According to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, the average American who made it to age 65 in 1950 could expect to live to age 78.9. Today, a male American who makes it to age 65 can expect to live to age 82.9, and a female American who lives to age 65 can expect to live to age 85.5. In other words, we’ve extended the average life by approximately 5 years since 1950. At this rate, it will take a few generations before we’ll see a life expectancy of 150 years, but the pace is steady, and a significant breakthrough could certainly occur at any point. An important question is, how will society choose to deal with its aging population? Freedman poses a number of interesting strategies.

Assignment:

This is a two-paragraph assignment. Your first paragraph will be a **summary** of Marc Freedman’s main points. In your second paragraph, please **respond** to one of his ideas.

Refer to the checklist below to be sure you observe standard academic conventions in crafting your summary paragraph.

Making the Most of Longer Lives

Summary Checklist

In your summary paragraph, be sure to:



Begin the summary paragraph with a topic sentence claim that mentions the article, the author's name, and a statement of the article's main point.

For example:

In his recent *Wall Street Journal* article, Marc Freedman explores . . .



Identify and *briefly* explain the six (6) ideas Freedman poses and why he believes each is necessary.



Summarize the article's **KEY** points and refrain from including your own personal opinion . . . or too many of the article's *minor* details.



Stay in the present tense throughout this summary when referring to Freedman's actions. (See yellow-highlighted verbs below.)



Remind the reader, intermittently throughout your summary, that these are Freedman's ideas – not your own.

For example:

Freedman **goes** on to explore . . .

Freedman also **suggests** . . .

One of Freedman's main concerns **is** . . .

Freedman also **discusses** . . .

Response Checklist



In your response paragraph, focus on just one strategy Freedman proposes and offer your response to that idea. Is it a viable strategy? Why or why not? What modifications (if any) would you make to his proposal?