Write a 750-word essay on the following topic. Your essay is due in CLA 251 by 4 PM on FRIDAY January 22. Please include a title (not on a separate page), single space, and use both sides of a single sheet of paper. Also, please include a word count.

Does Tom Paine in "Agrarian Justice" articulate a competitive or egalitarian liberal political culture?

Be sure to use direct quotations from the reading to bolster your argument and to cite the page number in parentheses after the quotation. Finally, be sure to include at least one claim-objection-rejoinder sequence.

What do I mean by a micro-essay?

Micro-essays are short (650-850) persuasive essays in which the writer explores a specific issue, problem, or puzzle shared by a group of readers. In our case, the group of readers is our class. Your audience is your class members. It is best to begin with a one sentence restatement of the problem you are going to address and to then launch immediately into your first claim, e.g., "Tom Paine expresses a competitive political culture because he stresses that the value of property derives mainly from individual labor and his system offers twenty-one year olds a chance to compete." or "The logic of Paine’s plan is egalitarian because it is premised on the existence of two groups, the rich and the poor, and he identifies with the second group and aims at improving their condition." In these sentences, the first clauses are the claims you are making. In a micro-essay it is important to realize that (1) claims are statements you want to persuade your reader to accept, and that (2) claims need support with evidence or logical inference to be persuasive. In the sentences above, the support appears following the word ‘because’.

What do I mean by a "claim-objection-rejoinder sequence"?

Technically, a claim is the conclusion of an argument. Thus the claim: ‘Socrates is mortal" is really the conclusion of an argument based on reasoning from certain empirical premises. Making the reasoning explicit, I would say: "Socrates is a man, and all men are mortal. Therefore Socrates is mortal." The statements about Socrates being a man and all men being mortal are empirical observations; the claim that Socrates is mortal is a logical deduction that follows transitively. A is a subset of B; all Bs have the quality C; therefore A has the quality C.

To be persuasive, it is crucial that you defend your claims with evidence and reasoning. It is also important to understand that many claims about the world which matter to us are contested and do not follow as straightforwardly, e.g., as the deductive conclusion above based on uncontested empirical premises. In fact, each essay you write for this class is designed to feature questions that arise from contested claims. Thus it is incumbent on you to indicate to your reader that you understand there is more than one plausible answer to the question under debate. This is sometimes called arguing from both sides of a question. It requires that you supply an objection to your claim. An objection is just a claim, complete with evidence and reasoning in its support, that offers a reason not to believe the claim you just articulated. Thus, after defending Paine’s status as an egalitarian, you might entertain the following objection. "Paine’s egalitarianism is not unalloyed. At several crucial points in the essay he indicates support for competitive goals, such as ...." If you can’t think of a reply to this objection, then it should become your claim, and your original claim your objection. Replies to objections are called rejoinders. You might reply to the above by noting: "In the end, Paine is in favor of taxing inherited wealth, however minimally, and he does this for the purpose of making the society more equal; this makes him an egalitarian because ...."