

ENGR 125CS

Using references without plagiarism

Name: _____

Referring to the material in the attached article excerpts as a basis, write a paragraph (or two) building on one of the following topic sentences. You must use ideas and concepts taken from the excerpts, but demonstrate proper paraphrasing and citation.

Topic sentence choice #1:

Commonly shared resources, such as land, water, and air, are likely to be used wastefully unless there are rules and regulations put in place to enforce equal access.

Topic sentence choice #2:

The U.S. National Park System is so seriously under funded that we must seriously consider the idea of placing the land in a private trust and then charging sufficient access fees to cover the ongoing maintenance costs.

Topic sentence choice #3:

Not all public resources are governed by Hardin's "Tragedy of the Commons" concept. The National Weather Service and the U.S. Postal Service are examples of a "public commons" (shared resource) that are not susceptible to overuse and disintegration.

Excerpt from: Hardin, Garrett, "The Tragedy of the Commons" (1968)

The tragedy of the commons develops in this way. Picture a pasture open to all. It is to be expected that each herdsman will try to keep as many cattle as possible on the commons. Such an arrangement may work reasonably satisfactorily for centuries because tribal wars, poaching, and disease keep the numbers of both man and beast well below the carrying capacity of the land. Finally, however, comes the day of reckoning, that is, the day when the long-desired goal of social stability becomes a reality. At this point, the inherent logic of the commons remorselessly generates tragedy.

As a rational being, each herdsman seeks to maximize his gain. Explicitly or implicitly, more or less consciously, he asks, "What is the utility to me of adding one more animal to my herd?" This utility has one negative and one positive component.

1. The positive component is a function of the increment of one animal. Since the herdsman receives all the proceeds from the sale of the additional animal, the positive utility is nearly +1.
2. The negative component is a function of the additional overgrazing created by one more animal. Since, however, the effects of overgrazing are shared by all the herdsmen, the negative utility for any particular decision-making herdsman is only a fraction of -1.

Adding together the component partial utilities, the rational herdsman concludes that the only sensible course for him to pursue is to add another animal to his herd. And another.... But this is the conclusion reached by each and every rational herdsman sharing a commons. Therein is the tragedy. Each man is locked into a system that compels him to increase his herd without limit -- in a world that is limited. Ruin is the destination toward which all men rush, each pursuing his own best interest in a society that believes in the freedom of the commons. Freedom in a commons brings ruin to all.

Excerpt from: Hanson, Jay, "Bad Drives Out Good" (1997)

"Public goods" are goods and services that can be shared by a whole group of people. Some examples of public goods are national defense, police protection, government, and environmental services. As a rule, government must provide public goods for two reasons:

1. Private investors won't supply public goods because they can't make a profit on them.
2. Voluntary efforts won't supply public goods because the voluntary contribution of any one person exceeds the services received by that person. For example, suppose the cost of national defense to each taxpayer is worth the services each taxpayer receives. But if the entire cost were spread out evenly among only those who will voluntarily pay, then the individual cost will exceed the individual services. Thus, only government can supply a national defense through its taxing powers.

This same principle applies to voluntary efforts at cleaning roads, parks, and so on. Voluntary efforts will ultimately fail because those who don't contribute (called "free riders") can use the services anyway. So there is little incentive for volunteers to contribute over the long term. Ultimately, volunteers will "burn out".

"Private goods" are restricted goods. A couple of examples of private goods are gated communities and toll roads (only those who pay can enjoy the services).

America's political system is based on private money: whoever can raise the most money usually wins. Our private-money political system naturally exhibits a strong bias towards private goods—and private profits. This bias towards private goods leads to less public infrastructure and more private infrastructure (e.g., private police, gated communities, etc.). Unfortunately, this leads to a two class society: one with private infrastructure and one with no infrastructure; and ultimately, these will lead to the disintegration of the state.