

Paper #2: Topics and Guidelines

1. Assignment: Write an essay of 1200-1800 words (~4-6 pages), on some philosophical topic from unit two.

2. Due Dates: *Part one: The rough draft & classroom consultation.* A paper copy of your rough draft is due Wednesday, 4/24, at the beginning of class. *Note: Please bring an **anonymous paper copy** to class (with NO author-identifying features).* In that class period, you will exchange papers with one of your classmates. You will then read and give comments on that paper, and then discuss the comments given/received. This activity will count as 10% of your participation grade (i.e., 1% of your final grade).

Note: Students who arrive late to class on this day will receive a zero for this assignment.

Part two: The final draft. After receiving comments on your draft from your peer, you will then revise your paper. Your final draft (worth 15% of your final grade) is due Monday, 4/29, at the beginning of class. By that time, please turn in an electronic copy to Blackboard (*Written Assignments* → *Paper #2* → *Scroll to Attach File* → *click Browse My Computer*).

3. Late Penalty: Late papers will be penalized. A paper turned in by 11:59pm on 4/29 receives -10 points (out of 100), and -2 more points every day after that.

4. Suggested Topics: In your paper, you will argue for or against some philosophical view presented in unit two. Below are some suggestions.

Note: You may design your own paper topic based on the material from unit two, but **you must first get instructor approval for any topic NOT listed below.**

- 1) Animal Rights: You will present Cohen's or Norcross's argument, and argue either that eating factory-farmed meat is morally wrong, or that it is not.
- 2) Human Cloning: You will argue either that producing a human clone would be morally wrong, or that it would not. (Assume that the research is still in the initial stages and still imperfect; e.g., the clone will only live for 30 good years.)
- 3) Vaccine Mandates: You will present Flanigan's argument for the conclusion that there is a moral obligation to be vaccinated, and laws mandating vaccines are just, and argue that this conclusion is correct, or that it is mistaken.
- 4) Video Games: You will present the Gamer's Dilemma, and argue for your favorite response to that dilemma (i.e., virtual killing is morally permissible while virtual pedophilia is wrong; both are permissible; or both are wrong).
- 5) Autonomous Weapons: You will present Roff/Sparrow's argument, and argue either that the use of autonomous weapons is morally wrong, or that it is not.

5. How to Begin: First, decide which of the above topics you want to discuss. Then decide what stance you will take regarding that issue. Did any particular topic or reading excite you? Do you feel passionate about any of these issues? Write about that.

Next, **you must read** [The Pink Guide to Taking Philosophy Classes](#) if you haven't already (esp. the two tabs on writing; pdf version [here](#)), and also watch this [Video Tutorial](#).

You may also find questions #10 and #12 of [my FAQ page](#) helpful – especially if you are hoping to significantly improve from the first paper to the second.

6. Structure: Once you have completed the preliminaries, you will write a paper following the same guidelines as the first paper ([here](#)); i.e., you will (i) Write a brief **introduction** explaining what you are about to do, and stating your **thesis**. (ii) Introduce and explain some philosophical **view, argument, or problem**. As you explain it, be sure to **motivate it** (i.e., make it sound plausible to the reader that it might be a sound argument, or that the problem is a legitimate and troubling problem, etc.). Then, (iii) **Critically grapple** with what you've presented by way of, e.g., raising an objection to the argument you've presented, or a problem for the view you've presented, or a potential solution to the problem you've presented, etc. (iv) You will then **evaluate** this objection, or this solution, by explaining why it is either successful or unsuccessful. Then, (iv) Add a **concluding remark**, stating what conclusion the reader should draw from your discussion.

The only difference is that, for this paper, you will have the space to go further in depth when explaining the view, and (ideally) spend **twice as much time critically evaluating** that view. For instance, if last time you only examined one objection, this time examine two. If you'd like, you *may* wish to use something like the following format:

Sample Format

- (a) Write a brief introduction explaining what you are about to do.
- (b) Briefly describe the view or argument that you are going to defend.
- (c) Raise one major objection against this view. Be sure to pick one that is *challenging*; i.e., do not pick the least plausible, most easily refutable one.
- (d) Respond to the objection; that is, explain why you think that the objection fails to successfully refute the view you are defending.
- (e) Raise a second major objection against the view (again, a plausible one).
- (f) Respond to this second objection.
- (g) Write a brief conclusion summarizing what you have just done; i.e., state that the view you have just defended against objections is the correct view.

7. Grading Rubric: Primarily, I will be looking for two things when I assign grades:

- (1) Clarity: Do you explain yourself in a way that is **clear, concise, persuasive, and well-organized**? Imagine that you are writing for someone who has never taken a philosophy course. Your writing should be clear enough so that they would (a) easily **understand** you, (b) would **learn** something new about a philosophical problem and the ideas of a historical figure, and (c) maybe even be **persuaded** by you.
- (2) Critical Reasoning: Does your treatment of the view demonstrate your ability to think critically? It should be apparent that you have thought about the view and the objections **carefully**, that you **understand** their implications, and that you have **put some thought into** your response.

8. Academic Integrity: As per the syllabus, any student caught cheating or plagiarizing will immediately be issued an F for the course and a report to [the honor council](#).

Plagiarism is defined as any instance of presenting someone else's work or ideas as your own (e.g., by copying an internet source, another student's work or ideas, or any other source at all without citation). So, be sure to cite any and all ideas that are not your own.

*Note: Even with citation, turning in an exact copy or a slight re-wording of someone else's work is still plagiarism. Do not turn in a copy or a slightly re-worded version of the readings or my lecture notes. The purpose of this assignment is for me to be able to assess **your** ability to communicate clearly and persuasively, and **your** understanding of the material. So, your work needs to be put into your own words.*

In addition, it should go without saying that the use of Chat-GPT or any other A.I. to generate content for this paper constitutes plagiarism and is not permitted.