

## Paper #2: Topics and Guidelines

**1. Assignment:** Write an essay of 1400-2000 words (~6 pages), which engages with the readings and ideas from unit two.

**2. Due Date:** Due Friday, 12/6, by the beginning of class. By that time, please upload your paper to Blackboard (click *Environmental Ethics* → *Written Assignments* → *Paper #2* → *Start Submission* → scroll to *Submission* → add your file → click *Submit*).

**3. Late Penalty:** Late papers will be penalized –10 points (out of 100) for the first day, and –2 points for each additional 24 hour period after that. For instance, turn it in by 11:59pm on 12/6, receive –10 points; turn it in on 12/7, receive –12 points; and so on.

**4. Suggested Topics:** Please choose one of the following prompts.

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) **The Non-Identity Problem:** You will present the non-identity problem and its implications for environmental ethics, and then argue for your favored response to it. (This should include an explanation of why it is morally *wrong* for the mother in *Unhealthy Child* to conceive now, or why it *is not* wrong.)
- 2) **Procreation:** You will argue either that—given the assumption that “eco-gluttony” is morally wrong—it is morally *wrong* to procreate, or that it *is not*.
- 3) **Individual Causal Impotence:** You will present the problem of individual causal impotence and argue either that we *do* (individually) have a moral obligation to reduce our greenhouse gas emissions, or that we *do not*.
- 4) **Group Responsibility:** You will argue in favor of what you believe to be the most just method of distributing the burdens of mitigating climate change (e.g., polluter pays, cap & trade, fair chore division, carbon fee & dividend, etc.).

**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:** After completing the preliminaries, you will then write a paper following roughly the same guidelines as the [first paper](#); 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* objections. Alternatively, consider taking a much deeper dive into one objection. 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.