Paper #1: Topics and Guidelines

1. Assignment: Write an essay of 900-1200 words (~3-4 pages), on some philosophical topic from unit one.

2. Due Date: Due Friday, 9/26, at the beginning of class. By that time, please upload your paper electronically to Blackboard (Click *PHIL 403* → *Written Assignments* → *Paper #1* → *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. Example: A paper turned in at 11:59pm on 9/26 receives –10 points; one turned in on 9/27 receives –12 points; etc.

4. Suggested Topics: Please choose one of the following topics:

1) **The Non-Identity Problem:** Present the non-identity problem, and argue in favor of your preferred solution to that problem.

2) **The Nature of Harm:** Argue in favor of your preferred analysis of 'harm'.

Note: You may choose a different thesis, if you like. However, (a) It *must* engage with the readings and/or philosophical ideas from unit one, and (b) **You must first get instructor approval**. Feel free to pitch your thesis and outline during office hours.

5. Structure: I expect that you are familiar with the typical method and format of an argumentative philosophy paper. (If not, please see me during office hours.) For instance, papers in analytic philosophy traditionally have the following structure:

(a) Write a brief **introduction** explaining what you are about to do. Be sure that your paper has a clear ***thesis***. That is, make it clear that you are trying to ***persuade*** the reader to agree with you about something.

(b) **Present the view** or argument that you are defending or refuting, **or the problem** that you are trying to solve.

(Be sure to *motivate* it; i.e., make the argument sound *plausible* to the reader, even if you plan to refute it; or, make the problem sound *serious* and *important* to the reader, even if you plan to solve it; etc.)

(c) Provide the details of your favorite **objection** to the view that you have presented; or—if you presented a problem in part (b)—now present your preferred **solution** to that problem, and *then* present an objection to your solution.

(When defending a view against objections, be sure to pick objections that are *challenging*. Do not pick the least plausible, most easily refutable ones. Rather, always strive to defend your thesis against your *best* opponents.)

(d) **Critically assess** the objection or solution; i.e., evaluate it, and defend your evaluation. Do you agree with it? Why or why not? Convince the reader to agree with you that the objection or proposed solution is successful, or unsuccessful.

(e) If space allows, repeat (c) and (d) until you have sufficiently defended your thesis.

(f) Write a brief **conclusion** summarizing what you have just done.

6. Grading Rubric: Primarily, I will be looking for three 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.

(3) Originality: Is there evidence of **original thought** in this paper? (In a senior seminar, your paper should not *merely* be a presentation or summary of another philosopher's work, or a re-hashing of my lecture, etc. Rather, your paper should contain substantial evidence of original thought. For example, you might present an original objection, or response to some objection, or solution to some problem, or an original case which uniquely supports or illustrates some claim, etc.)

For a more detailed rubric, note that I am in perfect agreement with everything stated on pages 14-17 of *The Pink Guide to Taking Philosophy Classes* (here).

7. 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.