

PHIL 112 Guidelines & Topics for Paper #3

1250-1500 Word Paper Due via E-mail to garrettj@csus.edu by 11:59 p.m. on 11/25/09

General Advice from Professor Garrett

(1) Have others proofread your paper and help you identify obvious mistakes (grammar, spelling, sentence structure, etc.). Papers with sloppy writing and obvious mistakes will be penalized. The campus has a free writing center in Calaveras Hall #128. It is open Monday – Thursday from 10 a.m. – 6 p.m. and Friday from 9 a.m. – 12 p.m. Take advantage of this free resource.

Additionally, coordinate with your classmates and read each other's papers to help each other improve writing quality. One way to do this is to find one or two classmates who will agree to read and comment upon papers that are e-mailed to them (though obviously this does not mean "write" or "rewrite" anyone else's paper).

(2) Once you have a draft of your paper, analyze it with the following checklist in mind:

- a) Have you represented the views you are discussing in their strongest and most plausible form?
- b) Is your essay organized in a way that is logical and easy to follow?
- c) Does each sentence and each paragraph have a clear purpose? Or do they repeat things that have already been said? Avoid unnecessary repetition.
- d) Are the sentences short, crisp, and clear? Avoid long, convoluted sentences that try to say too much.
- e) Are the sentences written in a direct and active voice?
- f) Are the words you have selected the best and most precise way to express your ideas? If you are using words with which you are NOT 100% comfortable, look them up in the dictionary and confirm that they mean what you think they do. If they do not, look for a better and more precise word.
- g) Are you focusing on the main ideas related to your topic? You do not have enough space to waste it on tangential matters; if you include something in your paper, I will assume that you think it is absolutely critical for properly understanding and evaluating your topic. Your paper will be evaluated not just on how clearly you present your ideas, but also on whether you have a good sense for which ideas are most important in a given debate.

General Advice on Writing a Philosophy Paper

Two good websites for getting sound advice on writing your paper:

<http://www.jimpryor.net/teaching/guidelines/writing.html>

<http://www.csus.edu/phil/req/writing.htm>

How Papers will be Graded

In grading your papers, I will employ a five-part rubric. Each component of the rubric will be worth 15 points. The five components are:

(1) Focus – Does the paper define an appropriately sized topic and limit its attention to the *main* questions and concerns associated with that topic?

(2) Organization and Clarity – Is the paper organized and written in a clear and logical manner so as to make her/his reasoning clear to the reader?

(3) Content and Completeness – Does the paper demonstrate clear understanding of the philosophical material and adequately address all required prompts in the instructions?

(4) Reasoning – Does the paper demonstrate the ability to reason critically and consistently about the philosophical material?

(5) Overall Writing Quality – Is the prose clear, crisp, and easy to follow? Does the paper make proper use of sentence structure, word usage, grammar, punctuation, etc.?

Specific Guidelines

(1) Any terms, phrases, or sentences taken from someone else's work (including my PowerPoint slides) **MUST** have quotation marks around it/them AND include a citation. It is fine to reference the work of other people (though be careful about doing too much of this), but it is absolutely unacceptable to try to pass that work off as your own. Per the course policy on Academic Honesty, any paper that includes any part of another's work without this being clearly indicated with quotation marks and a citation will result in a grade of 0. [NOTE: THERE IS NO CITATION STYLE (e.g., MLA, APA, etc.) YOU NEED TO FOLLOW; JUST PICK ONE AND BE CONSISTENT.]

(2) Papers should be in Microsoft Word format, so that I can use Word's "Comments" feature when assessing them. You will then both attach the paper to your email to me and copy and paste it into the body of the message.

(3) Please use 12 point Times New Roman font and double-spacing throughout the paper.

(4) Please save your paper as a .doc file, with the view set at 150%, and with the title as "Last Name – PHIL 112 – Paper 2_." (with the blank indicating the specific paper topic you're choosing). So, for example, "Garrett – PHIL 112 – Paper 2.1"

(5) Please include a Word Count at the top of your paper and with each section break. The word count should not include your name, title, or any other information supplied at the top of your paper; it should not include section titles, footnotes, or references; and it should not include any explicit arguments that are required to be included in your paper.

(6) Please put the Section Numbers (e.g., Part 1, Part 2, etc.) for your paper topic in the body of the paper to help me follow the precise structure of your analysis and argument.

Option 2.1 The Foundation and Nature of Morality: Mill vs. ____

The object of this paper is to compare, contrast, and critically evaluate the competing accounts of the foundation and nature of morality given by Mill and either Aristotle, Hume, or Kant. ***If you choose this option, the philosopher that you choose must be someone you have NOT previously written on in this course.***

Proposed Structure of Paper:

Introduction (50-100 words) – Get to the point pretty quickly; what conclusion(s) are you going to argue for and why is it (or are they) important?

*Part 1 – Compare, Contrast, and Analyze the Positions of Mill and ____ (400-600 words) – Lay out the **main** assumptions, premises, and conclusions in the accounts of the foundation and nature of morality offered by Mill and the other philosopher you choose. Be sure to make it clear to the reader how their views are similar and how they are different.*

Part 2 – Articulate and Defend a Clear Position in the Debate (750 – 1000 words) – In this part, you will take a clear position in the debate, though you need not (and perhaps should not) agree fully with either thinker. Which of the major conclusions or arguments defended by each thinker do you agree with and why? Which of the major conclusions or arguments defended by each thinker do you disagree with and why? In a sense, then, you’ll be developing your own account of the foundation and nature of morality in this part of the paper. Be sure to consider at least one serious objection to your position and to defend your view against it.

Conclusion – (50-100 words) – As with the intro, hit the high points. What were the main claims that you defended? Why are they important? Are there any surprising implications yielded by your paper?

Option 2.2 A Critical Evaluation of Mill, Moore, Anscombe, or Rawls

The object of this paper is to reconstruct, analyze, and critically evaluate the ethical theory (or a particular argument/position) of EITHER John Stuart Mill, G.E. Moore, Elizabeth Anscombe, or John Rawls (pick just one). With Mill, for example, you might choose to write on his overall utilitarian view or to focus on a particular component of his theory (e.g., his qualitative hedonism, his “proof” of utility, his account of justice, etc.)

Proposed Structure of Paper:

Introduction (50-75 words) – Get to the point pretty quickly; what conclusion(s) are you going to argue for and why is it (or are they) important?

*Part 1 – Reconstruction and Analysis of ____’s Account of ____ (550-700 words) – First, reconstruct and analyze the main components of the account of ethics defended by the philosopher you are considering. Obviously, you don’t have much space to do this. Thus, you will have to be very selective in what you decide to include in Part 1. Part of how I’ll be grading this paper will be based on how well you are able to isolate and concisely reconstruct the **most important** components necessary for understanding the account you’re considering.*

Part 2 – Critical Evaluation of ____’s Account of ____ (550-700 words) – In Part 2, you will need to take and defend a clear position with respect to the view you are considering. Which arguments and conclusions do you agree with and why? Which arguments and conclusions do you disagree with and why? In what ways can the view be improved? Defend your position with careful argumentation. NOTE: as should be obvious, you do not have to fully accept or fully reject the account; you can (and probably should) accept some parts and reject (or preferably, show how to improve) others.

Conclusion – (50-100 words) – As with the intro, hit the high points. What were the main claims that you defended? Why are they important? Are there any surprising implications yielded by your paper?

Option 2.3 Propose Your Own Paper Topic

You are free to propose an additional topic and paper structure, but you must get it cleared with me (via e-mail is fine) by Saturday, November 21.