

## PHIL 112 Guidelines & Topics for Paper #4

1250-1500 word paper due via email to [garrettj@csus.edu](mailto:garrettj@csus.edu)

*Initial Draft:* Due by 11:59 p.m. on 12/12/09

*Final Draft:* Due by 11:59 p.m. on 12/18/09

### 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 4". So, for example, "Garrett – PHIL 112 – Paper 4".
- (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.
- (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.

## ***Structure of Paper #4***

The object of this paper is to defend a clear answer to one of the “big questions” in the history of ethics. Possible questions include:

- Why be moral?
- What is the basis or foundation of morality?
- What property/properties of actions make them right or wrong or good or bad?
- Should moral assessment focus on (a) the intentions of the actor, (b) the character of the actor, (c) the intrinsic properties of the action, or (d) the consequences of the action?
- What are the necessary and/or sufficient conditions for living a good human life? Here you might identify what you consider to be the 1-3 most important necessary conditions for living a good human life and defend these as both “important” and “necessary”.
- What is/are the meaning(s) of life? What is the significance of death? And how do our answers to these questions bear on how we should live our lives?
- ...and there are other possibilities (feel free to propose your own “big question” no later than Thursday, December 10 for approval).

In answering the question you select, you should feel encouraged to draw on any of the philosophers we’ve covered this semester. However, the ultimate aim of the paper is for you to be crafting your own original account, so be sure to devote some time to this end (though note that your own original answer does not need to be wholly novel; it might be a synthesis or development of existing answers). ***Note: while it is okay to draw some on philosophers that you have already previously written on in this course, you should NOT repeat much, if anything, that you’ve already said in another paper.***

### Proposed Structure of Paper:

#### *Introduction* (50-100 words)

Get right to the point: what conclusion(s) will you argue for and why is it (or are they) important?

#### *Part 1 – Overview the Question and Some Influential Answers to It* (300-500 words)

Begin by stating the “big question” you’ll be addressing and analyzing it to whatever extent possible. The goal here is to make sure that your reader fully understands the nature and significance of the question. After analyzing the question, lay out a few of the most compelling and/or widely accepted answers to this question in the history of ethics (or in popular moral discourse). (Be sure to make it clear to the reader how these answers are similar and how they are different.)

#### *Part 2 – Critically Evaluate the SECOND Most Compelling Answer to the Question* (250-400 words)

In this part, you will critically evaluate the second most compelling answer to the question (second to your own answer, of course!). Thus, select the answer from Part 1 that you find most persuasive and make an argument for why it is not the best answer that can be offered to the question.

#### *Part 3 – Articulate and Defend Your Own Original Answer to the Question* (600-850 words)

Here you will need to articulate your own original answer to the question and make an argument for why it is better than the alternatives. Again, this can be done by synthesizing two or more existing answers or by substantively developing or revising a single existing answer. Regardless, though, 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?