

Essay 2

Follow the instructions given below carefully.

Write an essay that focuses on one of the arguments found in any of the readings assigned for modules 4 – 7.

1. Submit your essay as an attachment. Use a word document file extension of some sort (rtf, doc, docx, odt, etc.) do not submit a pdf file.
2. Do not quote or cite (or plagiarize) the PowerPoints from the course—they should only be used to help you understand the material. All citations and quotations should come directly from the readings.
3. The essay should be 3 to 4 pages.
4. **Do not use outside sources—only use the readings that were assigned for the course—do not go out on the internet and look up sources.**

Your essay must follow this format:

1. Begin with an **introductory paragraph** that a) presents your thesis; b) identifies which text and author you will discuss, and c) prepares the reader for the organization of your paper. **Your THESIS is a clear and exact statement of the claim you will support in your essay.**

- a. **Thesis Statement: You must tell the reader specifically what position you will defend.**

Example of a thesis statement:

“Carl Cohen’s claim that reason is required to justify the extension of moral consideration is flawed. One’s capacity to suffer, should be the only requirement necessary to justify the extension of moral consideration.”

2. The **body** of the paper should consist in a focused discussion of the author’s argument from your chosen reading. Your paper should provide a clear **exposition** of one of the arguments offered by the specific author from the text you focus on. Following the exposition, give **one or two objections** to the author’s claims. Discuss your objection(s) carefully. Provide the strongest possible counter-argument or counterexample. Be sure that your objection(s) are specifically linked to the arguments given by the author whose work you have explicated. Next, **offer possible responses** to your objections. In other words, present possible responses/arguments against your original objections. Then **offer replies** to these responses in an effort to show that the original objection (your argument) still stands. In other words, offer reason to believe that one should not accept the responses to your original objection(s).
3. The **conclusion** should **not** simply repeat what you have already said in the body of the paper. The concluding remarks may reiterate *briefly* the structure of your foregoing argument and the conclusion(s) you have reached. But, crucially, concluding remarks should say something more than this. Are there still further, related questions that you have not addressed? Does your discussion have an important implication for the topic, for philosophical theory, for life in general? In other words, try to show how your work in this particular essay reaches out to other topics of interest or paves the way for further argument or analysis. Remember that philosophy papers rarely solve problems once and for all time, so resist the temptation to overstate or exaggerate your conclusions. It is reasonable, even admirable, to acknowledge the limitations of your discussion in your concluding remarks.

4. Quote and cite the text *to support* your discussion (Footnotes or parenthetical citations are preferred). All verbatim quotation must use quotation marks. Citations are also required for paraphrases of the text. The goal is to point the reader to the appropriate passages of text where the claims are made. Use quotations selectively; most of the paper should be written in your own words. Use a works cited page.

In a nutshell:

1. Tell the reader what text you will discuss, identify the specific author you will address, offer a thesis statement (the position you will defend), and give a brief overview of how the essay will proceed.
2. Explicate the specific author's argument from the text you have chosen—explain the argument in detail, walk the reader through the argument step by step.
3. Offer objections to the argument—point out problems with the author's argument, and offer your own argument in an effort to justify your claim that the author's argument contains these problems. Do not ignore the author's counter arguments—for example, if the author addresses a particular objection in their piece, and offers (a response) a reason to think these objections are not problematic for their position, then be sure that you do not simply offer that very same objection without addressing why their response does not work.
4. Examine possible responses to your objections—discuss possible weaknesses/problems with the argument you present in section three. What sorts of issues might one raise against your argument? Note the weaknesses and/or limitations with your original argument.
5. Offer replies to these responses—produce another argument that offers an effective rebuttal to these responses, and shows that these weaknesses do not destroy your original argument (the goal is to produce a dialogue).
6. Conclusion (see above)

*** Be sure to read “How to Write a Philosophy Paper” in Blackboard.**

OTHER IMPORTANT INFORMATION:

- You need not do additional research. Focus on the essays we have read, or any of the others in Blackboard (provided they were assigned and we have discussed them).
- Your work must be your own, original writing. There are severe penalties for plagiarism and cheating. See the syllabus for details.
- Your paper should be double-spaced in 10 or 12-point font. Use 1-1.25 inch left and right margins. **Do not use a cover page.**
- Spell-check your paper. Proofread and edit your work to check for mistakes that computer programs cannot catch.
- **At the top of the first page provide the following information single spaced:**

Student Name
PHI 1010: Introduction to Philosophy
Date

- Give your paper a title. DO NOT USE A COVER PAGE!
- **Quote and cite the text to support your discussion. (footnotes or parenthetical citations) All verbatim quotation must use quotation marks. Citations are also required for paraphrases of the text. The goal is to point the reader to the appropriate passages of text where the claims are made. Use quotations selectively; most of the paper should be written in your own words. Use a works cited page.**
- The exposition should provide a clear, accurate, precise, and selective account of the author's position.

CLEAR: Write in complete, grammatical sentences. Organize your thoughts.

ACCURATE: Give a fair and reasonable representation of the author's position.

PRECISE: Avoid offering vague claims and mere generalities. Make your discussion detailed, specific, and focused on the exact claims the author gives in support of the particular arguments you will examine.

SELECTIVE: In a short paper you cannot cover all of the arguments or claims the author gives. Select only those ideas, reasons, arguments that are directly relevant to your discussion.

- As a guideline, your first, introductory paragraph should not be more than ½ a page. The exposition should take 1-2 pages and the presentation of your objection(s) and response(s) should take 1-2 pages.

NOTE: This paper assignment focuses on **exposition AND on critical thinking**. The first goal is to demonstrate that you have a solid understanding of the text, that you can explain specific arguments from the text, and that you can appropriately cite and quote the text in support of your discussion. The second goal is to critically evaluate the text. In formulating your objection(s) to the text, you are attempting to provide reasons why we might reject the author's argument or claims. These reasons should identify specific problems with the author's claims, not merely a general difference of opinion or view. The reasons you offer in formulating your objection should be reasonable, clear, intelligent, and as convincing as possible.¹

Plagiarism

Your essays will be run through a plagiarism checker. If you plagiarize an essay you will receive a 0% for the essay, and may be failed for the course. There are no second chances. If you are unclear about what constitutes plagiarism, then please contact your professor prior to submitting your assignment.

¹ A portion of this document was excerpted from Dr. Brook Sadler's "Guidelines for Writing a Philosophy Paper."