

Philosophy and Society
PHIL 09241

Final Paper Instructions

Each student is required to write and submit a final paper for the course. The final paper is worth 25% of the overall course grade. Students will write a critically evaluative essay on the topic of their choice, which they will choose from the list of final paper topics at the end of this document.

Your paper should contain the following:

1. **An introductory paragraph** – this provides a brief description of the topic of the paper. It also contains your thesis statement and the points you are going to discuss in support of your view (you should have a minimum of three).
2. **Body paragraphs** – your paper should have a paragraph for each of the points you are going to discuss in support of your view. These points should be relevant to the questions asked in the description of the topic. You should also consider objections that can be raised to your view, and demonstrate how you can respond to those objections.
3. **Conclusion** – your paper should have a brief conclusion, clearly stating what you have demonstrated in your paper (which should be that your thesis is correct). It is also nice if you can draw a further conclusion about the topic, such as why it is relevant to the topic of the course.

Your paper should follow the general instructions given below. It is due by 11:59 pm, on Monday of Week 8. You may submit the paper at any time during the course; however, your paper will not be returned to you until after the last day of course evaluations, for two reasons. Firstly, CGCE requires this class to have course evaluations, and requests that the instructor not return the final grade prior to the end of the evaluation period. Since the paper will be the remaining ungraded assignment, returning the paper will give students the information needed to calculate their final grade. Secondly, I make it a point not to return student papers before all students have submitted their papers, or the due date, whichever comes first. This avoids the possibility of some students having an advantage by having access to other students' graded papers.

General Instructions:

1. Address all parts of the question – Papers are graded on completeness, accuracy, and how well you defend your view, so failure to answer any part of the question will diminish your grade. Your paper should be approximately 1000-1500 words in length, depending on the topic you chose write about. This is just an estimated guideline – if it is any shorter, it will probably be incomplete. If it is much longer, you are either going off on a tangent, or writing beyond the level of this class.
2. Take a stand on the issue and defend it – The assignment provides the opportunity for you to give your opinion about each issue. There is no right or wrong position, but you must defend one side of the issue or the other.

3. It is not necessary to do outside research for this essay – You are being asked to form and defend your opinion based on the information in the readings and lectures. If, in spite of this warning, you do outside research, you must provide a bibliography indicating your sources. If you do not provide a bibliography, and I discover outside sources for your paper, you will be in danger of incurring penalties for academic dishonesty (see next point.)
1. Be sure to cite any quotations or paraphrases – When you quote or paraphrase one of the readings in the textbooks (or an outside source), you must cite it parenthetically, using the MLA or APA style. Your paper must include a works cited or bibliography page. For text sources, your parenthetical citations must provide page number references for all quotations and paraphrases. For web sources, your works cited / bibliography must list the URL where the source in question can be found. Failure to cite sources is plagiarism, the theft of intellectual property. It is morally wrong and punishable by penalties ranging from a written warning in your file with the Dean of Students (which can affect admissions to various academic programs) to expulsion from the University. Don't do it – when in doubt, cite!
2. You must provide proper support from the primary texts for any and all claims you make about an author's views, claims, or ideas. That is, if you say that someone says or believes something, you should be able to show exactly where he or she does that. The strongest form of textual support is a direct quotation—be sure to explain the context of the quote and its meaning in context, if that isn't immediately clear. However, it may not always be feasible to quote, in which case a paraphrase or summary of the view in question, with a proper citation reference to where the author says what you are attributing to them may also suffice. Be sure not to distort someone's views when paraphrasing! And be sure to cite.
4. Limit your collaboration – Part of the fun of doing philosophy is sharing your views with others, so in general, you are encouraged to discuss the material with other students. However, you are strongly discouraged from writing your papers together and reading each other's papers; students whose papers bear a strong resemblance to each other will be required to satisfactorily explain the similarities.
5. Your paper should be neat and polished – Your paper should be formatted according to either the MLA or APA style (although no title page or abstract is required). It should be 12 font, double-spaced, with one inch margins. Be sure to spell-check and proofread (the spellchecker will not catch all the spelling errors). Multiple errors in spelling, grammar, and punctuation will adversely affect your grade.
6. Turn your paper in on time – Submit your paper on the upload page on the course LMS by the deadline.
 - a. Your paper should be an attachment in one of the following formats: doc or docx.
 - b. Do not submit your papers in any other format.
 - c. I will return your paper, with comments and grade. Keep a copy of your paper, so that you can resubmit it in case of computer problems.

Topics for this assignment:

Choose ONE of the following topics to write on. In each case, you are being asked to discuss the views of two or three philosophers regarding a particular topic. The general assignment is to compare and contrast those views with each other and with your own view on the topic. Each topic includes several

questions that are intended to help you focus your paper. Be sure to address those questions in your essay.

1. The State of Nature: In their writings, Hobbes, Locke, and Rousseau all invoke the concept of a “state of nature”, which is their conception of what things would be like if there was no government. Describe each of their views about the “state of nature”, and explain the similarities and differences between the three views. Do you think that there ever was a state of nature? Why or why not? If you think that there was a state of nature, which of the three views does your own view most closely match? Why?
2. Examine the development of the notion of government by social contract in the writings of Hobbes, Locke and Rousseau. What did Locke find wrong in Hobbes’ account, Rousseau find objectionable in Locke’s theory, and what problems remain in Rousseau’s social contract? Does the notion of government by social contract even make sense, and if so, what is the best social contract that can be achieved?
3. Plato’s ideal state proposed in the Republic was far from democratic, yet it was an inclusive government where women were given equal rights and responsibilities as men. Aristotle’s state was closer to our modern idea of democracy, yet it was an exclusive arrangement, with most people being denied citizenship – in particular, women and slaves. Does government need to have absolute power in order to achieve equality? Does democracy and the primacy of liberty necessarily result in inequality?
4. Plato and Hobbes both defend an absolutist state in which the ruler or rulers cannot be held accountable by the population and in which absolute obedience is called for. Yet their absolutist states are very different. Write an essay explaining how they differ and what features of Hobbes’ and Plato’s general philosophical positions are responsible for the differences.
5. Hobbes proposes an absolutist state with limited regard for individual liberties. Hobbes’ primary goal was security of the citizens and preservation of the state, therefore individual liberty was to be sacrificed for the collective good. Mill’s principles place protection of individual liberty as the central responsibility of the state. Mill promotes diversity as something that will strengthen, not weaken the state, therefore he does not advocate for a large, intrusive government. Does individual liberty and diversity of opinion weaken or strengthen the state?
6. In Communist Manifesto, Marx describes how private property has caused exploitation of the majority of society and created a class system. Marx writes that justice will be achieved only when the class system is abolished. How does his theory relate to Rousseau’s critique of liberal individualism? In what ways do both Rousseau and Marx disagree with Locke and Mill’s support for protection of individual liberty as government’s primary goal?
7. Describe how Rawls’ aims to provide a fair distribution of goods in his Theory of Justice. Is Rawls correct that justice should not be based on luck of birth? Do the original position and veil of ignorance better guarantee that justice will be achieved by the least well-off? Contrast Rawls’ theory with Mill’s theory of utilitarianism.