

**ESSAY PAPER CRITERIA**  
**PHIL 1301, Introduction to Philosophy, Spring 2021**

The essay paper assignment is 100 points and is 25% of your final grade. This assignment is meant to test your ability to explain philosophy, specifically ethics, more in depth and to critically analyze and compare different approaches to ethics. *This must be a new essay written specifically for this class by you individually. You must get approval from me before using part or all of an essay that was submitted for another class or a previous semester of Introduction to Philosophy.*

**You have two topic area choices: your essay must cover either Topic A or Topic B, not both. Whichever option you chose, you will pick only two approaches to cover in your essay.**

**Topic A:** Pick any **two** out of the following approaches to ethics: Ethical egoism, utilitarianism (act *and* rule), Kant's categorical imperative, Aristotle's virtue ethics, or care ethics. First, give your own cohesive summary of each of those two approaches. Second, discuss the comparative strengths and weaknesses of each and give your own argument for which is a better approach to ethics and why.

**Topic B:** Pick any **two** out of the following approaches to environmental ethics: Singer's animal equality, Taylor's biocentric outlook, Leopold's land ethic, or Sandler's environmental virtue ethics. First, give your own cohesive summary of each of those two approaches. Second, discuss the comparative strengths and weaknesses of each and give your own argument for which is a better approach to environmental ethics and why.

### **Essay Setup**

**Summary:** You should summarize each of the two approaches you are discussing, in about a paragraph each (or two each, if necessary). For this assignment, your summary should not give any judgment, but simply present a neutral explanation (any evaluation should be in your analysis). Your summary must be mostly in your own words; you can and should use key terms, and limited use of direct quotes is helpful, but you cannot just copy the text, notes or other sources.

**Analysis:** You should discuss and explain what you see as the strengths and weaknesses of each approach and give your own argument for which is better and why. This portion should not just repeat the strengths and weaknesses given in the text and notes or outside sources; you should focus mainly on your own clearly given analysis and your own rationally supported argument. You do not have to argue that one view is better than the other, as long as you have a clear conclusion that you argue for.

**Setup:** Your paper will have two main parts to it: first, a relevant summary of course material. Secondly, your own critical analysis or argument regarding the theories you are addressing. You must have both parts, and they should be roughly equal in length. In addition to those two main parts, the paper should further begin with a one-paragraph introduction (including a thesis statement) and end with a one-paragraph conclusion. Again, this must be a new paper written specifically for this course; you must check with your instructor before using work from other courses.

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**Due Date and Submission:**

**Your essay must be submitted online by 11:59 PM on Thursday, April 29!** You will upload a copy of the essay as a Word document (.doc or .docx) on eCampus; it must be a Word document specifically. *Please put your last name and PHIL1301 in the file name of the document.* Your essay will be run through SafeAssign, software designed to help identify potential cases of plagiarism.

**Length and Format:** Your essay paper must be *no less than 1000* and should not be more than 1500 words. Your essay must be 12" Times New Roman font, double-spaced, with 1" margins on all sides. Any paper written below the minimum length will receive a lower grade (you may go beyond the upper word count if really necessary). Heading, direct quotes, footnotes, your works cited page, etc. do NOT count towards the 1000-1500 words.

**Sources and Citation:** You must properly cite the assigned *readings* relevant to your essay! You may also cite the course notes or bring in outside sources, but it is not required; using outside sources or citing the course notes does *not replace* needing to cite the required course readings. All sources, including assigned readings, must be properly cited according to either MLA, APA, or Chicago style citation, resources for which can be easily found online. Remember, anything that is not your own thinking or idea must be properly referenced! *The care ethics reading and any of the environmental ethics readings should be cited as chapters in an edited volume; the source information for each is given in the PDF.*

Proper citation always includes two things: in-text citation (parenthetical references or footnotes) and full information for each source at the end of the text (a works cited list). Any use of a source that is not cited constitutes plagiarism. Direct word-for-word copying from a source without use of both quotation marks and source citation is also plagiarism. Plagiarism may result in a 0 on this assignment.

**Grading:** The essay as a whole is worth 100 points and is 25% of your final course grade. Your grade on the assignment consists of the following criteria:

**Summary (25 points):** Give a clear and cohesive summary of two philosophical approaches to ethics or environmental ethics, clearly covering the most important aspects and overall main idea of each.

**Analysis (25 points):** Compare the strengths and weakness of each ethical approach, and give your own argument for which is better and why (or why both are equally good, etc.)

**Critical Thinking (25 points):** Be sure to show careful and consistent reasoning throughout your essay, clearly explain your ideas, and give reasoning behind your judgments and conclusion.

**Writing (25 points):** Be sure to write clearly, properly cite your sources, and make sure that your essay is mostly free of spelling and grammar errors; submit essay in proper format.

*Essays that are late and/or below the required word count will have points deducted outside of this grading criteria.*

**Contact your instructor if you have any questions over the essay paper assignment!**