

PHIL 1301 – Introduction to Philosophy (HCC)
Professor Joshua Ellery, J.D., M.A.
Term Paper Assignment

Due Date: You must upload a copy of your completed paper via the course Canvas site **no later than 11:59 p.m. on Monday, May 10, 2021**. Unless excused by me, late papers will be penalized one (1) full letter grade for every day late past the due date. Papers more than two (2) days late will not be accepted.

Weight/Value: 40% of your total course grade. See attached Grading Rubric.

Guidelines: Your term paper must follow the following guidelines:

- Total paper length must be at least 2,500 total words in length (approximately eight (8) to nine (9) double-spaced pages plus title page and works cited page). Papers failing to meet this requirement will be heavily penalized. See attached Grading Rubric for more details.
- You must insert the final "word count" on the bottom of the works cited page. Instructions for adding the "word count" field to your term paper will be given in class. Instructions can also be found here: <http://www.thewindowsclub.com/how-to-insert-word-count-in-word>
- Your paper must be typed, double-spaced in 12-point Times New Roman font with 1-inch (1") margins on all sides.
- Your paper should include a title page at the beginning of the paper, as well as a separate works cited page located at the end of the paper. Your title page should be fully descriptive and include (at minimum) the paper title, course name, semester and year, instructor name, student name, and date. Your works cited page should adhere to MLA Style (discussed further below).
- Each page of your paper (except the title page) should include a page number located in either the upper or lower margin. Do not include a table of contents.
- In writing your paper, you must clearly articulate a central thesis that responds to the paper topic you have chosen. Then, you must develop and execute that thesis. If you have any questions about this requirement, please ask me for help.
- In writing your paper, you must use and properly cite any relevant primary course text(s), **as well as at least two (2) additional outside sources**. Your outside sources should be scholarly in nature (e.g., article from a peer-reviewed journal; not Wikipedia or *SparkNotes*). If you only use the minimum two (2) outside sources, both **MUST** be scholarly in nature. If you use more than two (2) outside sources, most (but not all) should be scholarly in nature. If you have any questions about outside sources, please ask me for help.
- If your paper fails to cite any sources, you will receive an automatic "0."
- You may find the following online research sources helpful:
 - Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy – <https://plato.stanford.edu/> (good background reading on topics and philosophers)
 - www.philpapers.org (a very extensive database of published philosophy articles)
 - The JSTOR database at your school's library.

- Use MLA Style Guide when citing your primary and outside sources. Please note that MLA Style differs depending on whether you are giving an in-text citation or a citation on a works cited page. The following link contains a helpful free guide on MLA Style and several citation examples: <https://library.hccs.edu/mla-guide>

Plagiarism: You are expected to strictly adhere to the college's policy on plagiarism. If you have any questions regarding what constitutes plagiarism, please contact me so that I can address your question. **Any student submitting plagiarized work will receive an automatic zero ("0") for the assignment.**

Writing and Style Tips: There are many ways to write a very good philosophy term paper. We will discuss several of these approaches during my Writing Workshop lecture. In addition, you should also follow these general writing and style tips:

- You should re-read the relevant text several times before you start writing. You should research and find an informative outside academic source to help bolster your paper. You should outline your paper before you begin writing. You should revise and re-write your paper at least once after writing your first draft. You must be sure to cite properly any direct quotes or paraphrased passages – to do otherwise constitutes plagiarism.
- Your paper should have a short introductory paragraph and thesis that explains to the reader what your paper will set out to accomplish. Do not give a lengthy introduction and avoid protracted background/historical narrative. Indicate the task you will undertake and then immediately get down to business.
- Use correct grammar, spelling and punctuation throughout your paper. Write in a clear and readable style. Use short, direct language rather than complicated sentences or fancy words. If you are in need of a reference, I highly suggest reading Strunk and White's *The Elements of Style*.
- Never write in run-on sentences, they are distracting, sometimes confusing, and almost always can be written as separate full sentences, however fragments are just as bad. Do not use them. Unless you are a professor trying to make a point. Emphatically.
- Avoid using contractions in your writing (e.g., "do not" instead of "don't").
- Use transition words and "signposts" to guide the reader through your paper (e.g., "First, I will discuss..." and "However, many counter-arguments to this position exist.>").
- Use the present tense, except when describing historical events. Even though he is dead, "Descartes *argues* that the mind is distinct from the body..." (not "argued")
- You should use your computer's spell checking feature, but you should not rely on it entirely. Read your paper out loud at least once. Watch out for tricky words:
 - Properly use "cannot" (one word) not "can not"
 - Do not confuse "then" with "than"
 - "quote" can only be a verb; "quotation" is the noun
 - "accept" means allow; "except" means excluding
 - "effect" is usually a noun; "affect" is usually a verb meaning "to influence or produce an effect"
 - "it's" means "it is" ("It's raining outside.") while "its" is possessive ("This magnet has lost its magnetic powers.") Other examples include "you're" vs. "your" and "they're" vs. "their."

- Avoid using the passive voice, especially phrases such as “It is believed...” or “It is argued that...”
- Quotation marks go outside commas and periods (e.g., Socrates argues that piety cannot mean simply “...what all the gods love.”)
- In your paper, be clear when you are citing or paraphrasing someone else’s work or text versus when you are presenting your own ideas or arguments. You should use “I” freely when doing the latter.
- Finally, think of writing as *teaching* someone about a really interesting idea you want to them to understand. Maintain a tone and level of discourse appropriate for the subject, but think of your audience as a good friend or spouse whom you hope to enlighten and perhaps convince. In fact, it can be helpful to have someone else read your paper and tell you where it is not clear enough or needs more explanation.

Term Paper Topics: Choose one (1) of the topics below and write a fully developed term paper that adheres to the above guidelines.

1. In *The Republic*, Plato explores several important themes (e.g., justice, power, human nature, etc.) Choose one (1) of the above themes (or another approved by me) and fully articulate Plato's position on that theme. Use two (2) or (3) distinct arguments/concepts from *The Republic* to support your thesis. Do you agree or disagree with Plato's position with respect to your chosen theme? Why or why not?
2. In his *Discourse on the Origin of Inequality*, Rousseau uses the traits of "perfectibility" and "free will" to help describe different aspects of human nature. What does Rousseau mean by perfectibility? How does Rousseau define free will? Does Rousseau think that perfectibility and free will are positive attributes for us to have, or does he think they are negative attributes (or a little bit of both)? Explain fully. Finally, explain whether you agree with Rousseau's position or not.
3. Mary Wollstonecraft artfully explores several different feminist themes in her *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*, including the institution of marriage, the role education ought to play in a young woman's development, and arguing that women should be financially self-sufficient.

Choose one (1) of the above feminist themes (or another approved by me) and fully explain Wollstonecraft's position. Next, compare and contrast Wollstonecraft's position with that of a modern-day author/academic/theorist who has written on that same feminist theme. Which person – Wollstonecraft or the author of your choosing – has the best approach? Have we as a society finally "solved" this particular issue, or is there more room for improvement?

Please let me know if you have any questions about this assignment. Good luck!
Professor Ellery

Term Paper Assignment – Grading Rubric

	The "A" paper	The "B" paper	The "C" paper	The "D" paper	The "F" paper
Overall execution	Excels in responding to the assignment. Central thesis is clearly communicated and then fully executed. Shows sophisticated, independent thought and mastery of subject matter.	A solid paper, responding appropriately to the assignment. Clearly states and executes a central thesis, but may have minor lapses in execution. Shows basic understanding of subject matter.	An adequate but weaker paper, responding less well to the assignment. Central thesis is not clearly communicated. Alternatively, central thesis is not well executed. Shows basic competency of subject matter.	Does not respond appropriately to the assignment. Thesis may be missing or vague. Demonstrates little understanding of subject matter. Paper may also be deficient in length.	Non-responsive to the assignment and/or severely deficient in length.
Literary support	Uses in-class and outside sources very effectively. Citations are well executed throughout.	Uses in-class and outside sources appropriately and effectively. Citations are more or less well executed throughout.	Uses in-class and outside sources somewhat effectively. Citations are present but are sporadically used and/or not well executed.	Missing references to in-class and/or outside sources. Citations may also be missing entirely and/or not well executed.	Does not use any in-class or outside sources. Citations may also be missing entirely.
Organization & coherence	Very well organized. Uses a logical structure appropriate to the central thesis and subject matter. Sophisticated transitional sentences are used. The paper guides the reader through the chain of reasoning or progression of thought.	Organized, but shows less of a command of transitional sentences. Uses a logical structure appropriate to the central thesis and subject matter, but may have minor lapses in execution. Each paragraph clearly relates to the thesis, but some transitions may be awkwardly executed.	May present ideas or arrange them randomly rather than using a logical structure. While each paragraph relates to the central thesis, transitional sentences are not widely used and the logic is not always clear. Arrangement of paragraphs or sentences within paragraphs may be awkward or lack structure and coherence.	May have random organization, lacking overall organization or internal paragraph coherence. Makes use of few transition sentences, but they are unfocused or vague. Paragraphs may lack topic sentences, are off-topic, or may be too general or vague to be effective.	No appreciable organization; lacks transition sentences and coherence.
Writing style	Chooses words for their precise meaning and uses specificity when needed. Sentences are varied, yet clearly structured and carefully focused – not long and rambling.	Generally uses words accurately, but can be too general or vague at times. Sentences generally clear, well structured and focused, but a few are awkward or ineffective.	Uses vague or general words, may use some inappropriate language. Sentence structure is fair, but some sentences may be wordy, unfocused or confusing at times.	Uses vague, abstract or inappropriate language. Usually contains several awkward or ungrammatical sentences.	Usually contains many awkward sentences, misused words or inappropriate material.
Writing mechanics	Almost entirely free of spelling, punctuation and grammatical errors.	May contain a few errors, which might annoy the reader but does not impede his understanding.	Usually contains several mechanical errors, which may temporarily confuse the reader but does not impede his understanding.	Usually contains many mechanical errors which impede the reader's understanding.	Usually contains many errors. These errors may be serious enough to cause confusion to the reader.