

Instructions

You will write a philosophy paper, related to the issues that we have talked about in class. It is up to you to come up with a thesis and defend it in the paper. Refer to the course website for resources on how to write a philosophy paper.

The final paper you write will be ideally 7-9 pages, double-spaced. There are three tracks you can choose, as described below:

Track #1 (10-10-40)

16 November: You will submit a paper draft. A paper draft is a philosophy paper as much as a final paper is. That is, it will have a thesis, and arguments for that thesis. It will consider the most reasonable objections to that thesis, and say something reasonable in response to them. But it will be shorter, 5-7 double-spaced pages. This draft is worth 10% of your final grade, and I will grade it more leniently than a final paper.

30 November: I will give your paper to (up to 2) other students pursuing Track #1. They will be in charge of reading your paper and writing a (around ½ to 1 page) critique of it. You will also be required to read (up to 2) student papers and write critiques of them (around ½ to 1 page). I will also give you a critique of your paper. Your critiques will be worth 10% of your final grade (on the paper). Your critiques can say anything, e.g. 'I don't understand this part, because...', 'I think this is mistaken, because...', 'I think you should consider this other argument...' and so on. I will grade your critiques based on how much I think you've tried to help your fellow students.

(I may email you and tell you which parts of your fellow students' critiques are most useful to you in writing your final draft.)

14 December: You will submit a final paper. It will be 7-9 pages, as described above. This will be worth 40% of your grade. I will grade it partially relative to how well you dealt with your critiques. That is, there will not be an absolute standard of good argumentation, but a relative one.

Track #1 is the easiest track for a good grade. If you earnestly try to help your fellow students in your critiques, you are more or less guaranteed 10%. Your draft (with no help from others) is limited to 10% of the paper grade. Finally, you will be assessed by a relative standard (which is good for you). Track #1 involves the greatest amount of work.

Track #2 (20-40)

30 November: You will submit a paper draft. A paper draft is a philosophy paper as much as a final paper is. That is, it will have a thesis, and arguments for that thesis. It will consider the most reasonable objections to that thesis, and say something reasonable in response to them. But it will be shorter, 5-7 double-spaced pages. This draft is worth 20% of your final grade, and I will grade it more leniently than a final paper.

I will write you a critique/ grade of your paper by 7 December (it depends on how many people choose Track #2). So you will have significantly less time to revise your paper in response to the critique, and far fewer critiques to help you.

14 December: You will submit a final paper. It will be 7-9 pages, as described above. This will be worth 40% of your grade. I will grade it partially relative to how well you dealt with your critique (1). That is, there will not be an absolute standard of good argumentation, but a relative one.

Track #2 is “middle” difficulty for a good grade. Some of your final paper grade will be determined by the draft, which is graded leniently. Additionally, you will have my feedback (though less time to use it). Finally, you will be assessed by a relative standard (how well you responded to my feedback), rather than an absolute one (how good I think your arguments are absolutely).

Track #3 (60%)

14 December: You will submit a final paper. It will be 7-9 pages, as described above. This will be worth 60% of your grade. I will grade it on the basis of how good I think the arguments are (and the other virtues of a good philosophy paper).

Track #3 requires the least amount of writing and has the furthest-away deadlines, but it is the hardest track to get a good grade in. However, very good and confident students may choose this track if they wish.