

PHIL 340 guidelines for paper assignments
Dr. Earl, Spring 2012

General instructions:

There are five short papers required for our course. Each paper should be an argumentative essay that focuses very sharply on a particular thesis or argument to be presented and critically evaluated. These aren't research papers: You'll have some exegetical material, yes, but I need to see your own argumentative work here. Papers should be no less than three full pages in length, though the text can run as long as four full pages.

Each paper must be typed, not be composed of extensive quotations or close paraphrases, and it must include proper citations where appropriate. Your essay is expected to live up to the basic standards of college writing, so be sure to spellcheck and proofread your paper multiple times before handing it in.

You'll turn your paper in on Blackboard under the SafeAssign link (on the main content page for our course). It's a plagiarism detection program, but I'm mostly using it as an easy way for you to submit online while at the same time having an easy method on my end to keep copies of everyone's papers together. I'll return comments to you either through SafeAssign or by email.

Formatting and citations

- Double-space the text, number the pages, use a normal type of font (such as Times New Roman or Palatino) with black ink, and leave a one-inch margin around the text.
- In the upper left-hand corner of your first page, give a single-spaced list of the following: Your name, the course (PHIL 340), which paper the assignment is (e.g., Paper #1), and the date. Below that, and centered, should be a title. Ten points may be deducted for failing to include these items.
- All thoughts that are not your own must be referenced by properly formatted in-text citations, and such references must be listed in a properly-formatted works cited list at the end of the paper (which doesn't need to be on a separate page, incidentally). If you don't cite your sources properly, you're plagiarizing.

I'll give you suggestions as for possible topics. You may choose your own topic too, provided that the entirety of your paper is directed at the material that is the subject matter of the portion of the course in question. (E.g., a paper entitled "Aristotle vs. Sun Tzu's *The Art of War*: Let's get ready to rumble" just won't work here.)

The first paper is due on Blackboard by Wednesday, January 25 at 11:30 p.m. (changed from syllabus deadline)

Suggestions to maximize the chances for a successful paper:

- **Focus the paper on a particular thesis or argument.** Broad issues and general debates are good to mention in the introduction or at the end, but they shouldn't be the primary focus of the paper.
- **Have something to say.** The paper needs a thesis statement expressing what you're aiming to show or defend in the paper. The paper will focus on a philosophical argument or thesis we've considered, yes, but you still have to be saying and defending something with respect to your topic.
- **Have a short but effective introduction.** In a short opening paragraph, we need your thesis, what generally the paper's focus is, how the rest of the paper will be structured, and something very short that connects the paper with larger issues. Don't leave out any of these things.
- **Organize the paper in a logically perspicuous way.** The paper should have a logical structure appropriate to an argumentative paper. There are lots of good structures for papers, but here is an example: After the introduction, a paper might state an argument, with some discussion of the defense of the premises. It might then consider an objection to that argument, followed by a possible reply to that objection. A conclusion summing things up appears at the end.
- **Have only one argument per paragraph.** This is for clarity and organization. Clarifications of a thesis should be kept separate from arguments for that thesis. Arguments should be kept separate from objections to that argument. An objection should be kept separate from replies to that objection. And so on.
- **Consider at least one objection to your own theses and arguments.** The best argumentative essays consider objections to their own arguments. If you consider the best criticism of your own view and then refute that objection, your view is thus much better defended.
- **Cite all sources properly.** Anything that is not your own unique contribution or a matter of common knowledge needs a citation in the text. You'll be summarizing things from our readings, and such material needs citations. Include a works cited list also.
- **Write in complete sentences.** Observe all of the rules for proper grammar, mechanics, and usage (including those for our technical terms). Less than one "fatal error" per page is a reasonable goal. Ten or more errors per page guarantees a very low grade. (*Fatal errors* are significant mistakes: misspelled words, run-on sentences and sentence fragments, errors using the comma, errors using the apostrophe, agreement errors (especially for use of verbs and pronouns), and mistakes in capitalization.)

Other items of note:

Paper resubmission policy: You have the option to resubmit any one of the first four papers, with the possibility of receiving a grade as much as 30 points higher than the original. (You can't get higher than a 100 though.) Resubmissions need to be submitted electronically (on Blackboard, as with the other papers) by 11:30 p.m. on the day of our last class meeting.

Late assignments: Unless otherwise specified, papers are due at the assigned due date and time. Ten points will be deducted for late papers, with an additional ten points for each further *calendar day* the assignment is late. Some leniency may be expected for documented excuses of the types given in the course syllabus (p. 3), and perhaps others, the leniency being at the instructor's discretion. (Late papers may not be resubmitted for a higher grade.)

Supplemental materials: For more materials on essay writing in general, and on writing philosophy papers in particular, go to <http://ww2.coastal.edu/dearl/papers/papers.html>.

Course/assignment: PHIL 340 paper #X			Student name: name		
	Excellent (A)	Good to adequate (B+ to C)	Needs significant improvement (D+ to F)	Points Available	Points Earned
Is the introduction effective and efficient?	(9-10 points) All of the following are clearly and efficiently stated: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The thesis The focus/main topic Overall structure Relevance to larger issues 	(7-8 points) Some of the following are unclear or not stated efficiently: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The thesis The focus/main topic Overall structure Relevance to larger issues 	(0-6 points) Some of the following are very unclear, inefficiently stated, or missing: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The thesis The focus/main topic Overall structure Relevance to larger issues 	10	
Is the organization logically perspicuous?	(9-10 points) The paper's overall logical structure is very clear: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sections and subsections are clearly separated and are in a logical order. Each paragraph performs only one argumentative task. 	(7-8 points) The paper's overall logical structure is clear but could be improved: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Not all sections and subsections are clearly separated or arranged logically. Some paragraphs perform more than one argumentative task. 	(0-6 points) The paper has little or no clear logical structure. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Most sections and subsections are not clearly separated or arranged logically. Many paragraphs perform more than one argumentative task. 	10	
Is the exegetical material (of the views and arguments of others) clear and accurate?	(23-25 points) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Views discussed are stated clearly, accurately, and in detail. Arguments discussed are stated clearly, accurately, and in detail. If quotations are used, they are only used where appropriate. 	(18-22 points) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Some views discussed are stated unclearly, inaccurately, and/or with not enough detail. Some arguments discussed are stated unclearly, inaccurately, and/or with not enough detail. Fewer quotations are needed. 	(0-17 points) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Most views discussed were stated unclearly, inaccurately, and/or with not enough detail. Most arguments discussed were stated unclearly, inaccurately, and/or with not enough detail. Quotations are used excessively. 	25	
Are the student's own views and arguments clear?	(14-15 points) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The views stated in the paper are clear. All of the paper's arguments are clear, with appropriate supporting arguments where necessary. A clear, relevant, and reasonable objection is considered along with a reply. 	(11-13 points) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Some views stated in the paper need to be stated more clearly. The paper's arguments need to be clearer, and/or they need more supporting arguments. An objection is not considered, or is unclear, irrelevant, weak, or not replied to. 	(0-10 points) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Most or all views stated in the paper are very unclear. The paper's arguments are very unclear or include little detail and support. An objection is not considered or is very unclear, irrelevant, weak, or not replied to. 	15	
Are in-text citations and the works cited list complete and properly formatted?	(9-10 points) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Any omissions of in-text citations are extremely minor. The works cited list is complete and contains no formatting errors. 	(7-8 points) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Several in-text citations are missing, or at least one source is missing from the works cited list. There are some errors in the formatting of in-text citations or the works cited list. 	(0-6 points) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Many in-text citations are missing, or many sources are missing from the works cited list. There are many errors in the formatting for the in-text citations or the works cited list. 	10	
How good is the writing quality ?	(27-30 points) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The writing is error-free or nearly so: There is at most one fatal error per (double-spaced) page. The style is clear and easy to follow. 	(21-26 points) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> There are between two and five fatal errors per (double-spaced) page. The style could be clearer and easier to follow. 	(0-20 points) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> There are five or more fatal errors per (double-spaced) page. (>10 errors/page = 0 points) The style is very unclear and hard to follow. 	30	
Total				100	0

Primary suggestions for improvement: