

PHIL001. INTRODUCTION TO PHILOSOPHY – SHORT PAPER #1, **DUE: SEE BELOW**

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1. TOPIC

The topic of your *Short Paper #1* must be on or closely related to one of the following philosophical issues:

- (1) Freedom & Moral Responsibility
- (2) Personal Identity
- (3) Mental States
- (4) Material Objects

Ideally, you should take a stance on one of the above issues and argue for that position by providing compelling reasons for your position.

2. LENGTH AND FORMAT

Your paper should run be *at least* 2500 words but *no more* than 3000 words. The paper should have 1, 1.5, or 2 spacing, 12-font, Times New Roman, standard 1 inch margins. Your paper should have the following basic structure:

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| <p>Title of Paper Your Name PHIL001 – Short Paper #1</p> <p><i>Section 1. Introduction</i></p> <p>Explain the topic of your paper and note your principal goals/aims/theses.</p> <p><i>Sections 2–4</i></p> <p>In the middle sections of your paper, you should:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">(1) Make distinct sections, labeled by section titles (e.g. 1. [Name of Section 1]) that correspond to the principal goals/theses/aims of your paper.(2) Each section should begin by indicating what information it plans to address (e.g. In this section, I first articulate that the <i>second</i> tenet of classical foundationalism consists of the following claims x, y, z. From this interpretation, I argue that in the <i>Discourse on Method</i>, Descartes holds all three of these positions for he writes x, and then in arguing for x, claims y and z). <p><i>Section 5 Conclusion</i></p> |
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Summarize the preceding.

3. DUE DATE

A complete draft of your paper is due (in class) on **Friday, July 22nd**. You should bring your paper into class for a peer-editing session. This session is critical because your classmates and I will give you a number of tips on how to improve your paper and correct any typographical errors you may have made. A final version of Short Paper #1 is due on **Monday, July 25th**.

4. KEY ELEMENTS

Your paper should aim to have the following key components:

- 1. Metadiscourse**
- 2. A Thesis and an Argument**
- 3. Frequently Asked Questions**

1. METADISCOURSE

Metadiscourse is sometimes defined as ‘talk about talk’. It is language used to refer to the author’s degree of a commitment to a proposition (I maintain, I believe, I conclude, I strongly believe), to announce what the author plans to do in a paper (explain, argue, claim, describe, suggest, summarize), or to indicate the organization of the paper (First, Second, Finally).

1.1. USING METADISCOURSE TO ORGANIZE & PLAN

One of the best places to use metadiscourse is in the Introduction of your paper. Consider the two introductions below.

Introduction #1 – With Metadiscourse

In this paper, I will make three points. First, that Descartes claimed that we can be justified in the existence of the external world by introspection. Second, Peirce claimed that there is no evidence for the faculty of introspection. Third, and finally, I will argue that there is evidence for such a faculty and Peirce’s arguments fail.

Introduction #2 – With Metadiscourse

Descartes claimed that we can be justified in the existence of the external world by introspection. Peirce claimed that there is no evidence for the faculty of introspection. There is evidence for such a faculty and Peirce’s arguments fail.

Notice that in the first introduction, the author clearly indicates (i) how many points they plan on making and (ii) gives some indication what each of those points are.

1.2. SECTION TITLES

The use of numbered section titles is a form of metadiscourse. For example, a paper could be divided into the following sections.

1. *Introduction*
2. *The Physical Theory of Personal Identity*
3. *Three Objections to Physicalist Theories*
4. *A Revised Physicalist Theory of Personal Identity*
5. *Conclusion*

The use of section titles breaks up large blocks of text and allows the reader to see how chunks of text fit into an overall argumentative structure.

2. A THESIS AND AN ARGUMENT

2.1. A THESIS

In the paper you should assert a **thesis**. This is a philosophical position you take to be the case. It can be either positive or negative. Here are two examples:

- (1) In this paper, I will argue that hard-determinism is false because of reasons X, Y, and Z.
- (2) In this paper, I claim that soulful theories of personal identity are better than physical theories of identity for two reasons.

2.2. AN ARGUMENT

In addition to a thesis, you will want to provide a convincing **argument** or *reasons* why your position is the case. Remember, you don't have to know that your thesis is the case, your goal is to provide a compelling case why one theory is better than the other, or why one theory is hopelessly wrong.

There are many examples of arguments in your textbook and we have gone over many in class. Here is one:

Hard-determinism is defined as the following thesis:

Hard-determinism=df. (i) determinism is true, (ii) no humans are morally free, (iii) humans are never morally responsible for their actions.

While people think hard-determinism is false for a variety of different reasons, many people think that hard-determinism is false because (iii) is false. In opposition to these people, I claim that hard-determinism is true. My argument is as follows:

1. Determinism is true.
2. If determinism is true, then every human action is pre-determined by antecedent conditions and the laws of nature.

3. If every human action is pre-determined by antecedent conditions and the laws of nature, then no humans act freely.
4. If no humans act freely, then humans are not morally responsible for their actions.
5. Therefore, humans are not morally responsible for their actions.

Assume (1) is true. The rationale behind (2) is (i) that there are a state of affairs (antecedent conditions) that occur before human actions and (ii) if determinism is true, then every human action was made physically necessary by these antecedent conditions and the laws of nature. The rationale for (3) is that if every human action is predetermined, then no human acts freely since every action is the consequence of a prior state of affairs and laws of nature and *not* the consequence of human choice. That is, while *I think (or feel like)* it was me who choose to do X, it was determined by a previous state of affairs and the laws of nature. The rationale for (4) is that in order for a human to be considered morally responsible for an action, humans must have committed that action freely. Thus, if no one acts freely, then no one is morally responsible. Finally, (5) states the conclusion which is the consequence that no one is morally responsible for their actions.

3. FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

1. Do I need to quote or cite the texts?

You should keep *quotations* to an **absolute minimum** but if you should *cite* passages (including page number) so it is possible to identify where you are drawing your information from. Try as best you can to summarize the contents in your own words. However, whenever you are summarizing you should *cite* the paper and/or page you are summarizing, e.g. (Gettier 1963:121).

2. Do I need a reference (or Works-Cited) section?

Yes, but it does not need to be extremely detailed. Make sure you have the major elements:

Author Name. Year Published. Title of Book/Article. Place of Publication or Journal Title, etc.

If you are unsure about formatting citations, take a look at [KnightCite](#). Here is the citation for *The Essential Peirce*.

Peirce, Charles. 1992. *The Essential Peirce*. Edited by Nathan Houser and Christian Kloesel. Vol. 1. Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press.

Here is the citation for citing a classroom handout:

Agler, David W. 2011. PHIL001: Introduction to Philosophy, Freedom & Determinism, pp.53–64. Classroom Handout.

3. Are you grading for correct grammar and spelling?

Yes and no. Improper grammar and bad spelling will likely make your essay difficult to understand, and this will in turn affect how clearly you demonstrate your understanding of the topic.

4.4 ANY SUGGESTIONS

1. Try not to make generalizations about the history of philosophy, widespread opinion in philosophy, or statements about what occurs in philosophy as a whole. For example, these sentences are **not** acceptable.

- It is widespread opinion in philosophy ...
- From the dawn of time, people have tried to discover what knowledge is ...

2. If you plan on making a controversial claim, you will need to argue for it. If you plan on making an uncontroversial claim,

- No matter how the definition of knowledge is argued it is impossible to ever come up with one correct definition.

3. Don't end your paper with a question.

- So, in conclusion Descartes's argument is pretty complicated and could be reworked into a successful one, don't you think?

4. If you need to emphasize, use *italics*. Don't underline and don't **bold**.