

First essay assignment
PHIL 102, Hendricks, Fall 2013

DUE DATE: Due Friday, Oct. 4, by noon at the latest (beginning of the last discussion section for that day) — submit this essay on the Connect site for the course (<http://connect.ubc.ca>), under “Assignments.” Bring 1-2 copies of your essay to give to one or more members of your small group (you’ll probably be doing peer feedback in pairs, but some groups have 5 members so some people will give their essay to two other people instead of one). We’ll work out in discussion sections who is reading whose essay, so you’ll know in advance how many copies of your essay you need to bring. Alternatively, you could post your essay on your small group’s discussion board on the Connect website for this course (see: <http://connect.ubc.ca>).

I. Instructions for content of first essay

The first essay is about how one ancient philosopher might answer the questions, what is philosophy and what is its value? Choose **one** of the ancient philosophers we’re discussing in the course to write your essay on. Plato/Socrates and Epicurus are the only ones we’ll be discussing in time! Think of Plato/Socrates as “one” philosopher for the purpose of this essay.) If you would like to write about Plato/Socrates, be sure to discuss some of what Plato says in at least **two** of the texts we’ve read by him (*Euthyphro*, *Apology*, *Gorgias*).

In your essay, discuss the following:

What might the philosopher you’ve chosen say about **one or both of the following questions:**

- (1) What is philosophy?
- (2) What might its value be? And/or: Why might it be good to engage in philosophical study or activities?

Justify your answer by reference to what that philosopher says in the texts we’ve read. Though it would ideally be best to answer (2) only after you’ve answered (1), this first essay is quite short, and is meant to give you practice in writing for philosophy. So for this one, you can do either question or both.

Your essay must have the following elements:

1. *Give a thesis statement in the introduction* that states what the philosopher might say in answer to one or both of the above two questions.
2. *Provide arguments in the body of the essay to support your claims* that this is what the philosopher would say, being sure to point to what the philosopher says in the texts we’ve read as evidence. You can paraphrase the philosopher’s claims in your own words, and/or use quotes. It’s best to use quotes when you are speaking about a very specific thing a philosopher says, or when the particular words used are important to your claims; paraphrasing is good for more general ideas, or if the particular words used are not crucial to your claims. These are just guidelines, though; I don’t have hard and fast rules about when you should use quotes and when you should paraphrase. It’s probably best to do some of both.
3. *Give a conclusion that wraps up the argument* in some way. It can summarize your main points, or repeat the basic idea of the thesis, or possibly provide a nice quote that wraps everything up. There are numerous ways to conclude an essay; just be sure you have a conclusion and don’t just stop in the middle of the argument in the body of the essay.

II. Instructions for format of the first essay

Page length, margins, etc. Your essay should be 2-3 pages in length, typed, double-spaced, with margins between 0.75 and 1 inch, and font size between 10 and 12 points. It can be a little less than 2 pages or a little more

than 3, but not much. You won't be able to do justice to the topic in less than 2, I think, and practice in being concise (saying what you need to in a clear but fairly short manner) is a good skill to learn in philosophy!

Citations for quotes and paraphrases: Any time you use a quote or you paraphrase an idea from any text (whether from readings assigned for class, or from another source), you must cite the source of that quote or idea. If you use only texts assigned for the course, you do not need to provide a bibliography or "works cited" page at the end of the paper, just the author and page number after the quote or paraphrase (or, if we read more than one work by the same author, give the author, title of the work, and page number in parentheses). But if you use anything beyond what is assigned for the course, you must provide a bibliography or "works cited" page. You may use any of the standard citation methods: e.g., MLA, APA, Chicago/Turabian. If you are unsure how to use any of these, please see this page on the course website, which has links for how to cite sources: <http://blogs.ubc.ca/phil102/resources/> (see: "Citing Sources and Avoiding Plagiarism")

Avoid plagiarism: It is the policy of the Instructor to prosecute plagiarism to the fullest extent allowed by UBC. Any use of another's words, including just a sentence or part of a sentence, without citation, constitutes plagiarism. Use of another's ideas without citation does as well. To avoid plagiarism, always give a citation whenever you have taken ideas or direct words from another source. **Please see this page on the course website for information on how to avoid plagiarism**, especially when you're paraphrasing ideas or quoting from another source—quite a lot of plagiarism is not on purpose, just because students don't understand the rules! <http://blogs.ubc.ca/phil102/resources/>

Depth of explanation and narrowness vs. breadth and superficiality: It's usually best to focus your paper on a small number of claims and argue for them in some depth rather than trying to range widely over a very large number of claims that you then only have space to justify very quickly. This is especially the case in a short essay like this. You may not be able to talk about everything you think the philosopher would say in answer to one or both of these questions in such a short space. So pick one or two main things the philosopher would say and focus on those.

Audience you should write for: Write both of these essays as if you were writing for someone who is not in the class, has not read the texts, and has not attended the lectures. Explain your view, and the arguments of the philosophers you discuss, in as much depth as would be needed to make them clear to such an audience.

Criteria for marking essays: See the "Guidelines for Writing Papers for this Course," posted on the course website (under "Assignments"). I will also post a marking rubric that we will use when marking your essays, which adheres to the "Guidelines" document.

Late penalty: Late essays must be accompanied by a "late paper form." accessible on the course website on the page that has this essay assignment, under "Assignments." Late essays will receive a 5% per weekday penalty, beginning after class on the day when the essay is due, unless you have an acceptable excuse for turning in your essay late. So, if you turn it in after your discussion section on Friday Oct. 4 and before 5pm on Monday Oct. 7, it will be 5 points off, if you turn it in after 5pm Monday Oct. 7 and before 5pm Tuesday Oct. 8, it will be 10 points off, etc. You should contact Christina or your T.A. before turning in a late essay, if possible.