

Aim to convince using logical argumentation. Display your reasoning. Include at least one *valid* argument. Note that the word counts for the paper is 3000 maximum (due **July 3rd**, including footnotes and bibliography).

Checklist:

1. Double-spaced?
2. Title?
3. Student-number? (Anonymous grading)
4. Works cited or bibliography?
5. Clearly separated introduction, body and conclusion? (Follow the more detailed instructions for each section)

Following this checklist should be enough to ensure that a paper is written. However, if a good, or a great paper be written, those further instructions ought to then be followed.

1 Introduction

Write your introduction last. *Introduce your paper, not your topic.* Tell the reader what the paper they are to read contains. Be specific. Your title (or keywords for published papers) should say enough about your topic to draw the reader in to your paper. If you want to introduce your topic in more detail, save it for the second paragraph of your essay (and think of that paragraph as providing an aetiology of the problem addressed by the paper).

State the position that you will argue for clearly: give a thesis statement.

Avoid the English-paper descent to the particular, e.g., “Philosophers have long pondered death. One of the most popular theories is West’s. West holds that . . .”

Checklist:

1. One paragraph?
2. Map of the paper to come?
3. Thesis (or statement of the point of the paper)?
4. Summary of the means by which the thesis is argued (an answer to a how-question)?

State your thesis clearly. This is of the utmost importance. Topic-statements and thesis-statements are different:

Topic	Thesis
In this paper, I discuss Klein's notion of the Shock Doctrine.	I argue (show, demonstrate, etc.) that Klein's notion can be countered with Sherwin's ramblings.
In her article, Klein talks about telehealth.	Even though she talks about telehealth, she ultimately forgets to discuss telewealth. (Or: Klein succeeds in talking about telehealth but only at the cost of excluding telewealth).
Thomson is known for her valiant defense of abortion.	Despite Thomson's valiant defense of abortion, I will argue that her notion of abortion implies that it is much better to be dead than it is to be alive, which is absurd.

Do not introduce your paper with a meaningless, general, vague or abstract sentence. For example, “Plato is one of the greatest philosophers ever.” How do you know? How many philosophers have you read? Or: “Since the dawn of time, men and women of all cultures and religions have wondered about the nature of nature.” What does that bring to your argument? For any sentence, if the answer is nothing, then erase the sentence. Only bring in biographical, historical, or contextual details that are relevant to *your* argument.

2 Body

Write this first, your introduction last, and make the body of your paper follow the plan laid out in your introduction. In the body of your paper make distinctions when necessary (usually this is quite often), cite where appropriate (see Section 4), aim to rationally persuade, and make arguments that are easy for someone else to follow. A philosophical essay is all about logical structure and clarity.

Checklist:

1. Valid argument? (All philosophy papers should contain valid arguments. You are writing a philosophy paper, therefore you must give a *valid* argument.)
2. Connectivity?
3. Grammar and style?

With respect to *validity* please see the “Logic” handout. Throughout this course we will be applying the concepts outlined in that handout. If you are objecting to an argument, give the argument, then tell the reader which premise you are objecting to. If you are unsure whether or not your argument(s) is(are)

valid, drop by during office hours or email me. You may of course include MORE than one valid argument in your paper.

As far as *connectivity* is concerned, there will come a place where it has been some time since the reader was introduced to your argument and the logical structure of your paper, so you will need to *sign-post*. When you are editing or writing your paper you need to find the “natural joints” of your paper. Once you’ve found them, or planned them out, answer the following questions about these key turning points in your paper:

1. What have you done so far?
2. Why have you wrote what you wrote?
3. What are you going to do next?
4. What is the aim of what you are going to do next?
5. How does what you have done, what you have written, what you are going to do next, and what the aim is of what you are going to do next, connect to the purpose of your paper?

Fill the natural joints with the answers to those questions. Given that these are 3,000 word essays, there may be only 3-4 natural joints to your paper.

With respect to *grammar and style*, follow the conventions of good writing. Follow a style guide (if you are unsure where to find an appropriate style guide, please come see me, or visiting the writing centre or the library). Above all, philosophical writing is concise. The more “boring” your paper is, the easier it will be to understand.

Focus! Avoid throwing as much mud at the wall in order to see what sticks. This is what class-time is for. In a paper take only your best shots.

Make use of the course material. However, do not consider your topic from every angle.

Use whatever voice you prefer: first person, second person, third person, fourth person, etc. If you have some direct experience with your topic, you may include this in the paper, but don’t overdo it. A paper is not a place to share your personal reflections and feelings. If that’s what you’re interested in, start a blog. In this class, how you feel is not important, only how you think.

Write no more or less than you need. Write one paper. Focus on making it unified. If there is anything that does not pertain to the main point you want to make, cut it out. If you really want to include it, try putting it in a footnote. Avoid fluff. If your paper can survive without a sentence, remark, or even a paragraph, it needs to go. In most cases the use of fluff indicates that the author does not understand what they are talking about. Edit, re-read, re-examine, revise, and tighten up your argument. An essay is a work of art.

Make use of any comments you receive, proofread, and edit your paper. Read it out loud to yourself, have someone else look it over, and do what all else you can to make your paper readable.

Eye halve a spelling chequer
It came with my pea sea
It plainly Marx four my revue
Miss steaks eye Cannes knot sea.
Eye strike a key and type a word
And weight four it two say
Weather eye am wrong oar write
It shows me strait a weigh.
As soon as a mist ache is maid
It nose bee four two long
And eye can put the error rite
Its rare lea ever wrong.
I've run this poem threw it, and
I'm shore your pleased two no
Its letter perfect awl the weigh
My spell Czech tolled me sew

Writing is an acquired skill. Model your writing on an author who speaks to you in a clear voice. Find your own voice, but know your audience.

3 Conclusion

Wrap-up your paper. Answer the following questions:

1. What you have done, accomplished, shown, and argued for in your paper?
2. What is the significance of your paper? What is the up-shot of your paper? What is the take-home message?
3. How has what you have written, and hopefully thought about, add to the texts you have discussed?

The conclusion should not be a personal statement or reflection. A philosophical paper is about how you think, not about how you feel, though you may certainly think about how you feel.

4 Citations

Ultimately all of this depends on where you want to be published, many journals are idiosyncratic, and do not fully conform to the famously irritating style guides (e.g., MLA, Chicago, APA, etc.). Use whatever citation method you prefer, but be consistent. Make sure someone else can find what you are referencing. Follow the citation conventions for particular works (e.g., Stephanus pagination for Plato).

It goes without saying, but do not plagiarize. If you are unsure about how you are making reference to someone else's work, speak with your professor. Do not include unnecessary sources. You are marked by how effectively you use your sources, not how many sources you have (quality over quantity).

Checklist:

1. References? Do all direct “quotations” have citations? Do all paraphrases (indirect quotations) have citations? No quotation without citation!
2. Have you followed the citation conventions for canonical authors? This is the digital era, so find the authoritative text.
3. Endnotes? Do not use endnotes ever, even if someone asks you to.
4. Are all quotations (direct and indirect) explained or justified? A quotation should always be preceded or followed by an explanation of its meaning and significance. Don’t just quote and drop the mic.

Any sentence that is introduced for example by Downie says, thinks, shows, argues, etc. should be followed by a parenthetical reference. Even when a sentence does not explicitly start this way, if it states an idea you got from the reading, it should be followed by a parenthetical reference. Where did you hear about this idea? How do you know Downie says or thinks that? Where did you get the idea that the soul has three parts? Are you making it up? You need to tell me that you are not relying on hearsay but on what Downie ACTUALLY says or thinks. A reference should ALWAYS be followed by a margin or page number. Telling me it’s in Downie’s article is not helpful. Be kind to your reader. Where is it exactly?

Why are references important?

Uphold the principle of faithfulness. Suppose you claim that Wolf says X and I think you’re wrong. If you tell me it’s at page 123 of *Feminism and Bioethics*, then I will go read the passage, and I will see if it supports your claim. Chances are it will and you’ll have proved me wrong. If, on the other hand, you didn’t include a parenthetical reference, then I can take any passage in Wolf’s entire corpus work and say: See, you’re wrong! Wolf says the exact opposite of X!

5 Good Papers

1. Think about your topic before you start looking at the text or writing anything. Be prepared. What information do you need to give the reader to make your point? What is the logical order of the demonstration? Write this down, use it as a plan. This will prevent you from writing about everything and nothing and help you focus your paper. Avoid repetition.
2. Link your ideas using logical connectors ('if ..., then ...,' '...and ...,' 'either ...or ...' 'Therefore, ...' etc.). Avoid plain enumerations: Savulescu says things are like this. Savulescu also says this. And he goes on to say this is that. What is the link between all those affirmations? Better: Savulescu says ...because ...However, Savulescu also says ...Therefore, we can conclude ...
3. Use simple language and simple sentences. Do not try to hide your ignorance under 5-syllable words and 5-line sentences. If you use a technical word, define it and give a simple example. The goal of philosophical writing is to be clear, not to impress. My head should not hurt when I read your essay. Be precise with your use of concepts. In philosophy, a critique is not a deconstruction, a theory is not an ideology, a person is not a consciousness, etc. Make sure your paper is easy to read (no typos, no grammatical mistakes ...)
4. Uphold the principle of charity. Assume that anyone you represent is right, that their theory is coherent and their arguments sound. Do everything you can to defend their position before you attack. If you misrepresent Marquis's position for example, his defence is going to be easy: that's not what he said! If you represent a position as well as you can, then even the most modest criticism can be fatal.

6 Great Papers

Be meticulous.

1. If I were to ask you what each paragraph is about, could you tell me in a sentence: "Here I do X"? (You should be able to label each paragraph.)
2. If I were to ask you what each sentence is doing in your paper and why it is where it is, could you answer: "Here I do this, then I do this, then I do this, so I can explain why X"?
3. If I were to ask you how each sentence relates to the topic and helps you defend your thesis, would you be able to answer?
4. If I were to ask you: what does this word mean, could you explain it in a simple way? Would your paper be clearer if you included this explanation? (If so, include it.)