

**Dr. Y's Philosophy 216 Paper Policies:
Writing PHI 216 Papers**

GENERAL INSTRUCTION: Your paper should be a reflection of some serious thought on your part to one of topics given on my website for PHI 216. One of your missions in the paper assignments is for you to discover what the most important points and objections are and discuss those. Remember that your argument is only as strong as your objections and your replies to those objections, and that I am not looking for a "laundry list" of points in favor of your view, or a paper based on "stream of consciousness."

PUNCTUALITY: No late papers will be accepted: Papers are due in class on the due dates you are given in class. Since I give you at least 4 weeks (in a 16-week course) to work on your papers, I will accept no late papers, unless you approve it in advance, or you are unconscious when the paper is due. We all know that "stuff happens," so plan accordingly. For instance, having a cold or a broken leg the day before a paper is due, jury duty, a computer problem, a business meeting on the morning that the paper is due, etc., can all be overcome by either working on the paper well before the night before the due date or turning the paper in ahead of time. If I do not talk to you BEFORE class starts (I'd recommend at least one day in advance, as sometimes I have 2 classes before yours, and will not be in my office until I return from your class that day!), your late paper will not be accepted. The only exception to this policy would be that you are unconscious! If you are in a hospital and conscious, have your friend or relative give me a call and let me know what is going on immediately!

FORMATTING: Every paper should be typed or word-processed (with a 12 cpi font). Your paper should be double-spaced, with one-inch margin on all sides, with page numbers in the upper right corner (see "Good Paper Sample" on my website). I will not accept handwritten papers for drafts or final papers. (The reason for these requirements is so I can write comments in between lines and in the margins.) Moreover, please do not use those plastic paper holders or report covers - they are cumbersome, often fall off, and make it hard to add comments to your paper - please simply staple your paper instead. Print and keep an extra copy for yourself in case a paper is misplaced. **Give your paper a title (and try to make it funny):** You have spent some time on your paper, have fun with titling it and entertain me at the same time! The first and second papers should be at least 4 pages, but *no more than 6 pages*. *If you are having problems on having too little or too much to say in your paper, come see me.* Do not change the font size or margins just to make it appear that your paper is larger or smaller than it is. I'm not an idiot - I can tell when you are doing this, and it doesn't help anything. This is yet another reason to start each paper early - you may have too little or too much to say. Remember, I am here to help!

GRADING CRITERIA: Grades for papers will be awarded based on using the following five criteria for evaluation:

- **Following Instructions:** Have you followed the format requirements, answered every question in an adequately complete way (given the allotted space!), and do you have the required elements within the required parts of the paper (Introduction, Body, and Conclusion - see the "Paper Checklist")? Have you plagiarized something from online or elsewhere?

- **Level of Clarity:** How clearly did you explain the view or theory, and argue for your position? Are there any weak arguments? Does the paper have more than 3 or 4 mistakes in grammar and/or spelling per page?
- **Consistency:** How well do you maintain a thesis that did not appeal to different, competing, contradictory theories? For example, did you argue in the first paragraph that there is a soul, and then say that there is no such thing as a soul? Or did you argue using Mill's theory of ethics in order to make your argument in the first paragraph, then argue using Kant's view in order to make your argument in the second paragraph?
- **Understanding:** Did you demonstrate a proper understanding of the views of the author(s) and/or philosopher(s) mentioned in your paper? Did you demonstrate your understanding of the philosophical issue that is at the heart of your paper? And finally,
- **Fairness:** Were you fair to your opponent? Did you set up your argument by presenting the other side in as weak a way as possible?

An "A" First Paper will (1) follow the instructions, have a high level of clarity, be consistent, and demonstrate understanding and fairness; (2) contain a good argument in support of the student's argument; and (3) will contain at least one good objection to the student's thesis and a reply to that objection by the student. An "A" Second Paper will have the three features mentioned for the First Paper above [(1), (2), and (3)], and (4) will contain at least two good objections to the student's thesis and separate replies to those objections by the student. In general, an "A" paper will (1) include relevant quotes from relevant readings (with page numbers as required below) to apply analysis to the answer; (2) include good objections (especially if required) and replies to those objections (this demonstrates you've thought about the other possible positions and have something intelligent to say about them); (3) answer all questions clearly and completely, focusing on answering the questions and not going on tangents (e.g., throwing in other related issues for whole paragraphs); and (4) not use many different theories to back up your view, since all these theories cannot be true at the same time.

YOUR AUDIENCE FOR THIS PAPER: You should pretend that you are writing to a skeptical, intelligent reader, who does not believe you when you state what other people believe or say. So, you need to give page numbers from the philosophers to prove your case – then the skeptical reader can verify that you have supported your case well, you've accurately described the author's/philosopher's position. Suppose that you will be giving your paper and the text for the class, and that they are NOT in the class (or the professor for the class) – will he or she be impressed, that you showed them that you knew what you were talking about and were fair to your opponent?

CITING PAGES: Readings and pages should be cited when necessary. *Whenever you quote or make use of a point made by others, EVEN IF YOU ARE NOT DIRECTLY QUOTING THEIR EXACT WORDS, you should document the source. To do otherwise is plagiarism, and you will fail the course.* This is therefore a very important issue. I do not care what style of referencing you use (e.g., your own method, APA, Chicago Manual of Style, etc.) as long as the references are precise and usable. There are two possibilities: Either you are quoting from the required text or not. **If you are citing a page from the required text** (Louis P. Pojman and Paul Pojman, eds. *Environmental Ethics: Readings in Theory and Application*. Fifth Edition), do **not** write out the whole name of the

book or even the author/editor each time; also, do **not** use the APA or MLA citing method. Note that, since there are two columns on most of the pages in our Ethics textbook, you should cite what *column* you got the information from whenever possible (e.g., use “17c1” for page 17, column 1; “17c2” for page 17, column 2; “17” for a sentence that goes from column 1 to column 2 on page 17; “17c2-18c1” for a sentence that goes from page 17, column 2 to page 18, column 1, etc.). For example, either (a) or (b) is fine [and (c) is not]. Suppose the sentence in your paper looks like this:

- (a) “World agriculture, in particular, is closely tied to current weather patterns” (434c2). [BEST] [or]
- (b) “World agriculture, in particular, is closely tied to current weather patterns” (p. 434c2). [OK]
- (c) “World agriculture, in particular, is closely tied to current weather patterns” (Louis P. Pojman, ed. *Environmental Ethics: Readings in Theory and Application*. Fourth Edition, p. 128). [BAD/WRONG] This just needlessly takes up *lots* of space.

However, if you are citing anything from a text other than one that is required, you should (1) simply cite the source and page number in parentheses in the body of your paper, and then (2) write a “Bibliography” page for your last page (I will NOT count this as part of your total pages!) with the author, the title of the book, magazine, journal, etc. or cite a website, and give the relevant publishing information (e.g., publisher, date of publication, author’s whole name, name of article, etc.). Just list the authors or websites in alphabetical order by last name (see below for more). [Moreover, you *may*, depending on how important the quote(s) is/are to your thesis and how thorough you would like to be, provide a copied page (attached at the end of the paper) from a website, book, etc.] Here are some *fictional* examples:

Website: In the paper: “The U.S. population is 325 million” (Census website). [Then on the Bibliography page, type in the URL: www.uscensus.org]

Magazine Article: In the paper: “Pollution due to plastic is at an all-time high” (*Time*, p. 39). [Then on the Bibliography page, type: Sixpack, Joe P. “What’s with the plastic?” *Time*. June 2002, pp. 38-39.]

Book: In the paper: “Ecocentrism is the most plausible, coherent theory about the environment” (Smith, p. 212). [Then on the Bibliography page, type: Smith, Penelope. *The Awesomeness of Ecocentrism*. Boston: Harvard University Press, 1996.

I highly recommend that you not quote passages from any holy writing (e.g., The Bible) to support your argument: Why? You will be opening up another issue that your opponent can question; he or she might have another holy writing they believe in or just not believe your preferred holy writing is correct.

If English is not your native language, if you have problems with grammar, or if you want to try to do really well on the papers, I recommend turning in a draft of your papers, so you can work out the major kinks (if any!) before you turn it in. You should keep two things in mind about draft papers. First, turning in a draft and fixing commented-on parts thereof does not guarantee an A (though I am pretty sure it will help). Second, there will be deadlines given with the topics as to

when you may turn in draft papers: **Procrastinators beware!** After the draft deadline has passed, I will be happy to **discuss** your paper in office hours, but I will probably not be able to read an entire paper at that point to comment on it. Philosophy papers are not easy to write, so I suggest that you write a draft of a paper (*whether or not you turn in a draft*) as soon as possible in order to do as well on the paper as possible. You might want to have a roommate or friend read your paper and have them tell *you* what the author you are explaining is saying, if they thought you were fair to your opponent, if it was clear, etc.

Come see me if you have any further questions about the paper, and I will answer them to the best of my ability. "I cannot help you if you do not ask!"