

310: THE PHILOSOPHICAL ESSAY

Deadline Window: May 6th 11:59pm via emailed attachment (no google docs links)

NOTE: (As per University grading deadlines, no Extensions are possible after this)

Length: 8 pages

Standard formatting: 1 inch margins; 12 pt Font; Times New Roman; Scholarly citations

Learning Outcome: The aim of this course is not only to learn *about* philosophy, but to cultivate your ability to *do* philosophy. The purpose of the Final Essay is to give you the opportunity to demonstrate knowledge of the history of Western philosophy while also giving you the opportunity to explore an original contribution to philosophical discourse.

TASK: Write an 8 page philosophical essay of your own design that engages with one of the following figures from the course:

1. Immanuel Kant
2. Arthur Schopenhauer
3. Friedrich Nietzsche

THE BASIC REQUIREMENTS

1. ORIGINAL ARGUMENTATIVE CONTRIBUTION: You have choice in conceiving the purpose of your essay, which you will include in a bolded thesis statement(s) to be found in an introduction to your paper. Your thesis statement(s) should provide an original response to a central guiding question your paper intends to explore.

2. MATERIAL APPLICATION: Incorporate at least 2-3 exhibits to help you develop your question or argumentative thesis. Exhibits can be drawn from any possible object of thought, including thought experiments, empirical studies, personal anecdotes, historical events, current affairs, music, film, poetry, dance, art, etc.

3. CONTEMPORARY INTERLOCUTOR: Inquiry, at its best, is a communicative process. You will be expected to substantially incorporate the ideas or arguments of at least one contemporary philosophical interlocutor into your discussion. Your interlocutor may but *need not be another philosopher*; you may draw your source from other disciplines and domains of discourse (e.g. natural science; social science; literature; etc.).

4. DIVERGING PERSPECTIVE: At some point in your discussion, you will need to develop and respond to a diverging perspective. Your diverging perspective may come from another author's argument in print, or you may anticipate a possible diverging perspective.

APPENDIX: SOME POSSIBLE ARGUMENT TYPES

If you are new to philosophical writing, it may help to have some basic examples of original argument types. Here are a few different arguments that one could develop in a paper. In principle, a single paper could develop one or all of these argument types:

- 1. Critical Engagement:** Engage critically with a philosopher's work by generating original objections or challenges to their position
- 2. Reconstructive Effort:** Try to defend a philosopher's view from some classic objections or problems by reconstructing a fortified or amended version of their position
- 3. Applying Historical Thought to a Topical Debate:** Show how a real-world issue is illuminated or problematized by a philosophical figure or idea; Or, show how a philosophical idea might be illuminated or problematized by a real-world issue.
- 4. Interpretive Dispute:** Engage in an existing scholarly debate between differing interpretations of a philosopher.