

Philosophy 106 Second Paper Assignment

Paper Length: 5-6 pages

Due Date: *The Official Due date for any paper will be in class Wednesday of dead week (April 27)* in compliance with the University's dead week policy. Penalties for lateness will accrue if papers are handed in after 4pm on Friday of that week. However, these may not be the only things you should pay attention to in deciding when to hand in your paper if you want comments back on it before the final. You should also consider the following:

Thursday April 21st is the **latest date to hand in a paper and be sure it back with comments before the final exam.** It is in your interest to get them back with those comments so that you can use those to improve your final based on those comments. If you hand a paper in after that time and you still want comments, please indicate that on your paper.

Paper Topic: Write on **one** of the following questions. In answering that question, *discuss one of the readings that reaches conclusions **opposed** to your own.* State the argument for the opposing point and tell your reader what is wrong with that argument. (If you think there is a better argument not from our reading you may discuss it instead. Just be aware that it is harder to be fair to an argument when you don't have an actual representative of the position to keep you honest.)

Topic 1. Do either **1a** or **1b**.

1a. Are there measures that should be taken to reduce income and/or wealth inequality in this country? If you think so, please explain what those measures should be and why they ought to be taken. If the answer is no, explain why no such measures are needed or a good idea to implement.

1b. Are there measures that should be taken to reduce the influence of money on politics and the ways in which that influence interacts with inequalities of wealth and income to give people differential influence over the laws and administration of the laws? If you think so, please explain what those measures should be and why they ought to be taken. If the answer is no, explain why no such measures are needed or a good idea to implement.

Topic 2. Do either **2a** or **2b**.

2a. Should the federal government and/or state and local governments take measures to decrease the rate of incarceration in this country. What measures? Why or why not?

2b. Is the death penalty as it is administered in this country an appropriate method of punishment. Why or why not?

For both topics, ***you must comment on an argument for the opposing position*** as required above.

Writing a good paper: Clearly state what considerations lead you to your conclusion and defend the conclusion you derive therefrom.

To the extent that your views rest on accepting some particular normative principle, say which principle or principles you rely on. (You may rely on more than one, or you may think that no matter what principle you rely on, your answer is justified. If so say so.) Also give some reasons why the principles you rely on are appropriate.

If you make a consequentialist argument to justify your position, be clear about which consequences count, and which values are intrinsic and which instrumental.

To the extent that you rely on empirical matters of fact, **cite sources which substantiate the facts you use.**

Typically a good paper will: Include a thesis sentence in the first paragraph. It will then present an argument in favor of the position you take. The discussion will include considerations which give the reader some reason for thinking that the normative principles used in that argument are correct, and support for the empirical claims on which the argument relies.

The paper will then go on to consider an argument in opposition to your thesis or the argument for it. That discussion will start by rendering your opponent's argument in its best form. (Don't attribute an argument that is very bad just because it is easy to knock down.) Typically it will take a paragraph or more to set the argument out adequately. Just as with your own position, you should give the normative principle and bridging claims the opposite position relies on. Then tell your reader what is wrong with that argument. Why shouldn't we accept it, and why should we accept the conclusion you reach instead?

Crediting Sources: You must cite all sources used (not just those quoted) in a form that allows us to find the source from the information you provide. Any standard citation format will do, so long as it accomplishes that purpose. You may feel free to consult with anyone you like in writing this paper, including me, your TAs, your classmates, or anyone else who you think can be of help. *You must give credit where credit is due.* If you got help from a friend, credit that friend in a footnote. Using ideas from a source, even when that source is not quoted, requires a reference. *No matter who you get help from, essays must be in your own words.* Quotations, even of partial sentences, must be clearly indicated with quotation marks or indented paragraphs. Even unintentional plagiarism may be grounds for flunking the assignment.

Philosophical Argument: As far as the normative claims you make are concerned, their persuasiveness should rest on the content of what you say in their support, as opposed to the authority of the people who espouse those views. It is fine to use a quotation in support of a point, but that should be because the person puts the point particularly well, not because the person is some kind of moral authority whose views are beyond question. (Of course with the empirical claims, someone's status as an authority might count.)

Final Exam: For the final exam you should be ready to answer the remaining question about which you did not write your paper (in other words, question 1a or 1b if you wrote a paper on 2a or 2b, and one of 2a or 2b if your paper was on question 1a or 1b). The content of that exam will be like the one for this paper, except that you will be writing it in class (again with a note card) and you will have a bit under two hours to complete it. (You will get a handout on that exam later in the term.)