

PHIL 101 Introduction to Philosophy
 Writing Assignment #3 Prompt
 Due 5/13/16

Guidelines

In this assignment you will carefully consider, explain, and provide your own input on one of the philosophical questions we have discussed so far in class. This is a writing assignment and should be treated as such. Do **NOT** address the tasks given below in bullet points. Instead, write an essay in paragraph form. Do **NOT** write in sentence fragments, run-on sentences, grammatically poor English, or conversational English. Your essay **MUST** have an introductory paragraph, a body, and a concluding paragraph. In addition, it should be 3-5 **full** pages double spaced (this means your essay must reach at least the bottom of the third page), with 12-point Times New Roman font and 1" margins. Do **NOT** attempt to pad the paper length by using a larger font, using wider margins, putting additional spacing between lines or paragraphs, etc. You will lose points for doing so.

A hardcopy of the assignment is due in my departmental mailbox by **noon on Friday, May 13th**. This assignment is worth 20% of your overall grade. I will not accept electronic submissions. Also, as stated in the course syllabus, **I will not accept any late submissions for the final writing assignment—period.**

Assignment

For this assignment, you are to choose one of the following philosophical questions we have discussed in class. **Do NOT choose the same question that you chose for Writing Assignment #1 or Writing Assignment #2.**

- Does God exist?
- Do we have free will?
- Are there moral truths?
- What are the principles of morality?
- What is a just society?
- What is the relationship between the mind and the physical world?
- What, if anything, differentiates scientific knowledge from other forms of knowledge?
- What can be known and how can it be known?

Once you have chosen your preferred question, you must address the following tasks. Please read them carefully and consult them as you write your paper. Failure to fully address these tasks will hurt your grade.

1) Explain the position of **ONE** (and only one) way of responding to this question (from among the positions we have discussed in class). Clarify the *reasons* behind the particular answer given, as well as the details of that account. (Be sure to pick a position which you are able to criticize, because you will be doing that in the next task.)

For example, you may choose Karl Popper's view of what differentiates science from other forms of knowledge. You must then carefully, accurately, and in detail explain *what* Popper's position is, exactly *why* he thinks what he does, and what, according to him, are the virtues of his position. You should go into quite a bit of depth here.

2) Provide a criticism (or more than one, if you so choose) of the position you explained in the previous task. Your critique should be in-depth, pointed, and pertinent to the topic you are addressing. **Your critique may NOT be based on mere subjective feelings or distaste for the position in question (such as "I just don't like it" or "I disagree because it is not what I was raised to believe"); instead, it should be based on what you believe are objective reasons that a rational, intelligent, and intellectually honest person would find plausible.** When coming up with your criticism, keep the following questions in mind:

What specific premise or presumption of the position in question does your criticism target? Does your criticism totally demolish the position? If so, why? Or can that position accommodate your criticism by being tweaked in a certain way? If so, how must it be tweaked?

You may find that coming up with and articulating your criticism requires some amount of thought and consideration. This is part of the assignment, and it is why I have given you two weeks to complete it. It is *very* easy for me to determine who has put intellectual effort into their paper and who has not.

Do not forget that in addition to addressing the above tasks, **you must include a proper introductory paragraph and a proper concluding paragraph.**

Finally, a word of advice: you may believe that you have addressed both of the above tasks in sufficient depth, yet you have not reached the minimum required length of 3 **full** pages. If you find yourself in this situation, **it means that you have in fact not gone into enough detail.** Re-read your paper with an eye to finding ways to more fully explain the position or elaborate upon your criticism of it.

Good luck!