

How to do well in this module

This module comprises lectures; weekly seminar preparation (done individually or in groups); and seminars.

The purpose of *lectures* is to give you a broad overview of issues we are covering, and to provide pointers for your own further research. We expect you to take notes in or after the lectures, and to go through those notes afterwards. In reflecting on each lecture, we expect you to identify points you do not understand and to seek clarification, initially from other students and eventually in seminars or in our advice and feedback hours.

You *work in preparing for seminars* to deepen your understanding of issues we are covering and, especially, to identify things you do not understand. For each seminar we will set something to read. We may also set some questions to consider, or perhaps even a brief writing task. We expect you to make notes and to bring these to the seminar. If there is a writing task, we expect you to submit work by 12 noon the day before the seminar.

The *seminars* are for asking questions about things you don't understand and critically discussing the work you have done in preparing for it. When things go well, you will be doing some philosophy in the seminars. This can feed directly into the writing you do for this course. Note that your seminar leader's role is to facilitate discussion, not to lecture: she may pose questions, but it is you who brings the substance.

We strongly encourage you to talk to other students about issues from the course, and to discuss your writing with them.

When writing essays

The marking criteria used in the Philosophy Department can be found at https://warwick.ac.uk/fac/soc/philosophy/undergraduate/exams_essays/markingscheme. Here some practical suggestions:

1. Read the question carefully. Ask yourself, What is it asking, and what is required to answer it? Ensure that your essay is entirely focussed on answering the question.
2. Adequate preparation for an essay may require studying around 4 journal papers or book chapters – more for longer essays. It is your own knowledge of, and critical engagement with, the literature on the topic that you will be marked on.
3. As a general rule, what you read should be taken from the reading list for this module and the works cited on lecture handouts. If you are also making use of other material, think about why you are using it. Do use sources which go beyond what is contained in the suggested readings. Do not use low quality sources.
4. Don't assume that your reader knows what you are writing about: explain the ideas you use and spell out the argument. Assume your examiners will not interpret your

work charitably. They will start from the assumption that you know nothing; you need to convince them otherwise.

5. Be sure to state your main thesis (or theses) clearly in the first paragraph.
6. In the last paragraph, restate the main thesis, summarise the way in which you have argued for it, and indicate any outstanding problems.
7. Don't make objections in passing. If the objection is worth making, evaluate it carefully in one or more complete paragraphs.
8. Avoid writing about unspecified individuals; for example, cite particular passages instead of writing 'many philosophers'.
9. Avoid writing about yourself. The question isn't about you. (If you find yourself writing 'I agree', 'I believe', or the like, stop and ask yourself why. It's fine to use the first-person to indicate that the view is tentative, and to explain the aims of your essay. It's generally bad to use the first-person to write about yourself.)
10. Never discuss an argument which does not at least initially seem compelling. Either it isn't worth discussion, or else you have misunderstood it.
11. Use a single citation style (eg Harvard) consistently throughout.
12. As you write, read each completed sentence aloud. After each paragraph, go back and read the whole paragraph.
13. Make one point in each paragraph. Ensure that each paragraph contributes to a single, carefully ordered line of argument. Review the key moves of the argument in your conclusion.
14. After writing a complete draft of the essay, put it away for a few days (or longer). Then go back to it and revise it. Be prepared to rewrite it if necessary.

-
- i. Cut material that isn't relevant. Concision is a virtue.
 - ii. Re-read the titular question and your conclusion. Count how many distinct claims you make in the conclusion. For each claim, go through the essay and highlight the parts of the essay which establish that claim. Do you notice anything about the structure? Could your essay be improved even further by focussing on fewer claims?
-

15. Ensure that there is a single, coherent line of argument running through the whole essay. (You may find it helpful as an exercise to check your work by writing out the argument as a list of numbered propositions when it is done.)
 16. Read through your essay carefully one last time before handing it in.
-