

PHIL2611 Paper assignment #1

This assignment should take roughly 4–5 pages. Again, I strongly recommend use of plain and simple language—the issues can become subtle and complicated, and highfalutin language can make things even more unclear. Format it as follows: double-spaced, 12-point Times New Roman font, normal 1" page margins, stapled.

3 and 4 are
the most
important
sections—
focus on
them

Organization is very important. Your paper should have five sections.

1. Introduce your paper. Briefly explain what you are going to do in the paper.
2. Give a brief and clear explanation of the particular issue you are concerned with, and some of the alternative positions one might take on the issue.
3. **Lay out a point people have made (an argument for a specific position, an objection to a specific argument, etc.).**
4. **Either criticize this point, or defend it against objections.**
5. Briefly summarize what you've done with your paper.

In Chapter 3 of our textbook, Feldman discusses the Gettier problem and some possible solutions to it. In Chapter 4, Feldman discusses evidentialism and how different theories of justification respond to the Infinite Regress Problem.

Suggested topics:

- Does Feldman's "modest proposal" succeed at solving the Gettier problem (and any closely related problems that came up in class) or is the traditional view still in trouble? Be sure to discuss at least one possible objection to Feldman and say why, at the end of the day, the objection does or does not cast serious doubt on Feldman's proposal.
- Do "misleading defeaters" cases like *The Grabit Case* really show that the No Defeaters Theory fails as a solution to the Gettier problem? Or can the No Defeaters Theory be defended against (or easily modified to handle) this kind of case?
- Which version of evidentialism is superior: a version (like the textbook's) that ties epistemic justification to the evidence already possessed by the subject, or a version that adds a requirement like the *Get the Evidence Principle*? Is it epistemically irresponsible to refrain from gathering new and easily-obtained evidence, and does this affect one's epistemic justification?
- Can Cartesian Foundationalism (as the textbook presents it) be defended against the objections mounted against it by Feldman? Can any of the objections be overturned?

Notice that the paper should focus on a *specific* point. Don't write your paper on *the analysis of knowledge*—that topic is too big. Don't even write your paper on *the JTB analysis*—that topic is still too big. Write on a *specific* objection to an argument or a *specific* version of an argument—something small and manageable.

With such a small topic, you might wonder: what can I say about it? Start by thinking of problems with the argument, or reasons why the objection won't work, or criticisms commonly raised—this should be fairly easy, because there are always going to be problems. If you think you've come up with a really serious problem, then there's your paper: offer a criticism. Or, if you think all the problems are solvable, then there's your paper: defend against objections.