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Part I

PROJECT REQUIREMENTS

WHY PROJECTS?

The course project is an opportunity for you to explore an interesting problem of your choice related to philosophy. The purpose of the project is to inform you how to conduct research on an issue you find interesting or important. In this process, you will be able to practice the cognitive skills that are necessary for any kind of research within or outside philosophy. Those skills include:

- Critical thinking
- Structural Reading
- Succinct, clear argumentative writing

Successful implementation of a research project would make this course not just about philosophical theories or arguments, but also about cultivating practical skills to actually gain new knowledge efficiently.

REQUIREMENTS

You may develop your own structure of the paper. The following is a list of elements that are highly recommended:

- An Introduction to the philosophical issue and necessary background you are going to talking about in the paper. State your thesis clearly, and describe precisely how you are going to organize your arguments for your thesis.
- Describe your favorite answer to the philosophical issue, and provide at least one argument for your answer. The argument must be convincing and clearly written out. You can summarize the arguments given by one of the readings under your topic, but you must write the argument in your own words, expect a few necessary quotations.
- Think of at least one objection to the view or the argument you wrote in section 2, and write down the objection clearly. The objection should be as convincing as you can think of. A trivial objection will not do. The objection could be some argument you learned from your readings. Or you can come up with your own idea.

- Give a response to the objection you considered in section 3, and argues why the objection does not hold.
- Section 5: Write a conclusion, briefly describe what you have done in the paper and what you can do to improve your arguments and response to the objection.

A note on the deadline: The official due date is June 21. Please submit the paper via email renjie@cnu.edu.cn earlier than this date.

Part II

PROJECT CONTENTS

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TOPICS AND READINGS

This section provides a list of 28 recommended project topics. These topics are designed to have a format of a yes/no question. Philosophers have debated these questions at length. Their arguments for both sides of the answer and their objections against each other are presented in the corresponding readings.

There are two papers for each of the topic, one of them defends a “yes” answer to the topic question while the other one defends a “no” answer. These two papers provide a clear description of the philosophical issue under the topic. You are also encouraged to search for other papers not on the reading list and take them as your additional readings.

Topic 1 Is there *a priori* knowledge?

- Laurence Bonjour, In Defense of the a Priori
- Michael Devitt, There Is No a Priori

Topic 2 Is abortion morally acceptable?

- Patrick Lee and Robert P. George, The Wrong of Abortion
- Margaret Olivia Little, The Moral Permissibility of Abortion

Topic 3 Are there abstract entities?

- Chris Swoyer, Abstract Entities
- Cian Dorr, There Are No Abstract Objects

Topic 4 Is the aim of perception to provide accurate representations?

- Kirk Ludwig, Is the Aim of Perception to Provide Accurate Representations?
- Christopher Viger, Is the Aim of Perception to Provide Accurate Representations? A Case for the “No” Side

Topic 5 Is affirmative actions morally acceptable?

- Albert Mosley, A Defense of Affirmative Action
- Celia Wolf-Devine, Preferential Policies Have Become Toxic

Topic 6 Is medical use of animals morally acceptable?

- Tom Regan, Empty Cages: Animal Rights and Vivisection
- R.G. Frey, Animals and Their Medical Use

Topic 7 Are there general moral principles?

- Robert Audi, Ethical Generality and Moral Judgment
- Mark Norris Lance and Margaret Olivia Little, Defending Moral Particularism

Topic 8 Is it possible to reduce biological explanations to explanations in chemistry and/or physics?

- Evelyn Fox Keller, It Is Possible to Reduce Biological Explanations to Explanations in Chemistry and/or Physics
- John Dupré, It Is Not Possible to Reduce Biological Explanations to Explanations in Chemistry and/or Physics

Topic 9 Has cognitive science shown that human beings are cognitively bounded, or irrational?

- Gerd Gigerenzer, Bounded and Rational
- David Matheson, Bounded Rationality and the Enlightenment Picture of Cognitive Virtue

Topic 10 Is consciousness ontologically emergent from the physical?

- Martine Nida-Rümelin, Dualist Emergentism
- David Braddon-Mitchell, Against Ontologically Emergent Consciousness

Topic 11 Is death penalty morally acceptable?

- Louis P. Pojman, A Defense of the Death Penalty
- Stephen Nathanson, Why We Should Put the Death Penalty to Rest

Topic 12 Does science discredit religion?

- Michael Ruse, Science Discredits Religion
- Michael L. Peterson, Negative Position: Science Does Not Discredit Religion

Topic 13 Is egalitarianism morally justifiable?

- Larry S. Temkin, Illuminating Egalitarianism
- John Kekes, A Reasonable Alternative to Egalitarianism

Topic 14 Can the biological sciences act as a ground for ethics?

- Michael Ruse, The Biological Sciences Can Act as a Ground for Ethics
- Francisco J. Ayala, What the Biological Sciences Can and Cannot Contribute to Ethics

Topic 15 Is euthanasia morally acceptable?

- Michael Tooley, In Defense of Voluntary Active Euthanasia and Assisted Suicide
- Daniel Callahan, A Case Against Euthanasia

Topic 16 Do we have free will when sciences can predict human behaviors?

- Robert Kane, Incompatibilism
- Kadri Vihvelin, Compatibilism, Incompatibilism, and Impossibilism

Topic 17 Can human rights be morally justified?

- Onora O'Neill, The Dark Side of Human Rights
- James W. Nickel, A Defense of Welfare Rights as Human Rights

Topic 18 Is there immediate justification?

- James Pryor, There Is Immediate Justification
- Juan Comesaña, There Is No Immediate Justification

Topic 19 Should we admit immigrants?

- David Miller, Immigration: The Case for Limits
- Chandran Kukathas, The Case for Open Immigration

Topic 20 Is justification internal?

- John Greco, Justification Is Not Internal
- Richard Feldman, Justification Is Internal

Topic 21 Is God necessary for morality??

- Mark D. Linville, Affirmative Position: God is Necessary for Morality
- Louise Antony, Negative Position: Atheism, Naturalism, and Morality

Topic 22 Are there laws in social sciences?

- John T. Roberts, There are no Laws of the Social Sciences
- Harold Kincaid, There are Laws in the Social Sciences

Topic 23 Is language innate or learned?

- Barbara C. Scholz and Geoffrey K Pullum, Irrational Nativist Exuberance
- Robert J. Matthews, The Case for Linguistic Nativism

Topic 24 Do we have a right to privacy?

- John Deigh, Privacy
- Terrance McConnell, Privacy's Value

Topic 25 Can skepticism be refuted?

- Jonathan Vogel, The Refutation of Skepticism
- Richard Fumerton, The Challenge of Refuting Skepticism

Topic 26 Is the rightness of action determined by the value of consequences?

- William Shaw, The Consequentialist Perspective
- Peter Vallentyne, Against Maximizing Act Consequentialism

Topic 27 Is truth the primary epistemic goal?

- Jonathan L. Kvanvig, Truth Is Not the Primary Epistemic Goal

- Marian David, Truth as the Primary Epistemic Goal: A Working Hypothesis

Topic 28 Are we morally bound to help those famine victims who are starving to death?

- Christopher Heath Wellman, Famine Relief: The Duties We Have to Others
- Andrew I. Cohen, Famine Relief and Human Virtue