

# First Essay Topics

## Philosophy 25A

Write an essay of **1–2 pages** on **one** of the following topics, making sure you address each part of the prompt.

1. In the *Euthyphro*, Socrates asks Euthyphro to provide a definition of piety, or ‘the pious’. Euthyphro’s first proposed definition is that “What is dear to the gods is pious, what is not is impious” (7a). Socrates gives two different arguments that this proposed definition is unsatisfactory. Drawing on the text in 7a–9b, reconstruct Socrates’ arguments in your own words. How does he show that Euthyphro’s proposal will lead to a contradiction in many cases? Why does this mean that this definition is inadequate? What is the problem with Euthyphro’s claim that, in cases where someone has killed another person unjustly, “no gods would differ from one another” in their belief that the killer should pay the penalty (8b)?
2. In the *Meno*, Socrates asks Meno what virtue is. Meno proposes that virtue is “to desire beautiful things and have the power to acquire them” (77b). Socrates argues that the first part of this definition is not distinctive of virtue, and the second part is incomplete. Drawing on the text in 77b–79e, reconstruct Socrates’ arguments in your own words. How does Socrates show that desiring good things is common to both virtuous and non-virtuous people? Meno attempts to complete the second part of his definition by adding that it is only virtuous to acquire good things when they are acquired *justly and piously* (78d–e). Why does this addition make Meno’s proposal an unsatisfactory answer to Socrates’ original question?

**Formatting:** Your paper must be double spaced, in 12 point, Times New Roman font, with 1 inch margins. Your title should be in bold. Remember to cite the text using the Stephanus pagination.

**Deadline:** Your essay is due to Lindsay by **10AM on Tuesday, June 2**. You will submit it twice: first, to Lindsay’s personal email (ljcrawfo@berkeley.edu), and second, to turnitin.com, which checks for plagiarism. Here are the turnitin.com instructions:

1. Go to <http://www.turnitin.com>
2. If you *already* have a turnitin.com account, skip to step 5.
3. If you do not have a turnitin.com account, click on ‘Create Account’
4. To sign up, click ‘Student’ and fill in the required fields to create an account.
5. Enter the following information (password is case-sensitive):
  - class ID: 10038067
  - class enrollment password: parmenides

You will now be enrolled in the class on turnitin.com. When you want to turn in your paper, click on ‘Philosophy 25A Summer 2015’ and click the ‘Submit’ button next to ‘Paper 1.’