[Discussion 1: Branches of Philosophy (50 points)](#_Toc184201715)

[Model Response](#_Toc184201716)

[Essay 1 -- The Allegory of the Cave (50 points)](#_Toc184201717)

[Model Essay: The Allegory of the Cave](#_Toc184201718)

[Discussion 2: Truth-telling, Lying, Bullshit (50 points)](#_Toc184201719)

[Model Response](#_Toc184201720)

[Essay 2: Skepticism (50 points)](#_Toc184201721)

[Model Response](#_Toc184201722)

[Discussion 3: Gettier Cases (50 points)](#_Toc184201723)

[Model Response](#_Toc184201724)

[Essay 3: Gettier Problems (50 points)](#_Toc184201725)

[Model Response](#_Toc184201726)

[Discussion 4: Mind/Body Dualism (50 points)](#_Toc184201727)

[Model Response](#_Toc184201728)

[Essay 4: The Euthyphro Dilemma (50 points)](#_Toc184201729)

[Model Response](#_Toc184201730)

[Discussion 5: The Problem of Evil (50 points)](#_Toc184201731)

[Model Response](#_Toc184201732)

[Essay 5: Frankfurt Cases (50 points)](#_Toc184201733)

[Model Response](#_Toc184201734)

[Discussion 6: Moral Luck (50 points)](#_Toc184201735)

[Model Response](#_Toc184201736)

[Discussion 8: Gyges Ring (50 points)](#_Toc184201737)

[Model Response](#_Toc184201738)

[Term Paper Outline Assignment (100 points)](#_Toc184201739)

[Model Response](#_Toc184201740)

[Term Paper Assignment (100 points)](#_Toc184201741)

[Model Response](#_Toc184201742)

# Discussion 1: Branches of Philosophy (50 points)

Philosophy is the study of fundamental questions, with three main branches:

- Epistemology - The study of knowledge

- What is knowledge?

- How does one acquire knowledge?

- What is knowable?

- What cannot be known?

- Metaphysics - The study of existence

- What is the nature of reality?

- What kinds of things exist?

- What natural laws exist?

- What is identity?

- Ethics - The study of moral good and how we ought to live

- What is good? What is bad?

- Are there universal moral truths?

- What makes a person good?

- What should I do?

Assignment (50 points):

1. Choose one of the 3 branches of philosophy

2. Create an original philosophical question that this branch would investigate

3. Explain in detail:

- Why this question belongs to your chosen branch

- What makes it a philosophical rather than empirical question

- What approaches might be used to investigate it

- What potential answers might be considered

Model Response:

Branch: Epistemology

Question: Do virtual reality experiences produce genuine knowledge?

Analysis: This question belongs squarely within epistemology because it examines how we acquire and validate knowledge. When someone spends time in virtual reality (VR), they have experiences that feel real - they see, hear, and interact with a simulated environment. But can these experiences lead to actual knowledge?

Consider: If someone learns to paint in VR using virtual brushes and canvases, do they gain real knowledge about painting? They develop muscle memory, learn color theory, and practice techniques - but all in a simulated space. When they pick up a physical brush, has their VR practice given them genuine knowledge of painting?

This raises deeper epistemological questions about:

1. The relationship between experience and knowledge

2. Whether simulated experiences can produce real understanding

3. How we distinguish between genuine and illusory knowledge

4. The role of physical interaction in learning

I believe VR experiences can produce limited forms of genuine knowledge, particularly conceptual and theoretical understanding. However, the knowledge gained may be incomplete without corresponding physical world experience. This suggests VR knowledge exists on a spectrum rather than being simply valid or invalid.

This is a philosophical rather than empirical question because it involves analyzing the nature of knowledge itself, not just measuring learning outcomes. While we can study how well VR skills transfer to reality, the deeper question is whether VR experiences constitute genuine knowledge acquisition at all.

Why This is a Model Response:

1. Clear structure and organization:

- States chosen branch clearly

- Presents original question

- Develops analysis systematically

2. Demonstrates understanding of epistemology:

- Properly situates question within the branch

- Shows why it's epistemological rather than empirical

- Engages with core concepts about knowledge

3. Original thinking:

- Uses contemporary example (VR)

- Creates specific scenario (painting)

- Develops novel implications

4. Depth of analysis:

- Identifies multiple philosophical sub-questions

- Considers counterarguments

- Proposes nuanced view (spectrum rather than binary)

5. Clear writing:

- Uses concrete examples

- Avoids jargon

- Maintains logical flow

6. Meets assignment requirements:

- Explains why question fits the branch

- Discusses potential approaches

- Considers possible answers

# Essay 1 -- The Allegory of the Cave (50 points)

Write your essay for someone unfamiliar with this class, like a fellow student who isn't taking philosophy. Clearly label each section.

Section 1 (30 points) - The Allegory of the Cave

- Summarize Plato's Allegory of the Cave in your own words

- Explain how captives form beliefs about the world

- Analyze the escapee's attempt to challenge these beliefs

- Evaluate whether the escapee gains knowledge of the outside world

- Support your position with reasons

Section 2 (20 points) - Imparting False Beliefs: Aliens

- Describe how you would use shadows to convince cave captives that aliens exist

- Assume captives have never seen the external world but understand "shadow" versions of real things

- Provide specific examples and thorough explanation

- Focus on visual demonstration rather than verbal explanation

Notes:

- No minimum/maximum word count (typical range: 1-5 pages)

- Include Works Cited page if using external sources

- Cite using any standard format

- Label sections clearly with bold numbers or titles

## Model Essay: The Allegory of the Cave

Section 1: The Allegory of the Cave

Imagine being chained in a cave since childhood, able only to look forward at a wall. Behind you burns a fire, and between the fire and you, puppet-masters carry objects that cast shadows on the wall. These shadows are your only reality. This is Plato's cave.

The captives in this allegory form beliefs through observation and consensus. When a shadow of a tree appears and someone says "tree," they learn to associate that shadow with "tree." Their understanding is limited to these shadow-projections, yet to them, these shadows constitute reality.

One prisoner breaks free and leaves the cave. Initially blinded by sunlight, they gradually see real objects for the first time. Upon returning to free others, they face two challenges: their eyes, now adjusted to sunlight, struggle in the cave's darkness, and more importantly, they fail to convince the other prisoners of the outside world's existence. The other prisoners, having no context for understanding reality beyond shadows, reject the escapee's claims and threaten violence if any attempt is made to free them.

Does the escapee gain genuine knowledge? I argue yes, but with a crucial caveat. While they gain direct experiential knowledge of the outside world, they lose their ability to navigate the shadow-world effectively. This suggests that knowledge isn't simply accumulative – gaining new knowledge may require abandoning old frameworks of understanding.

Section 2: Imparting False Beliefs: Aliens

To convince the captives of aliens' existence, I would create a systematic shadow narrative. First, I'd establish familiar shadows – trees, animals, humans – maintaining the captives' existing shadow-knowledge. Then, I'd gradually introduce new elements:

1. Show shadows of spacecraft landing, using unfamiliar geometrical shapes unlike any normal object shadows

2. Project shadows of beings emerging: humanoid but with distinct differences like elongated limbs or additional appendages

3. Demonstrate these beings performing impossible feats: flying, transforming shapes, or passing through solid objects

4. Create interaction scenes between human shadows and alien shadows to establish scale and relationship

The key is consistency and progression. Rather than suddenly introducing alien shadows, I would build up to their appearance through a series of increasingly unusual shadow events, exploiting the captives' tendency to trust their sensory experiences.

Why This is a Model Response:

1. Structure and Organization:

- Clear sections with logical flow

- Builds understanding progressively

- Strong transitions between ideas

2. Analysis Depth:

- Goes beyond mere summary

- Explores implications

- Connects concepts meaningfully

3. Original Thinking:

- Novel interpretation of knowledge loss

- Creative approach to alien deception

- Thoughtful examples

4. Writing Quality:

- Clear, engaging prose

- Concrete examples

- Appropriate philosophical tone

5. Assignment Adherence:

- Addresses all required points

- Balances sections appropriately

- Maintains focus on key questions

6. Critical Thinking:

- Evaluates multiple perspectives

- Supports claims with reasoning

- Considers implications

Let me revise Discussion 2:

# Discussion 2: Truth-telling, Lying, Bullshit (50 points)

Frankfurt identifies three speech types:

Truth-telling:

- Saying "x"

- Believing "x" is true

- Wanting others to believe "x" is true

Lying:

- Saying "x"

- Believing "x" is false

- Wanting others to believe "x" is true

Bullshit:

- Saying "x"

- Wanting others to believe "y" or do "z", where y/z are unrelated to "x"

Assignment (50 points):

Choose one of these speech types. Write a post that:

1. States your chosen type

2. Presents an original example

3. Analyzes how your example satisfies each part of Frankfurt's definition

4. Explains what makes this a clear case of your chosen speech type rather than one of the others

Model Response:

Type: Lying

Example: An employee who is running late tells their boss "I'm stuck in terrible traffic" while actually still at home in pajamas.

Analysis: This fits Frankfurt's three criteria for lying:

1. Saying "x": States they are stuck in traffic

2. Believing "x" is false: Knows they are at home

3. Wanting others to believe "x": Intends boss to believe traffic caused their lateness

What makes this clearly lying rather than truth-telling or bullshit:

- Unlike truth-telling, speaker believes statement is false

- Unlike bullshit, speaker cares about truth value and wants specific false belief accepted

Why This is a Model Response:

1. Clarity:

- States type immediately

- Uses clear, realistic example

- Maps example to definition precisely

2. Analysis:

- Shows how each criterion applies

- Distinguishes from other speech types

- Demonstrates understanding of key concepts

3. Format:

- Concise structure

- Clear organization

- Focused analysis

4. Example Choice:

- Relatable scenario

- Clear intentionality

- Unambiguous categorization

# Essay 2: Skepticism (50 points)

Write a clear, well-reasoned essay addressing radical skepticism. Your audience is a fellow student unfamiliar with philosophy.

**Section 1: Introduction (10 points)**

* Define skepticism and radical skepticism in your own words
* Provide a brief roadmap for your paper's remaining sections

**Section 2: Living as a Skeptic (20 points)**  
Describe waking up one day as a radical skeptic who:

* Distrusts sensory information
* Doubts the existence of other people Explain:
* How you would behave
* How your actions and beliefs would differ from normal
* Specific examples from your hypothetical day

**Section 3: Responding to Skepticism (20 points)** Present ONE argument against radical skepticism:

* Take the perspective of a trusted friend trying to convince the skeptic
* Can draw from course readings (Plato, Descartes, Moore, Frankfurt) or other sources
* If using external sources, include citations

Model Response**:**

The Practical Impossibility of Radical Skepticism

Introduction

Skepticism is the philosophical position that questions whether we can truly know things. While moderate skepticism simply encourages careful examination of evidence before forming beliefs, radical skepticism goes further by claiming we cannot know anything with certainty. Radical skeptics doubt everything - from the reliability of our senses to the existence of other minds and even basic logical truths. In this essay, I will explore what it would mean to truly live as a radical skeptic and present a pragmatic argument for why such extreme skepticism is ultimately untenable.

Living as a Skeptic

Imagine waking up one morning as a committed radical skeptic. Though my senses tell me I'm lying in bed, I refuse to trust this sensory data. The soft mattress beneath me, the warm sunlight streaming through the window - these could all be elaborate illusions. When my phone alarm rings, I question whether the sound exists outside my mind. When my roommate knocks on my door asking if I want breakfast, I cannot be certain they are real rather than a sophisticated robot or figment of my imagination.

This skeptical mindset would paralyze even the simplest daily activities. Should I brush my teeth? Perhaps my teeth don't actually exist. Should I eat breakfast? Maybe my hunger sensation is illusory. Should I go to class? The entire university could be an elaborate deception. Even basic logical reasoning becomes suspect - perhaps 2+2 only seems to equal 4 because my mind has been conditioned to think so.

My behavior would differ dramatically from normal. Rather than confidently navigating the world based on sensory input and rational deduction, I would hesitate before every action, questioning its basis in reality. Simple tasks like crossing the street would become philosophical crises - can I trust my eyes to accurately detect oncoming cars? Do the cars even exist? This paralyzing uncertainty would make normal functioning virtually impossible.

The Pragmatic Response

As a friend attempting to pull the skeptic out of this philosophical quagmire, I would present G.E. Moore's pragmatic argument against radical skepticism. Moore contends that our basic sensory knowledge and logical reasoning must be reliable because they consistently produce successful results in navigating the world. When I reach for a glass of water, my hand reliably finds it where my eyes tell me it is. When I perform basic arithmetic, the results reliably work in practical applications like commerce.

Moore's famous proof of the external world - raising his hands and declaring "Here is one hand...and here is another" - seems almost comically simple. But its genius lies in highlighting that any philosophical argument against the reliability of our senses must ultimately be less certain than the direct sensory evidence it attempts to refute. The skeptic who claims we cannot trust our senses must rely on sensory input (reading/hearing the argument) and logical reasoning to even understand and consider that claim.

While radical skepticism raises fascinating philosophical questions, attempting to actually live as a radical skeptic reveals its practical impossibility. We must operate on certain basic assumptions about reality to function at all. The fact that these assumptions consistently produce successful results in navigating the world gives us good reason to trust them, even if we cannot achieve the absolute certainty the radical skeptic demands.

Works Cited

Moore, G.E. "Proof of an External World." Proceedings of the British Academy 25 (1939): 273-300.

**Analysis of Model Response:**

This response excels for several reasons:

1. **Clear Structure**

* Well-organized sections with clear transitions
* Introduces concepts before analyzing them
* Builds logically from definitions to practical examples to philosophical argument

1. **Effective Examples**

* Uses concrete, relatable scenarios (morning routine, crossing street)
* Shows rather than tells how skepticism affects daily life
* Makes abstract philosophical concepts accessible

1. **Strong Argumentation**

* Presents Moore's argument clearly and persuasively
* Shows understanding of course material
* Develops original examples while grounding in established philosophy

1. **Writing Quality**

* Appropriate for target audience (fellow student)
* Clear, engaging prose
* Professional academic tone while remaining accessible

1. **Philosophical Depth**

* Demonstrates understanding of radical skepticism
* Engages seriously with philosophical implications
* Makes meaningful contribution to discussion through practical analysis

# Discussion 3: Gettier Cases (50 points)

**Background:** Knowledge has traditionally been defined as justified true belief (JTB). According to this definition, you know something when:

1. You believe it
2. It is true
3. You have justification for believing it

Gettier cases show scenarios where someone has JTB but intuitively lacks knowledge.

**Assignment (50 points):** Construct an original Gettier case demonstrating the gap between JTB and knowledge. Your response should:

1. Present a scenario where someone has a justified true belief
2. Explain why it meets each JTB criterion
3. Explain why it intuitively fails to be knowledge

Model Response**:**

Sarah glances at her living room clock at what appears to be 3:15 PM and forms the belief "it is 3:15 PM." The clock has actually been broken since that morning, frozen at 3:15. However, by coincidence, it is actually 3:15 PM when Sarah looks at it.

This is a Gettier case because:

1. Belief: Sarah believes it is 3:15 PM

2. Truth: It is actually 3:15 PM

3. Justification: Looking at a normally reliable clock provides reasonable justification for time beliefs

Yet Sarah lacks knowledge because her justified true belief is merely lucky. The clock's display matching the actual time is pure coincidence. If she had looked at the clock at any other time that day, she would have formed a false belief. Her justification (the clock's reliability) is disconnected from why her belief is true (coincidence).

This illustrates Gettier's insight that justified true belief alone is insufficient for knowledge. Knowledge seems to require that our justification is appropriately connected to the truth of our belief, not merely coincidentally aligned with it.

**Analysis of Model Response:**

The response excels because it:

1. Presents a clear, original Gettier case
2. Explicitly shows how it meets each JTB criterion
3. Explains the key Gettier insight about justification-truth connection
4. Uses accessible example while maintaining philosophical rigor
5. Demonstrates understanding of epistemological concepts

# Essay 3: Gettier Problems (50 points)

**Section 1: Introduction (10 points)**

* Define knowledge and the traditional three-part theory
* Preview your paper's structure

**Section 2: Analysis of Brown Case (30 points)**

* Summarize Gettier's "Brown in Barcelona" case
* Explain why it challenges the three-part theory

**Section 3: Fourth Criterion (20 points)**

* Propose additional criterion for knowledge
* Show how it excludes the Brown case
* Explain why your criterion improves the theory

Model Response:

Beyond Justified True Belief

Introduction

Knowledge has traditionally been defined as justified true belief (JTB). Under this theory, X knows p if and only if: (1) X believes p, (2) p is true, and (3) X's belief in p is justified. Edmund Gettier demonstrated this definition's inadequacy through counterexamples where all three conditions are met, yet knowledge seems absent.

The Brown Case

Gettier presents Smith, who believes Jones owns a Ford based on seeing Jones driving one and repeatedly mentioning owning it. Smith then constructs the disjunctive proposition "Either Jones owns a Ford or Brown is in Barcelona." Since the first disjunct seems true, Smith logically concludes the disjunction must be true.

However, Jones has sold his Ford and now drives a rental. Coincidentally, Brown happens to be in Barcelona. Thus Smith's disjunctive belief is true and justified (through valid logical inference from seemingly reliable evidence), yet Smith clearly lacks knowledge of Brown's whereabouts.

Fourth Criterion

To exclude such cases, I propose a fourth criterion:

(4) X's justification must be causally connected to the truth-maker of p.

In the Brown case, Smith's justification (Jones' apparent Ford ownership) has no causal connection to what makes his belief true (Brown's location). This criterion captures our intuition that knowledge requires more than accidental truth - it requires our justification to track the actual reason why our belief is true.

This improvement helps explain why Smith lacks knowledge while preserving the core insights of the traditional theory. It also aligns with common sense - we want our reasons for believing something to be connected to why it's actually true, not merely coincidentally aligned with truth.

**Analysis:**

* Clear explanation of JTB theory and its limitations
* Accurate reconstruction of Gettier's argument
* Original, well-reasoned fourth criterion
* Strong logical progression
* Appropriate philosophical terminology
* Maintains accessibility while demonstrating sophistication

# Discussion 4: Mind/Body Dualism (50 points)

**Background:** Descartes argued the mind and body are separate substances. The mind (non-physical) thinks while the body (physical) exists in space.

**Assignment:** Create a case demonstrating apparent mind-body interaction:

* Describe a specific scenario where mental activity seems to cause physical action
* Explain how this illustrates the interaction problem
* Evaluate potential solutions

Model Response**:**

A concert pianist sits at her piano, reads the sheet music, and translates these visual symbols into precise finger movements. Her mental processing of musical notation somehow results in physical action - her fingers striking exact keys in perfect rhythm.

This case highlights the interaction problem: How does her non-physical mind (processing musical symbols) influence her physical body (finger movements)? Two substances with fundamentally different natures seemingly cannot interact, yet they appear to do so.

One solution posits a "translation mechanism" in the brain that converts mental states to physical ones. However, this merely pushes the problem back - how does this mechanism bridge the physical/mental divide? Another approach suggests mind and body operate in parallel, pre-established harmony. But this seems to deny genuine mental causation.

The case reveals why Cartesian dualism, while intuitively appealing, faces serious philosophical challenges explaining mind-body interaction.

**Analysis:**

* Clear, concrete example
* Demonstrates understanding of dualism
* Identifies key philosophical problem
* Evaluates potential solutions
* Accessible while maintaining rigor

# Essay 4: The Euthyphro Dilemma (50 points)

**Section 1 (30 points)**

* Explain both horns of the Euthyphro dilemma
* Analyze implications of each option
* Support with examples

**Section 2 (20 points)**

* Present and defend your proposed resolution
* Address potential objections

Model Response**:**

Divine Command Theory and the Euthyphro Dilemma

The Dilemma

The Euthyphro dilemma poses: Is something moral because God commands it, or does God command it because it's moral?

Option 1: If actions are moral solely because God commands them, morality becomes arbitrary. God could command torture, making it moral. This undermines moral objectivity and God's goodness.

Option 2: If God commands actions because they're independently moral, morality exists outside God, challenging divine sovereignty and making God unnecessary for ethics.

Proposed Resolution

A third option resolves this dilemma: God's nature defines goodness. Moral truths flow from God's unchanging character rather than arbitrary commands or external standards. This preserves divine sovereignty while avoiding arbitrariness.

Under this view, God cannot command evil because it would contradict his nature. Commands reflect rather than determine morality. This explains moral objectivity while maintaining God's role as moral foundation.

This solution faces objections about circular reasoning but offers a coherent alternative to the dilemma's two problematic options.

**Analysis:**

* Clear explanation of philosophical problem
* Rigorous analysis of implications
* Original solution with reasoned defense
* Maintains philosophical depth despite concision
* Accessible to target audience

# Discussion 5: The Problem of Evil (50 points)

**Background:** Traditional theism claims God is:

* All-knowing
* All-powerful
* All-good

This creates a challenge: Why does evil exist if God could prevent it?

**Assignment:**

1. Present an original example of evil
2. Analyze why it constitutes evil
3. Evaluate how this challenges or supports belief in an all-knowing, all-powerful, all-good God

Model Response**:**

Earthquakes kill thousands annually, including children. This natural evil seems particularly challenging for traditional theism.

These events constitute evil because:

1. They cause immense suffering

2. Victims bear no moral responsibility

3. Prevention appears possible for an omnipotent being

This challenges belief in an omnibenevolent, omnipotent God:

- God knows when earthquakes will occur

- God could prevent them without violating free will

- Prevention would reduce suffering

- Yet they continue

Possible responses:

1. Natural evils serve greater goods (ecosystem maintenance)

2. Physical laws requiring possibility of disasters enable greater goods

3. Human free will includes freedom to build in hazardous areas

These responses seem inadequate given the scale of suffering and God's supposed ability to create alternative physical laws or warn potential victims.

**Analysis:**

* Clear example of natural evil
* Strong logical analysis
* Addresses key theological concepts
* Evaluates common responses
* Maintains philosophical rigor while accessible

# Essay 5: Frankfurt Cases (50 points)

**Section 1: The Case (20 points)** Construct a coercion scenario:

* Clear threat
* Specific consequences
* Available options

**Section 2: Analysis (30 points)**

* Assess moral responsibility under coercion
* Compare to non-coerced version
* Support with reasoning

Model Response**:**

Moral Responsibility Under Coercion

The Case

A bank teller receives a note: "Transfer $100,000 to this account or my associate will harm your family." Security cameras show an armed person outside the teller's home. The teller makes the transfer.

Analysis

Under coercion, the teller remains partially morally responsible. While the threat severely constrained options, the teller still chose this action over alternatives (alerting security, refusing).

Without coercion, making the same transfer would demonstrate full moral culpability, warranting blame and punishment. The threat mitigates but doesn't eliminate responsibility because:

1. The choice remained technically free

2. Alternative actions existed

3. The teller's reasoning process stayed intact

Frankfurt's insight: Responsibility stems from actual decision-making process, not merely having alternatives.

**Analysis:**

* Clear coercion scenario
* Precise ethical analysis
* Demonstrates understanding of Frankfurt
* Supports claims with reasoning
* Maintains philosophical depth

# Discussion 6: Moral Luck (50 points)

**Assignment:**

1. Choose one type of moral luck (resultant, circumstantial, constitutive, causal)
2. Present original case demonstrating chosen type
3. Analyze why it challenges control-based theories of responsibility

Model Response**:**

Two identical twins, separated at birth: One grows up in wartime Germany, joins the Nazi party, and commits atrocities. The other grows up in England, becomes a teacher, and lives ethically.

This illustrates circumstantial moral luck because:

1. Same innate character, different circumstances

2. Circumstances beyond control determined moral behavior

3. We judge them differently despite equal control

This challenges Aristotle's view that moral responsibility requires control. The Nazi twin didn't control birth circumstances yet bears responsibility for choices.

**Analysis:**

* Clear example of circumstantial luck
* Shows understanding of moral luck types
* Challenges control principle effectively
* Concise while maintaining depth

**Discussion 7: Frankfurt-Style Cases (50 points)**

**Assignment:**  
Construct an original case showing moral responsibility without alternative possibilities. Include:

* Agent's actual choice
* Counterfactual preventer
* Analysis of responsibility

**Model Response:**

A neuroscientist secretly installs a chip in Jane's brain that will force her to donate to charity if she considers not donating. Unaware of the chip, Jane independently decides to donate and does so. The chip never activates.

This is a Frankfurt-style case because:

1. Jane couldn't have done otherwise (chip would force donation)

2. She made her actual choice freely

3. The preventing mechanism never intervened

Jane bears moral responsibility because her actual decision-making process was her own, despite lacking alternative possibilities. This challenges the principle that responsibility requires ability to do otherwise.

**Analysis:**

* Clear counterfactual preventer
* Shows understanding of Frankfurt's argument
* Maintains philosophical rigor
* Demonstrates why responsibility persists

# Discussion 8: Gyges Ring (50 points)

**Assignment:** You find a ring that makes you invisible. Analyze:

* How you would use it
* Whether your actions would be just
* If you'd remain invisible permanently

Model Response**:**

With Gyges' ring, I would initially use invisibility for harmless curiosity - observing wild animals up close or watching how art is made in museums. However, the temptation to exploit this power would grow.

The ability to act without consequences would corrupt my character. Small transgressions like sneaking into movies would lead to larger ones like theft. Even with good intentions (exposing corruption, helping others secretly), using invisibility requires deception and violates others' autonomy.

I would ultimately destroy the ring. Living outside society's moral constraints would gradually erode my ethical character. True justice requires accountability to others, not just internal restraint.

**Analysis:**

* Acknowledges moral deterioration
* Shows understanding of Plato's argument
* Connects to justice and character
* Demonstrates philosophical depth

# Term Paper Outline Assignment (100 points)

Choose one article:

* Ole Martin Moen's "Is prostitution harmful?"
* James Rachels' "Why Privacy is Important"
* Dan Brock's "Cloning Human Beings"

Create detailed outline with:

1. Introduction (5%)
   * Article overview
   * Your chosen argument
   * Section previews
2. Argument Summary (40%)
   * Key definitions
   * Article's scope/purpose
   * Chosen argument analysis
3. Critical Objection (25%)
   * Original counterargument
   * Supporting examples
   * Implications
4. Critical Response (25%)
   * Defense against objection
   * Policy proposals/solutions
   * Practical implications
5. Conclusion (5%)
   * Key points review
   * Broader significance

Model Response**:**

Privacy and Personal Development: Analysis of Rachels' Core Argument

I. Introduction

- Overview: Rachels argues privacy enables diverse relationships

- Focus: Core argument that privacy allows relationship differentiation

- Preview: Will examine argument, raise autonomy objection, propose solution

II. Argument Summary

A. Key Definitions

- Privacy: Control over personal information

- Social relationships: Varying levels of intimacy/disclosure

B. Article Scope

- Defending privacy's moral importance

- Countering reductionist views of privacy

C. Core Argument Analysis

- Different relationships require different behaviors

- Privacy enables behavior variation

- Therefore privacy necessary for relationships

III. Critical Objection

A. The Autonomy Problem

- Privacy enables deception

- Prevents informed consent

- Examples: Hidden medical conditions from partners

- Implications for relationship authenticity

IV. Critical Response

A. Modified Privacy Rights

- Context-dependent disclosure requirements

- Balancing autonomy and privacy

- Practical policy proposals:

- Relationship-specific privacy standards

- Legal disclosure requirements

V. Conclusion

- Privacy essential but needs limits

- Balance between openness and discretion

- Implications for privacy law

Works Cited

Rachels, James. "Why Privacy is Important." Philosophy & Public Affairs, vol. 4, no. 4, 1975.

**Analysis:**

* Clear structure following requirements
* Specific argument focus
* Original objection and solution
* Appropriate detail level
* Shows philosophical understanding

# Term Paper Assignment (100 points)

Choose one article:

* Moen: "Is prostitution harmful?"
* Rachels: "Why Privacy is Important"
* Brock: "Cloning Human Beings"

Requirements:

1. Introduction (5%)
2. Argument Summary (40%)
3. Critical Objection (25%)
4. Critical Response (25%)
5. Conclusion (5%)

* Works Cited

Model Response**:**

The Inherent Harm of Commodifying Intimacy

Introduction

Ole Martin Moen argues prostitution isn't inherently harmful. This paper examines his response to the "commodification of intimacy" objection, demonstrating that his analysis overlooks key psychological harms inherent to commercializing intimate acts.

Argument Summary

Moen addresses nine arguments against prostitution, including that it commodifies intimacy. He claims this isn't harmful since:

1. Many intimate acts are already commodified (massage, therapy)

2. Commodification doesn't necessarily degrade intimacy

3. Participants can separate commercial from personal intimacy

He concludes commodification concerns don't demonstrate prostitution's inherent harmfulness.

Critical Objection

Moen's analysis ignores psychological evidence about intimacy's role in human wellbeing. Unlike massage or therapy, sexual intimacy involves unique neurochemical responses (oxytocin, dopamine) that create emotional bonding. Repeatedly subverting these natural responses through commercial sex likely causes psychological harm by:

1. Disrupting normal bonding mechanisms

2. Creating cognitive dissonance between physical and emotional intimacy

3. Potentially impairing capacity for genuine intimate relationships

Critical Response

One might defend Moen by arguing these psychological effects aren't universal or that individuals can develop healthy coping mechanisms. However, this merely shows some people might avoid harm, not that the practice isn't inherently harmful. A better approach would be:

1. Acknowledging inherent psychological risks

2. Developing harm reduction strategies

3. Supporting alternative income sources

4. Treating prostitution as hazardous work requiring safeguards

Conclusion

While Moen's broader argument against prohibition has merit, his dismissal of commodification concerns overlooks significant psychological evidence. Effective policy requires acknowledging prostitution's inherent risks while working to minimize harm.

Works Cited

Moen, Ole Martin. "Is Prostitution Harmful?" Journal of Medical Ethics, vol. 40, no. 2, 2014, pp. 73-81.

**Analysis:**

* Clear thesis and argument focus
* Evidence-based objection
* Practical solutions
* Balanced analysis
* Professional academic tone