

Paper Topics

Philosophy 101

Due by **email** Tuesday, June 3rd by 4 p.m.

Write approximately 3-5 double-spaced pages on *one* of the following topics. For whatever topic you pick you must do the following:

- Explain the argument (what are the premises? what is the conclusion?).
 - You may present the argument in numbered form if you wish, though if you do so be sure to show the connection between the argument as you’ve explained it and the relevant text(s).
- Assess the argument for validity and soundness and *explain why* it is/isn’t valid/sound.
- If there are problematic premises, then explain how the author defends them.
- Is the argument for the conclusion convincing? Why or why not?

For any topic you are free to draw on any concepts or readings we have discussed thus far, but be sure to answer the questions raised by the prompt.

I expect papers to be *clear*. Write in short and complete sentences. Where possible, sacrifice elegance in favor of clarity. Signpost heavily. Avoid needless generality or autobiographical reportage. Be sure to *appropriately cite* any sources which you consult in the writing of your paper. **This includes sources which you do not directly quote!**

1. In “What is it like to be a bat” Thomas Nagel argues that the nature of consciousness presents a challenge to our understanding of physicalism. What is Nagel’s argument? What is the significance for physicalism of a “point of view” as Nagel understands it? Is Nagel’s argument convincing? Why or why not?
2. Explain the Knowledge Argument. What problem does it present for physicalism? What is the basic structure of Lewis’s reply? Is his reply convincing? Provide reasons why or why not.
3. Mackie argues that there are no objective values. Explain his arguments. Are they convincing? Provide reasons why or why not.