edX

MITx Philosophy Award

Students who display exceptional performance in the class are eligible to win the MITx Philosophy Award. High School students are eligible for that award and, in addition, the MITx High School Philosophy Award.

How the Award Works

Awards will be decided on the basis of a two-step process:

- The **first step** is to get a final grade of at least 90%.

- The **second step** is to submit a written essay, in which you articulate a disagreement with my discussion of one of the puzzles that we'll consider in class. Essays must consist of two parts:

  - In Part I, I'll ask you to identify a puzzle that is explicitly discussed as part of the class and explain how you disagree with my treatment. Assessment of Part I will not be based on whether I agree or disagree with you. It will be based on whether you are able to articulate an interesting objection to my view. It is essential that you be as rigorous as possible. Sloppy reasoning will lead to immediate disqualification.

  - In Part II, I'll ask you to articulate your own way out of the puzzle that you identified in Part I. As before, assessment will not be based on whether I agree or disagree with you. It will be based on whether you are able to articulate an interesting argument for your own position. Rigor is important, and so is originality.

If I'm sufficiently impressed by your arguments, I may do more than consider your essay for the award. I might also include your idea in a future version of the class. If I do make use of your idea, I will mention your name and give you full credit. (That is how academia works: on the one hand, one allows one's ideas to be distributed freely in educational contexts; on the other hand, one is credited for one's idea.) If you don't feel comfortable with this arrangement, please do not submit an essay.

Further Details

Writing a good philosophy essay is hard. Unless you've taken a college-level philosophy class before, I urge you to look at a guide to writing philosophy; for instance, Jim Pryor's "Guidelines on Writing a Philosophy Paper".

Shortly after the final homework is due, students with an average homework grade of 90% or higher will be sent an email, inviting them to submit their award essay. Essays will be due on **September 2, 2020, by 16:00 UTC.** They must be submitted in pdf format and must consist of **1500 words or fewer**. (Essays that do not satisfy these specifications will be discarded automatically.)

All essays must conform to MIT's Academic Integrity Guidelines. Using another person's words or ideas without giving them credit constitutes plagiarism. If you are found to have plagiarized another person's work you will be disqualified from the award and you will be given a failing grade on *Paradox and Infinity*.