

Argumentative Essay #1 - Peer Review

1. The first Argumentative Essay should be a standard, rhetorical paper, defending a thesis. Defend your thesis by considering at least two of the readings on personal identity, Classes 13-16:
 - Plato, from *Phaedo*
 - Locke, "The Prince and the Cobbler"
 - Reid, "Of Mr. Locke's Account of Our Personal Identity"
 - Reid, "Of Identity"
 - Kripke, from *Naming and Necessity*
 - Hume, "The Self"
 - Parfit, "Divided Minds and the Nature of Persons"See the next page of this assignment for some general guidelines for writing philosophy papers.
2. Your first Argumentative Essay is due in two stages. A hard copy of a draft is due to peer reviewers at the beginning of class on October 30. (Group assignments and instructions for peer review are listed at the end of this assignment handout.) Peer reviews are due to authors at the beginning of the next class, November 4. Peer-review groups and guidelines for peer review are listed on the third page of this assignment sheet. The final draft of your paper, along with the Halloween draft and the peer-review comments you received, is due on November 6.
3. Your final draft should be five-to-seven pages, double spaced, approximately 1250 - 2100 words, in a reasonable font, such as 11 point Times, with reasonable (e.g. one-inch) margins. Paginate your paper. Do not right justify (i.e. fully justify) it. Late papers will be penalized.
4. Feel free consult the Writing Center in addition to the class peer-review process. Remember to acknowledge all assistance you have had on your paper, including your peer reviewers.
5. You are wholly responsible for the work in the final draft. The peer review process is intended to provide you with suggestions for improvement. You need not heed all suggestions. You may not blame readers if your paper is not improved. I ask reviewers to maintain a positive tone and it is always up to you whether to take any given suggestion.
6. Standards for academic writing vary by discipline. Philosophical writing should be attentive to every detail. Write simply, and clearly. Minimize use of jargon. Observe standard rules of grammar and spelling. Avoid history and biography. Focus on the arguments.
7. Your work for this paper should mainly consist of you and your chosen readings. Other sources you consult while writing, including any websites you visit and any persons with whom you talk, must be noted. References to our assigned readings may be indicated in line: "Some truths there are so near and obvious to the mind, that a man need only open his eyes to see them" (Berkeley, §6). Other sources require a list of references at the end of the paper along with in-line citations. Internet sources must include a live URL. I must be able to trace any source.
8. You may not re-write the Argumentative Essays for an improved grade.
9. Violations of academic integrity, like plagiarism, will lead to failing grades.

The Hamilton College Honor Code will be enforced.

Some General Guidelines For Writing A Philosophy Paper

1. Introduce your paper by briefly stating your thesis, the conclusion you will defend. Be specific. Your paper should be an extended argument supporting your thesis.
2. Argue for your thesis. Each element of your paper should relate directly to your specific thesis. When editing your paper, think about the role that each paragraph plays in support of your thesis. Think about the role that each sentence plays in each paragraph.
3. Provide plenty of road signs along the way. (E.g. “First I will argue...; then I will argue...”; “In the last section, I showed that...”) Make sure that you and the reader know the narrative structure of your paper, and the role of each part.
4. Connect, rather than merely concatenate, the various assertions in your paper. Beware of beginning paragraphs or sentences with claims like, “Another argument is...” Show how each of the portions of your paper fit together.
5. Consider the best objections to any thesis you defend. Consider responses to those objections, and counter-responses. Avoid straw persons, arguments which no one really holds but which are easy to refute.
6. Avoid arguments from authority. Do not accept without question what any philosopher says. Argue your own point of view, but through the writings of the philosophers.
7. Conclude your essay by summarizing what you intended to say in the paper. You may indicate questions for further research. You may indicate the limits of your argument. E.g. “My argument only shows that Descartes’s argument is faulty, not that his conclusion is false.”
8. Write tight. Edit down.
9. Here are two sample templates for philosophy papers:

A. Single-philosopher paper

Thesis: A argues that p, but not-p
Careful exposition of A’s argument
Considerations opposing at least one premise
Alternative positive account (lessons from A’s failure)
Modest conclusion, repeating thesis

B. Compare and contrast

Thesis: A argues that p. B argues that q, which is incompatible with p. B is right and A is wrong. (Or, both A and B are wrong.)
Careful exposition of A’s argument.
Careful exposition of B’s argument.
Considerations favoring B’s argument over A’s argument (and/or considerations against B’s argument)
Alternative positive account

Links to excellent advice for writing philosophy papers are available on the course website.

Instructions to Peer Reviewers

1. Provide the author of the paper you are reviewing with criticism that you believe will help the author improve the paper. Make sure to indicate both what is good in the paper and what could use improvement, but try to stay positive.
2. Focus on the philosophical content of the paper. You may make suggestions about grammar, word choice, sentence structure, and organization. But, try to focus on the arguments.

Is the author's thesis clear?

Are the exegetical passages defensible interpretations of the original?

Does the body of the paper support the thesis?

Is the narrative cohesive?

How could the author improve the paper?

3. All comments should be made respectfully and tactfully. Be honest and critical. Make sure that you understand the difference between being critical, which is good, and being rude. Focus on the paper, rather than the author to avoid personal attacks. It is better to write, "The paper contains dangling participles," than, "You dangle your participles." Detailed suggestions are better than fawning praise.
4. You have five days to complete your peer reviews. Hard copies of your comments, roughly 300-600 words, are due to the authors at the beginning of class on November 5.

Peer Review Groups

Group A

Juliet

Jordan

Alex

Isabel

Group B

Emily

TJ

Courtney

Group C

Travis

Alex

Ginger

Group D

Leah

Henry

Sarah

Group E

John

Allen

Miller