

Term Paper Assignment

1. Your term paper is due in three stages, a one-paragraph abstract, a full draft, and an edited final version. All papers must be double spaced, approximately eight to twelve pages (2000 to 4200 words) in a reasonable font, such as 12 point Times. The abstract for your paper is due on **Tuesday, March 31**. The first draft of your paper is due on **Tuesday, April 14**. The final version is due on **Thursday, April 30**.
2. I will return your drafts, with comments, in time for you to do some re-working of the paper. But, the final draft does not depend on my comments. You are responsible for editing and improving your paper.
3. One excellent way to write a term paper is to take one of the readings for which you have written a seminar paper, and contrast it with a response paper. For example, Chapter 2 of Schiffer's *Meaning* is a direct response to Grice's article "Meaning." Here are some other possible topics in this vein:

Donnellan, "Reference and Definite Descriptions" vs Kripke, "Speaker's Reference and Semantic Reference"

Quine, "Two Dogmas of Empiricism" vs Grice and Strawson, "In Defence of a Dogma"

Quine, "Two Dogmas of Empiricism" vs Katz, "The Refutation of Indeterminacy"

Tarski, "The Semantic Conception of Truth..." vs Field, "Tarski's Theory of Truth"

Many of the unassigned papers in the Martinich are responses to some of the assigned papers, and would form a good basis for a paper topic in conjunction with one or another of them.

4. Alternately, your term paper could explore a new topic. We will not be able to spend much time on some recently hot topics like the liar paradox; the relation of logical form to language; formal semantics, including two-dimensional semantics; and vagueness. Just about any article in the Blackwell (Devitt and Hanley) and Oxford (Lepore and Smith) guides, as well as in the Ludlow reader would be a good basis for a paper topic. (See Course Bibliography.)
5. However you choose to structure your term paper, it should present a critical evaluation of an argument or debate, and it should involve some reading that is independent of the work we do in class. The course bibliography will help you get started with additional readings.
6. Avoid history and biography. Focus on the arguments, rather than particular authors' explications of those arguments.
7. Observe basic rules of grammar and spelling. Avoid jargon. Write simply, and clearly. Proofread your paper. Ask a good writer to read and comment on your paper; I encourage use of the Writing Center.

8. Some immutable formatting guidelines: Do not right-justify your paper. Print on only one side of each page. Paginate your papers.
9. Any citation method which allows me easily to trace your sources is acceptable. My preferred method involves a list of references at the end of the paper, and citations made parenthetically within the text by merely noting the author and page number: “To be is to be the value of a variable” (Quine 50). If there is more than one work by an author in your list of references, disambiguate using year of publication: “To call a posit a posit is not to patronize it” (Quine 1960: 22). If your list of references contains entries from the same author in the same year, disambiguate using lower-case letters after the year, and indicate the distinction in the list of references: “All we really need in the way of holism... is to appreciate that empirical content is shared by the statements of science in clusters and cannot for the most part be sorted out among them” (Quine 1980b: viii). Internet sources must include a live URL. I must be able to trace the source.
10. Violations of academic integrity, like plagiarism, can and will lead to failing grades. Remember to acknowledge any assistance you have had on your paper, including assistance from the Writing Center. **The Hamilton College Honor Code will be enforced.**

Some 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. Often, it is easiest to write the introduction after you have finished writing the body of the paper. Make sure to include a thesis statement.
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...”) If you find such road signs too clumsy, you may omit some of them, but make sure that you and the reader know the narrative structure of your paper, and the role of each part.
4. 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.
5. 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.
6. Conclude your essay by summarizing what you intended to say in the paper. You may want to indicate further or related questions. You may choose to indicate the limits of your argument. (For example, “My argument only shows that Russell’s argument is faulty, not that his conclusion is false.”)

Links to excellent advice for writing philosophy papers is available on the home page of the course website.