

Seminar Paper/Presentation Assignment

Seminar Papers

During this semester, you are expected to write two seminar papers. Classes will generally run as discussions of the seminar paper for that day. Seminar papers should summarize important arguments and raise questions for discussion. In contrast to a standard, rhetorical philosophy paper, seminar papers may be mainly exegetical. You need not defend a thesis in a seminar paper, though some theme will be welcome. I expect some critical examination of the readings, though it need not be fully developed. Here are some general questions you might try to answer in your seminar papers.

- What is the big picture? What questions is the author attempting to answer?
- What is the relation between the analysis in the reading and actual linguistic practice?
- How does this philosopher's approach to a particular question differ from others we have already seen?
- What would this philosopher's theory of meaning/theory of reference look like?
- Is the argument in the article convincing?
- What arguments or phenomena is the author missing?

Your seminar papers must demonstrate attempts to grapple with the primary source. You may also consider secondary readings, including Martinich's introductions. You are stimulating class discussion, focusing our thoughts on the central theses, and raising questions. It is good practice to end seminar papers with a few questions you believe will be useful for the class to discuss. Classes will begin with an opportunity to present your paper, at which time you may discuss any particular difficulties in the material, or topics that you were unable to cover in the paper.

Each seminar paper is due at noon the day before the class in which it will be discussed (i.e. Monday or Wednesday). This deadline is necessary for all participants in the seminar to be able to read the paper and prepare comments and questions for class. You may email the paper to me first, or you may email the paper to all the members of the class directly.

All students are expected to come to class having read the seminar paper or papers for that day. Every one should be prepared to ask questions, or make comments, on the paper for that day. Comments on the paper should be constructive.

Presentations

At the beginning of the class for which you have written a seminar paper, you will present your paper. The presentation of your seminar paper may be as ambitious as you wish. You might generate discussion by presenting a controversial position. You might ask interesting questions. You may be creative about how to interact with the class. You may read your seminar paper. You may do a PowerPoint presentation. If you want to do something more inventive, like have us break into groups to prepare a debate, I would be happy to help you think out the plan.

Presentations should last at least five-ten minutes, though you may lead the entire class period.

Presentation Resources:

Please feel free to meet with me before your presentations. I will try to have notes for each class available in time for you to use them in your preparation.

Many students find the oral communications lab, located in KJ 152, helpful. They have a wealth of resources readily available, and are eager to help. The staff at the lab can assist you both with the content of your presentation, and with determining how best to present your material. When you have prepared a draft of your presentation, they can record you while you practice giving the presentation. You can watch the recording with a tutor, or by yourself. You can sign up for an appointment with a tutor on the door of the lab, or you can email them at: oralcomm@hamilton.edu. Their website offers valuable resources: <http://www.hamilton.edu/academics/department.html?dept=Oral%20Communication>

Sign-ups

We will sign up for both seminar papers on the second day of class.