

Logic Paper Assignment

1. Your paper should explore a topic in: a. logic; b. philosophy of logic; or c. the application of logic to philosophy. All papers must be double spaced, approximately four to six pages (1000 to 1800 words) in a reasonable font, such as 11 point Times. **The final draft of your paper is due on Friday, December 3.**
2. You may write on any of the topics that we have discussed in class, or you may write on a different topic. The lecture notes for topics we have discussed in class contain some specific suggestions for paper topics. I urge you to meet with me before you write. You must get approval for any topic we have not discussed in class. Your paper should show evidence of independent research; it should not merely summarize what was said in class, or what appears in the class notes. The course bibliography will help you get started with additional readings.
3. Observe basic rules of grammar and spelling. Avoid jargon. Write simply, and clearly. Proofread your paper. Asking a good writer to read and comment on your paper can be helpful; I encourage use of the Writing Center. Don't forget to cite all assistance you received on the paper.
4. A few important, idiosyncratic formatting guidelines: Do not right-justify your paper. Print on only one side of each page. Paginate your papers.
5. Avoid history and biography. Focus on the arguments, or the logical machinery, rather than particular authors' explications of those arguments or presentations of that machinery.
6. Papers on logic proper may present a known result in some extension of the logic we study in class. These papers need not argue for a thesis, but should motivate the result discussed. Papers on the philosophy of logic or the application of logic to philosophy should defend a thesis. See below for further, general information about writing philosophy papers.
7. 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.
8. 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 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. 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 indicate questions for further research. You may indicate the limits of your argument. (E.g. “My argument only shows that Goodman’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.