

Seminar Paper/Presentation Assignment

During this semester, each student in the course will write and present two seminar papers. Classes will generally run as discussions of the seminar paper for that day. Your grade for the seminar paper will depend on both the paper and your presentation of it.

Papers

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. 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?
- Is the author attempting to account for particular mathematical results?
- What is the relation between the recommendations in the reading and actual mathematical practice?
- What does the author think about the nature of mathematical objects?
- Does the author think that mathematical truths are necessary?
- How does the author think we acquire mathematical knowledge?

Your seminar papers should demonstrate attempts to grapple with the primary readings for class. You may also consider secondary readings, or background readings. 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, if any, for that day. Every one should be prepared to ask questions and make comments on the paper. Comments on the paper should be constructive.

You may extend one of your seminar papers into your term paper.

Presentations

You will lead the class on the day we discuss your seminar paper. The presentation of your seminar paper may be as ambitious as you wish. You may focus on the content of your paper. You might generate discussion by presenting a controversial position. You might ask interesting questions. You may also discuss any particular difficulties in the material, or topics that you were unable to cover in the paper.

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.

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 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.

Sign-ups

We will sign up for both seminar papers on the second day of class. Slots are available for classes 3-25. You should choose one slot before spring break and one slot after.

Seminar Paper Sign-Up List

Class	Date	Topic	
3	Tuesday, January 28	Plato's Platonism	
4	Thursday, January 30	Aristotle	
5	Tuesday, February 4	Modern Rationalism I	
6	Thursday, February 6	Modern Rationalism II	
7	Tuesday, February 11	Modern Empiricism	
8	Thursday, February 13	The Synthetic <i>A Priori</i> I	
9	Tuesday, February 18	The Synthetic <i>A Priori</i> II	
10	Thursday, February 20	Radical Empiricism	
11	Tuesday, February 25	Cantor's Paradise	
12	Thursday, February 27	Logicism	
13	Tuesday, March 4	Formalism and Incompleteness	
14	Thursday, March 6	Intuitionism	
15	Tuesday, March 11	Conventionalism	
16	Thursday, March 13	Two Dogmas of Empiricism	
17	Tuesday, April 1	The Problem	
18	Thursday, April 3	The Indispensability Argument	
19	Tuesday, April 8	Dispensabilism I	
20	Thursday, April 10	Dispensabilism II	
21	Tuesday, April 15	The Weasel	
22	Thursday, April 17	Eleatics and Indispensabilists	
23	Tuesday, April 22	Mathematical Recreation	
24	Thursday, April 24	The Explanatory Argument	
25	Tuesday, April 29	The Nominalist Against the Explanatory Argument	