

Second Paper Assignment

1. A hard copy of your second paper is due in class on Thursday, April 30, at 9am. It should be double spaced, approximately five to eight pages (1250 to 2400 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.
2. The theme of your second paper may be any topic in the material we have covered from Hobbes, Spinoza, Leibniz, Locke, Berkeley, or Hume. I expect that you will compare and contrast the work of at least two philosophers; one of them may be Descartes. See the reverse for some sample specific topics. The panel presentations, both the ones you watch and the one in which you participate, should be useful in preparing your second paper.
3. Your paper should have a thesis in which you defend a specific argument, conclusion, or view. Again, the majority of your paper should be devoted to interpretation, including close textual analysis. Dividing your paper into sections can help your process and the coherence of the final product.
4. 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. Avoid these common infelicities: Conclusions are based *on* evidence, not *off* of evidence. 'Reference' should not be used as a verb. Do not use 'critique' where 'criticism' will do.
5. Any citation method which allows me easily to trace your sources is acceptable. References to pages in the Ariew and Watkins collection may be indicated, in line: "We owe a great debt to those who point out faults" (Pascal, AW 109). Other sources you consult while writing, including any websites you visit and any persons with whom you talk, must be noted. Provide for these a list of references at the end of the paper in addition to any appropriate in-line citations. Internet sources must include a live URL. I must be able to trace the source. For quotations of five lines or more, indent from both margins, single space, and do not use quotation marks. Avoid quoting from secondary sources like the Melchert or Tlumak; focus on the primary sources. For citations of personal discussions, a footnote like the following may be appropriate:

"In working out the ideas of this paper, I have benefitted from discussions with David Rosenthal and Shoshana Brassfield."
6. Late papers will be penalized.
7. Violations of academic integrity, like plagiarism and failure to cite sources, can and will lead to failing grades. Remember to acknowledge any assistance you have had on your paper, including assistance from the Writing Center.
8. See the First Paper Assignment for some general guidelines for writing a philosophy paper. Links to excellent advice for writing philosophy papers are also available on the course website.

The Hamilton College Honor Code will be enforced.

Paper Topics

Here are some themes we have studied across philosophers:

1. What are the fundamental substances of the world? How many substances, or kinds of substances, are there?
2. Does God exist? If so, how do we know?
3. Is there a material world? If so, what is it like?
4. What is the nature of mind? What is the relationship between minds and bodies?
5. What is the self?
6. Is our will free?
7. Are there innate ideas? If so, what are they? If not, do we know the claims that those who defend innate ideas say that we do? If so, how?
8. What are abstract ideas? Do we have abstract ideas?
9. What are the proper methods of science? Can we know scientific laws?
10. Are space and time absolute or relational?
11. Are mathematical claims necessary? How do we know them? What are they about?

Some of these topics are more appropriate for some philosophers than for others. On the nature of self, for example, I would expect that you would discuss Locke and Hume. On innate ideas, I would expect that you would discuss Descartes and Locke. On the freedom of the will, Descartes, Spinoza, Leibniz, and Hume are all relevant; for this topic, I would expect you to discuss at least three philosophers.

Feel free to divide your paper into separate sections. This can be helpful to both the writer and the reader.

For whatever topic you choose, **present a thesis of your own, formed by consideration of the work of the philosophers you will discuss.** You may defend one philosopher's position against the criticisms of another. You may present a thesis critical of more than one philosopher.

For more specific paper topics, Tlumak provides excellent suggestions at the end of each chapter. I encourage you to talk with me about your paper in advance.

You must meet with me to clear your topic if you are planning to diverge from those above.