

History of Social and Political Philosophy  
Fall, 2007

Term paper guidelines

Your main written work for this course is a term paper in which you compare and contrast the views of two of the authors on the syllabus about one of the main topics we are considering. You will also argue for the superiority of one of the two views over the other.

To help you with your paper you will do five 1-point Writing Exercises, on the following dates: Oct. 19, Oct. 26, Nov. 2, Nov. 9, and Nov. 19.

Your paper should do the following things, in roughly the following structure:

Introduction

- Identify the topic you will discuss, define it in your own words, and provide a general discussion of what it involves.
- Identify the two authors you will consider, and *very briefly* summarize the view of each on the topic.
- State which author's view you support, and *very briefly* summarize why.

Main body

- Discussion of first author
  - Summarize the author's view on the topic.
  - Support your summary by identifying and *restating in your own words* several passages relevant to your topic. (You may use direct quotations – but you should paraphrase as well to show your understanding of them.)
  - Explain how these passages bear on the topic.
- Discussion of second author
  - Summarize the author's view on the topic.
  - Support your summary by identifying and *restating in your own words* several passages relevant to your topic. (You may use direct quotations – but you should paraphrase as well to show your understanding of them.)
  - Explain how these passages bear on the topic.
- Comparison between authors
  - Identify specific similarities and differences between their views on the topic.
  - Explain *why* their views on the topic are similar and/or different – with reference to other aspects of their broader theories.

## Conclusion

- State which view you find more persuasive. (If you don't agree with either, state the view on the topic you hold.)
- Explain and justify your evaluation – i.e. provide some reasons to support it.
  - Your explanation should refer to the passages you review in the main body of your paper.
  - You must give some specific reasons why those passages show that one view is better than the other.
  - E.g. you might argue that the assumptions of one view are more plausible than the other's, or that one view is more practical in terms of policy, or that one is more in line with important moral or political values.

Throughout your paper you should stay close to the texts – that is, you should refer to particular passages where the authors deal with the topic, and you should give citations to the text (I will provide a guide to citing different versions of the text later). (Citations should be in parentheses, not in footnotes.)

Your paper should be about 2,000 words, or about 8 typed pages. It must be typed, double-spaced with 1" margins. *Pages must be numbered, and papers must be stapled together.* Your paper is due in class on Friday, November 30.

In addition to considering your observation of the structure above, I will grade your paper according to:

- The quality of your handling of your topic (is it focused? explained well? stuck to?).
- How well you treat each author (are their views summarized correctly? are the summaries supported by appropriate passages? do you restate and explain the passages properly?)
- The comprehensiveness and accuracy of your comparison between the authors (do you note relevant similarities and differences? do you explain them in terms of their wider theories?).
- The persuasiveness of your argument for the view you favor (do you have a clear statement of preference? do you support your judgment with specific reasons?).
- The quality of your writing, including grammar, spelling, and clear comprehensible style (papers that are written poorly will suffer a substantial grade penalty).

NOTE TO PHILOSOPHY AND ETHICS & RELIGION MAJORS (this does not apply to non-majors)

You should submit the Term Paper course for your portfolio. To do so, simply turn in two copies of your paper, one of which must include a title page that lists: the paper title; the course name and number; this semester and year; and the date the paper is turned in. This portfolio copy must not show your name anywhere except on the title page.