

Short Paper Assignment Details

The Basics: Everyone will complete a total of two short paper assignments:

One paper on an Early Modern Figure [e.g. Descartes and/or Hume]

One paper a Late Modern figure(s) [e.g. Kant and/or Nietzsche]

In order to prepare for your final paper, in which you will balance both textual exegesis and original argumentation, **you will complete the two short papers above by completing exactly one of each of the following Assignment types:**

One Argumentative Assignment - “Stake a Claim”

One Expository Assignment - “Philosophical Memes”

NOTE: You may choose how to pair these requirements [i.e. You may choose to do your Argumentative Assignment on an Early Modern figure and your Expository Assignment on a Late Modern Figure, or you may choose to do your Argumentative Assignment on an Late Modern figure and your Expository Assignment on an Early Modern Figure].

The Deadlines:

Early Modern Paper is due via email by the end of the day **Wednesday March 4th**

Late Modern Paper is due via email by the end of the day **Wednesday April 8th (extended)**

NOTE: In the spirit of charity, No Weeklies Will Be Due on the Week of a Paper Deadline

“Stake a Claim”: Argumentative Assignment

TASK: Write an original argumentative paper (3-4 pages) in which you engage in at least one of the following:

TOPICAL DEBATE - Engage with the ideas and arguments from the figure in question with your own arguments and ideas on the topic at hand

INTERPRETIVE DEBATE - Engage in a debate between differing interpretations of a Modern philosopher’s views.

RECONSTRUCTIVE DEBATE - Try to defend a Modern philosopher’s view from some classic objections or problems by reconstructing a fortified or amended version of their position.

Some Basic Guidelines for Writing Original Papers:

I. AIM FOR ORIGINALITY, IRRESPECTIVE OF NOVELTY: Your paper should demonstrate independent thinking and original synthesis of ideas. Now, this doesn’t mean that your ideas have never been expressed by anyone in the literature. The idea is rather to aim for philosophical growth on your own merits, relative to your encounter with the primary sources.

II. SHOW DIALECTICAL SENSITIVITY; PLAY DEVIL’S ADVOCATE: Compelling arguments require compelling interlocutors! In philosophical writing, if you do not consider an opposing view, or if you present the other side in a way that makes their position seem weak or underdeveloped, your argument will appear undermotivated in turn.

III. SOMETIMES, LOSING IS WINNING - AIM FOR INTELLECTUAL DISCOVERY, NOT “WINNING” While it is critical to consider opposing perspectives, this doesn’t mean that you have to defeat the objections you raise. In fact, it is an intellectual achievement to show just how difficult an issue really is, and some of the most important contributions to philosophy, and indeed some of the best student papers I have read, have concluded without a resolution to the problems that were raised.

“Philosophical Memes”: Expository Assignment

The word “meme” is most often associated with viral image-based internet humor. But in its broader sense, a meme is just any rapidly communicable piece of information that conveys an idea or attitude. The “Cartesian Circle,” for example, is a meme designed to convey the circular nature of Descartes’ argument in Meditation III.

TASK: In this assignment, you will try your hand at making simple visual aids as a way to frame your exposition of an idea or problem from our readings. **Details:**

(i) Two Ungraded Memes Create a simple visual meme designed to capture or express a philosophical idea or problem in thumbnail form. This portion of the assignment will be ungraded to allow for creative expression. Your meme should include some very simple visual artefact of your choosing or design (video and audio artefacts are fair game as well). You have full creative license here.

(ii) Two Graded 500-Word Expositions, one corresponding to each meme, in which you explicate the philosophical idea or problem at hand. Here you should focus your efforts on gaining mastery of the relevant content as opposed to pursuing an original line of argumentation. The goal is to acquire teaching knowledge of the material, such that you could explain the concept at hand to a philosophical novice.

			
<p><i>Hume's Fork and Kant's Attempt to Cross Hume's Fork</i></p>	<p><i>Hume's Is-Ought Gap</i></p>	<p>Nietzsche's Eternal Return</p>	