

## Critical Essay Requirements

This essay is an exercise in philosophical exposition and critique. The essay must be typed, double spaced, in 10 or 12 point type with normal margins. The essay should be at least 2 pages long and no more than 4 pages long. Each essay should contain Parts I and II.

**Part I.** Choose an argument found in one of the articles/books assigned as reading for the course and clearly present (explicate) the author's position and arguments (if the author gives a number of arguments then pick one or two that you consider to be the most central). Be sure to explain what conclusion(s) they are arguing for and what evidence or support they give for their conclusion(s). Note: this is the most important part of the essay because it lays the groundwork for the rest of the assignment.

**Part II.** Give, in your view, the most damaging criticism of the argument or position explicated in Part I. Be sure to develop your criticism in some detail. Where exactly does the author go wrong? What empirical claims (matter of fact claims) do they make that are false if any? Do not use the shotgun method — don't briefly mention five or six problems, develop one or two in detail.

More Information: For more information about writing philosophy papers and essays see p. 60-79 in A. Weston's *A Rulebook for Arguments*. Also, read see the "Writing Philosophy" handout in your course packet.

Plagiarism: University policy defines "plagiarism" as "a specific form of cheating which consists of the misuse of the published and/or unpublished words of another by representing the material so used as one's own work." Cheating and plagiarism will not be tolerated in this course. Depending on the seriousness of the student's action, the student may be penalized by an "F" on the assignment, to an "F" in the course, or some other more serious penalty. In any case, cheating in this course will result in the filing of a Cheating/Plagiarism Report to be placed in the student's permanent academic record.

All class lectures and course handouts are fair game — you may use this information without citation. If you are in doubt about footnoting something ask me or footnote it just to be sure.

### **Guidelines for Grading Written Work:**

- A      The high honor grade goes to papers which,
- demonstrate a clear and insightful attack or presentation of the problem;
  - develop a logical, coherent argument and a sequence of related paragraphs which lead to clear conclusions; provides reasons for claims;
  - show a firm grasp of classroom sessions and assigned readings and an ability to use the right information in the right place in substantial enough amounts;
  - adds something to what has been said about the problem in the classroom;
  - are correctly written in a technical sense.
- B      The honor grade goes to papers which,
- make some kind of sustained attack on the problem
  - develop an argument but one which may be less subtle or well-reasoned than an A- paper;
  - show a more than adequate grasp of all the course materials but are less masterful; in their use and application of them;
  - make thoughtful use of what has been said in class without necessarily adding something new;
  - have only minor technical flaws.
- C      The average grade goes to papers which,
- make a vague or unimaginative attack on the problem;
  - develop an argument which is not well-reasoned and has logical flaws and inconsistencies; argument not adequately supported;
  - show an adequate or less than adequate grasp of the course materials; miss significant relevant material, particularly in the readings - tends to summarize or narrate rather than argue;
  - make somewhat incomplete or even careless use of classroom work;
  - merely 'plays back tapes' of classroom work and assigned reading;
  - may have some major technical flaws or not be well written.
- D      The passing grade goes to papers which,
- make little or no attack on the problem;
  - do not develop a reasoned argument but rather a collection of isolated points;
  - seems unfamiliar with relevant material from readings and lectures;
  - are poorly written with numerous technical flaws.
- F      The failing grade goes to the paper that is indescribable in any of the above terms.