

Ucd school of philosophy



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

UCD SCHOOL OF PHILOSOPHY PHILOSOPHY ESSAYS I. Required Format, II. Writing Guidelines, III. A Few Common Mistakes I. Required Format for Essays in Philosophy: Essays must be typewritten; hand-written work cannot be accepted (medical-certified reasons aside). Use double-spaced or one-and-a-half spacing. In Microsoft Word, select ‘ Double’ or ‘ 1.5 lines’ under Format/Paragraph/Line spacing. The standard font size is 12. Do not type in 10 font (except perhaps footnotes) or in 16 font. Use ‘ Times New Roman’ (or some other standard font). Don’t get fancy with fonts! Indent the first line of all new paragraphs about 5 spaces; alternatively, insert an extra space between paragraphs and begin the new paragraph flush with the left margin. Quotations of less than 2-3 lines are enclosed within quotation marks (“ Mary had a little lamb”) and included within the text of your paper. Quotations longer than 2-3 lines (block-quotations) should be indented from the left margin, single-spaced, without quotation marks: I am a sample block-quotation, indented from the margins. Block-quotations can be 10 or 12 font. Do not put quotation marks around block quotations and do not italicise (except where italics are in the original). Always provide a reference, either in parentheses or by footnote or endnote (Billingworth, 1968: p. 104). Number all pages except title page, first page, endnotes and bibliography. Italicise (or underline) book titles; use quotation marks for articles and chapters. So, Heidegger’s *Being and Time* [or *Being and Time*] but Quine’s ‘ Two Dogmas of Empiricism’. Proofread your essay for spelling errors and grammatical mistakes. Use your word processor’s spell-checker but don’t rely on it exclusively. It is difficult to eliminate errors completely (there may even be some in this document!) but do try. You must submit two copies of your essay with the Philosophy essay cover sheet attached to one copy.

Simply staple your essay in the top-left corner; no hard plastic cover sheets or folders are necessary. The word-length for your essay (not including footnotes/endnotes or bibliography) will be specified for your year. Strict adherence to the word limit is mandatory. (Microsoft Word has a ‘word count’ facility under Tools on the toolbar.) A properly presented bibliography is essential. Alphabetise the bibliography by author’s last name. Single-space each entry, with a blank line between entries. Use ed. for editor; trans. for translator. Leave yourself time to produce a correctly formatted bibliography. Bibliography and Referencing:(standard footnote/endnote method) Alphabetise your bibliography by author’s last name (single space entries, double space between entries). The following are standard formats for the bibliography. A book: Merton, Robert K. *The Sociology of Science*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1973. An edited book: MacIntyre, A., ed. *Hegel: A Collection of Critical Essays*. London: University of Notre Dame Press, 1976. An article in a journal: Dove, Kenley R. ‘Hegel’s Phenomenological Method’, *Review of Metaphysics* 23 No. 1 (Sept., 1969), pp. 615-41. An essay or article in a book (by same author): Adorno, T. ‘Skoteinos, or How to read Hegel’, in *Hegel: Three Studies* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1993), pp. 89-148. An article in an edited collection: Harris, H. S. ‘Hegel’s intellectual development to 1807’, in *The Cambridge Companion to Hegel*, edited by F. C. Beiser (Cambridge University Press, 1993), pp. 25-51. Any claim you make in your text that is not your own idea must be referred to the relevant source. You may do this by putting the reference in parentheses at the end of the passage or by using a footnote. (Your computer’s word processor will have an ‘Insert Footnote/Endnote’ command that will take care of the numbering and location). Endnotes, if you use

them, occur at the end of your main text, before the bibliography. Your first footnote reference gives the full source (omitting the publisher) and the page referred to. The author's last name comes first in a bibliography; in footnotes then normal order prevails. 1 John Diamond, *The Third Chimpanzee* (London, 1983), p. 199. Where no confusion can arise (for example, where references are on the same page), subsequent references to the same book use 'ibid.' ('in the same place'), followed by the page number. If intervening references to other works occur, use 'op. cit.' ('in the work quoted'); however, do not send the reader back too many pages - if in doubt, use a full reference. Instead of using 'ibid' and 'op. cit' it is permissible to use an abbreviated version of the full reference, e. g. Diamond, p. 31. Samples: 2 *ibid.*, p. 103. [this is a reference to Diamond's book, above.] 3 Harry Lonner, 'Justice in a Lonely World', *Philosophy and Public Affairs*, 8 (3) (Oct. 1978), p. 4. 4 John Diamond, *op. cit.*, p. 56. 5 Diamond, p. 31 All INTERNET references must be cited using the full and accurate address! Cite the author's name (if known), document title in quotation marks, the date visited, and the full HTTP or URL address: e. g., " <http://www.ccs.neu.edu/home/lpb/mud-history.html> (5 Dec. 1994). "

II. General Guidelines for Writing Essays in Philosophy

1. The ESSAY TITLE and your THESIS; the INTRODUCTION and the CONCLUSION

If the assigned essay title is in the form of a question, your essay must answer the question. Here is a useful strategy for many philosophical essays: before you begin your essay, write down 'Therefore...' and complete the sentence as what will be the final sentence of your essay. This will be the thesis you are defending. (Note: some essay titles may require more exposition and interpretation rather than arguing for a thesis of your own; but even in these cases it is always a good idea to have a clear

focus for your essay, for example, an aspect of the topic you will critically examine.) Suppose the essay title is: " Is Sartre's conception of freedom defensible? " Begin with your hunch that, on balance, it either is or is not plausible. Your essay might end: " Therefore Sartre's conception of freedom, all things considered, is not plausible." That is your thesis. Your concluding paragraph will sum up the argument you have mounted in support of your thesis. The opening paragraph(s) of your essay should: (1) Introduce the topic. Avoid vague generalities. Get right to the main issue. (2) State your thesis. ' In this essay I will argue [contend, show] that Sartre's conception of freedom is not plausible.' Your thesis statement is crucial. (3) Outline your strategy. State explicitly how your essay will develop, step by step. (You won't know this precisely until after your next-to-last draft.) So, for example, " First, I clarify Sartre's conception of freedom, focusing on so&so. Secondly, I raise two familiar but mistaken objections to Sartre's view and suggest how Sartre could respond to them. Finally, however, I will raise what I consider to be the strongest objection to Sartre's position: his conception of so&so is inconsistent." Even if your essay is largely expository (e. g., if the essay title was: ' What is Sartre's conception of freedom?'), you should still have a thesis: a particular slant, or focus or strategy. For example, " In this essay I shall highlight the underlying role of so&so in Sartre's analysis."

2. CONTENT and PHILOSOPHICAL ARGUMENTS

Philosophical essays of all kinds consist largely in providing reasons for believing your thesis or interpretation to be true: yours is the correct view or interpretation of the issue or philosopher under consideration. It's about arguments: reasons or evidence for conclusions. Why, for example, is Sartre's conception of freedom supposedly implausible (or plausible)? You should look for reasons both for and against

the thesis you are defending. You will find arguments in primary sources, secondary sources, the lectures, and in your own reflections. Even if your essay is largely expository (explaining a philosopher's view, for instance), you will still be presenting evidence—analysing passages, for instance—for your particular interpretations. Here is an invaluable strategy for good philosophical essay writing: whenever your essay makes a claim, reflect on how an opponent might object to that claim. If you raise an objection to Sartre's view, devote a paragraph to how he might attempt to respond to your objection; and then evaluate whether and why such a response succeeds or fails.

3. OTHER TIPS and STRATEGIES Make your essay as concise and incisive as possible. Write a first draft that is longer than the required length and then delete anything irrelevant or superfluous to your main purpose. You need to go beyond simply reporting or paraphrasing what a philosopher said. If you assert that a philosopher holds a specified view, establish your claim on the basis of evidence (detailed analysis of passages is useful). And you need to go beyond simply reporting how you yourself feel about the matter: back up your claims with reasons and evidence, and fend off possible objections. Finally, you need to go beyond simply displaying what various commentators think about the topic. Do use secondary sources, of course, but ultimately your tutor or lecturer is interested in your best reasons for adopting your conclusion. If you quote be careful to use the exact words and punctuation of the original text! Give the appropriate page references. If you add italics that are not in the quote itself, insert ' emphasis [or italics] added' after your page reference; for example: " ... " (Putnam, 1985a, p. 17; italics added). If you insert a clarifying phrase in a quote, use square brackets: '[clarifying phrase]' to indicate that the addition is not in

the original. Use ellipses for omissions: ‘...’ (3 dots only, not ‘.....’; however, use 4 dots if the omitted material includes a full stop). Whenever you use a quotation from an author, always explain, analyse, or comment upon the claims made in the quote. Better still, put the philosopher’s ideas into your own words and then relate the ideas to your wider argument.

4. Features that make a GOOD paper

(i) Clarity. Assume that the reader of your papers knows less than you. Take pains to make your meaning as clear as possible. It is helpful to provide relevant examples that illustrate your points. Use your own words; avoid artificial, technical or convoluted language.

(ii) Accuracy. Be sure that you know and render the precise claim or argument or view that a philosopher intends or is committed to before you go on to evaluate it.

(iii) Reflection. Your writing should manifest careful, reflective thinking carried on in an imaginative and critical frame of mind. Probe the issue at hand so as to stretch yourself intellectually. It is better to delve deeply into one aspect of a problem than to address several aspects superficially.

(iv) Organisation. Try to order the expression of your thoughts in such a way that they build upon what comes before and support what comes after so that nothing irrelevant to the matter at hand remains to interrupt the flow. Ensure that it always is clear to the reader just what the current point is and how it relates to what you’ve done and are about to do.

(v) Argument. This is the most central feature of a philosophy paper. Try to satisfy yourself that you have succeeded in showing that everyone ought to believe what you in fact do believe (and where you do not feel satisfied, say so, and try to indicate why). To accomplish this, always establish your points by providing good reasons—the most relevant and persuasive ones you can think of, structured as rigorously and incisively as you can—in support of your views.

MARK Your mark will reflect the tutor's or lecturer's estimate of your success in thinking philosophically. A properly formatted essay with generally correct grammar, spelling and punctuation, and with generally concise, clear writing, expressing a genuine effort to grasp the relevant ideas is the minimum necessary for the award of a Pass mark. To achieve a second-class honours lower division (2. 2) your essay must additionally have a well-organized structure, include generally correct interpretations of philosophical positions and arguments, and make a good attempt to argue your case. A second-class honours, upper division, (2. 1) essay will exemplify these characteristics very well and also include some interesting insights, research, or interpretations. A first-class essay is one that succeeds in providing a particularly strong and insightful defence of an interesting thesis.

III. A Few Common Mistakes

A run-on sentence is one in which two or more independent clauses are improperly joined, this is usually done with a comma fault. This sentence is a run-on sentence, the first sentence was as well. Break the passage up into separate, shorter sentences; the use of semi-colons can help too. A sentence fragment is an incomplete sentence. Like this one. Something to be avoided. As a rule. Make sure each sentence has a subject and predicate (with a finite verb). Mistakes in the use of apostrophes have become quite widespread in students' writings, and such mistakes distract the person marking your essay from properly considering your ideas. When something belongs to someone or something, or is their possession, you must use an apostrophe. When the possessor is single, the ' s' follows the apostrophe: The man's coat. When the possessors are plural, the apostrophe follows the ' s': The girls' books. [Compare: The men's coats] When names end with ' s', either position is acceptable: James' dog, or

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James's dog. Do not use apostrophes with possessive pronouns: his, hers, its, ours, yours, theirs. It's is a contraction meaning 'it is'; Its is the possessive: "It's easy to teach this dog its tricks." Whenever you write 'it's', say 'it is' to yourself and you will catch many mistakes. 'e. g.' means 'for example': follow with a comma and one or more examples. 'i. e.' means 'that is': follow with a comma and a restatement or clarification. It is often better style to avoid such abbreviations and to write out 'for example' and 'that is' in full. Some common confusions: | accept/except | passed/past | | advice/advise | patience/patients | | affect/effect | peace/piece | | allusion/illusion | personal/personnel | | breath/breathe | plain/plane | | choose/chose | precede/proceed | | cite/sight/site | presence/presents | | complement/compliment | principal/principle | | council/counsel | quiet/quite | | descent/dissent | rain/reign/rein | | device/devise | raise/raze | | elicit/illicit | respectfully/respectively | | eminent/immanent/imminent | right/rite/write/wright | | every day/everyday | stationary/stationery | | fair/fare | their/they're/there | | formally/formerly | weather/whether | | its/it's | whose/who's | | loose/lose | your/you're |