

PHL 370 - Metaphysics
Echelbarger

GUIDELINES FOR TERM PAPER

LENGTH: Approximately ten pages typewritten, double-spaced and on one side of a page only. This would be equivalent to about 3000 words.

PRODUCTION: Preference is for typewritten or computer-produced papers. Papers must meet the following conditions: (1) Regular 8.5 x 11 inch sheets of white paper are used. (2) Black or dark blue ink is used. (3) Use some means of keeping all the pages together; a folder, a paperclip or similar device.

SUGGESTED CONCEPTUAL APPROACHES: Several kinds of approaches are good. Here are a few:

1) Original essay: According to this approach you could argue as best you can, formulating your own arguments, for or against some standard metaphysical position (e.g. Dualism, Materialism, Nominalism, Determinism, etc.). In this case, you would invent your own arguments for or against the position as well as clearly explain what you take the position to be and you present some of the usual reasons that are given by well-known philosophers for or against the position. You would explain how your position differs from theirs. If your position agrees with that of some other philosopher and you have presented that philosopher's arguments for the position, you would present some standard objections to those arguments and you would reply to those objections.

2) Critical Essay: Examine the metaphysical theory of some specific author who takes a position regarding some standard metaphysical issue. This could be an attempt to demonstrate that this author's arguments are inadequate, either because they are invalid, weak, incoherent or inconsistent or conflict with other things that we seem to know far better than the propositions the author defends. A critical essay could also be an attempt to analyze, clearly explain and criticize some specific author's views or critically examine views typically central to some standard metaphysical tradition.

For example, dualists typically claim that minds and bodies causally interact even though they are substances of different metaphysical kinds. One could write a critical paper in which it is explained what dualists are trying to establish,

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their intellectual motives for their theory, and some of what you take to be the most powerful criticisms of Dualism. It is far better to go beyond this general sort of examination, however. Besides just presenting general arguments critical of some view, it is better to present arguments that may *seem* damaging to some claim and then to show that these arguments could be answered effectively by a philosopher who defends those views. If there are still other arguments that you believe to be damaging to the view, you could describe ways in which the philosopher under criticism could modify his position in order to avoid the criticism or you could argue that the view cannot be defended by any sort of modification because the criticism you present is fatal to it.

3) **Research and Report:** An example of this approach is to write a paper in which you summarize, explain and compare the positions taken on some topic by two authors who are included in a bibliography you compile. The bibliography would consist of philosophy journal articles and commonly cited books regarding the topic on which the two authors discussed in your paper disagree.

4) A **combination** of research and original argument or criticism and original argument or research and criticism

Suggested research approaches:

The best place for you to begin is to try looking at the works mentioned at the ends of the major sections of Carter's text. Another excellent method for tracking down journal articles is to consult **The Philosopher's Index**, a multivolume reference work which is kept in the reference room of Penfield library. It can also be efficient to go directly to the bound philosophy journals that are kept on the second floor of Penfield library. Many journals publish an annual index of articles in each year's last issue.

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