

First paper

PHIL 13195

Due: Thursday, October 17 (the Thursday before fall break)

Below are four topics for your first paper. You are welcome to come up with your own topic, though you must get my approval by email first. If you do this, the question that you I approve should be on the first page of your essay. The papers should be at most 5-7 pages in length, double-spaced and with reasonable margins and font. You should turn in the paper to me as an email attachment. A late penalty of 3 points per day, including weekends, will be assessed for any papers which are handed in late. I am happy to read rough drafts, but these must be submitted 7 days or more before the due date by email.

Plagiarism is a serious and growing problem at Notre Dame and other universities. It is your responsibility to acquaint yourselves with the University's honor code, as well as with the philosophy department's guidelines regarding plagiarism. Both are linked from the course page.

1. Explain what you take to be the most convincing argument discussed in this class for the existence of God. Say, in the end, whether you think that it is a good argument, and why. Be sure to consider some objections to the argument, as well as ways in which a proponent of the argument might respond to these objections.
2. Is there evil in the world which is not caused by human free actions? If not, explain how some apparent evils which do not seem to be traceable to human actions might be caused by human free actions. If so, say whether you think that the existence of evil of this sort shows that God does not exist, and why. Be sure to consider objections to the view you defend.
3. van Inwagen says that free will presents a paradox, because each of the following three views about free will face seemingly unanswerable arguments: (1) that free will is compatible with determinism; (2) that free will is incompatible with determinism, but compatible with indeterminism; and (3) that free will is incompatible with both determinism and indeterminism, and hence impossible. Say which of these three views you think is most plausible, and why. Spend the remainder of the paper responding to some of the objections van Inwagen and Sider raise for your position.
4. Many have thought that the good of free will can, for the believer in an omnipotent and all-good being, explain the existence of all of the evil which is caused by human free actions. Consider and evaluate the following two objections to this view: (i) Mackie's argument that God could have created free agents who always did the right thing; (ii) the objection that some exercises of free will

have such horrific consequences that it would be better for an all-good being to block that one exercise of free will than to allow its consequences.

5. Imagine three people whose lives are alike except that one neither has free will nor believes she does, one lacks free will but thinks she has free will, and one both has free will and believes she does. Would these lives be different in any important way? What of value might be part of one or two of these lives, but not all?

HOW [NOT] TO STRUCTURE A PAPER

BY RIMA BASU

[OPENING QUOTE - BE SURE TO NEVER REFERENCE THIS QUOTE AGAIN ANYWHERE ELSE IN YOUR PAPER]

SINCE THE DAWN OF TIME MAN HAS BEEN STRUGGLING WITH...
[CONTINUE FOR REST OF INTRODUCTION; MAKE SURE NOT TO STATE WHAT YOU WILL BE ARGUING IN THE PAPER]

[INSERT PHILOSOPHER'S NAME SPELT INCORRECTLY] ARGUES...
[INSERT UNCITED PASSAGE FROM WIKIPEDIA]

[INSERT BLOCK QUOTE. DO NOT EXPLAIN QUOTE.]

I DON'T THINK THAT [INSERT A DIFFERENT PHILOSOPHER'S NAME] IS RIGHT BECAUSE...

[INSERT UNCITED PASSAGE FROM WIKIPEDIA]

[INSERT BLOCK QUOTE. DO NOT EXPLAIN QUOTE.]

AND THIS IS BECAUSE...

[INSERT FAILED AT ATTEMPT AT LOGICAL VOCABULARY HERE]

THUS I CONCLUDE THAT SINCE I HAVE ENGAGED IN THE SUBJECT MATTER OF THIS GREAT DEBATE FOR ONLY THE MERE MINUTES IT TOOK ME TO GOOGLE THE ESSAY QUESTION, I JUST, DUNNO.

[INSERT BLOCK QUOTE. DO NOT EXPLAIN QUOTE.]