

Paper #1 (final draft)

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PHIL 10100

due: Friday, March 10

This paper will have six parts, which you should clearly separate. You should revise your work on parts (1)-(4) in response to the comments on your rough draft.

- (1) Of the arguments we have discussed for and against the existence of God, say which one you think is the strongest argument – i.e., which one you think is both valid and has the most plausible premises. You must discuss the same argument as was the topic of your rough draft. This should not be more than one sentence.
- (2) In your own words, state that argument. In many cases, I have given you premise/conclusion versions of arguments. I would like you to state the argument in ordinary prose in a way which makes clear both the premises and the logical structure of the argument (i.e., what is supposed to follow from what). This should take at most one or two paragraphs.
- (3) Say which premise of the above argument you think is the weakest – i.e., the most likely to be false. This should take one sentence.
- (4) State what you think is the strongest argument against that premise. This should take at most one or two paragraphs.
- (5) Give the best response to that objection that you can. This can take one of two forms:
 - (a) a counter-argument to the objection, which tries to show that the objection does not provide good reason to doubt the truth of the relevant premise. In this case, it should take at most two paragraphs.
 - or*
 - (b) a reformulation of the original argument which avoids the premise to which the objection was made, and hence circumvents the objection, while maintaining the validity of the argument and (as much as possible) the plausibility of the premises. This should consist of a one paragraph explanation of the change plus a description of the reformulated argument – which may be given either in premise/conclusion form or in ordinary prose.
- (6) Say whether you think, in the end, the argument is sound or not, and why. This should take at most two paragraphs.

Grading rubric

Papers will be judged according to the following 12 criteria:

- (i) in (1), states the argument to be discussed;
- (ii) in (2), explains that argument clearly, making explicit all relevant premises as well as the logical relations between them;
- (iii) in (3), clearly identifies what the author takes to be the weakest premise;
- (iv) in (4), gives a clear objection to that premise;
- (v) in (4), gives a strong (i.e., as persuasive as possible) objection to that premise;
- (vi) in (5), gives a clear response to that objection (of either type (a) or (b));
- (vii) in (5), gives a strong response to that objection;
- (viii) in (6), clearly states a view about the soundness of the argument;
- (ix) in (6), clearly explains the reasons for that view;
- (x) in accomplishing one or more of the above, makes substantial original points which go beyond material discussed in lecture and discussion sections;
- (xi) is free of grammatical and spelling errors; and
- (xii) has the name of the author on it.

An A paper accomplishes all 12. A typical A- paper would accomplish (i)-(ix) and (xi)-(xii), but not (x); but in general an A- paper is one which fails to meet one of the above criteria. A B+ paper is typically one which fails to meet two of the above criteria, or egregiously fails to meet one. A B paper is one which fails to meet three of the above criteria, or fails to meet two, one of which it egregiously fails to meet. And so on. Obviously, meeting or failing to meet these criteria is a matter of degree, and we will take that into account; but this should give you an idea of how you will be evaluated.