Short paper #1

PHIL 10106
due: February 14
have a rough draft ready for discussion on February 7

This paper will have three parts, which should be clearly numbered and separated:

(1) Say whether, on balance, you think that the arguments we have considered count in favor of or against the existence of God. One way to think about this is as follows. Imagine that you came into this class an agnostic who thought that the probability of God's existence was 0.5. On the basis of the arguments we have considered, do you think that it is more likely that God exists, or that God does not exist? This part of the paper should be 1 or 2 sentences.

(2) Say what you think is the strongest argument for your view. The argument can be one of the arguments discussed in class, or a variant of one of those arguments, or a completely different argument. This part of the paper might be anywhere from 1 to 3 pages.

(3) Explain what you think is the strongest argument against the view stated in part (1), and say why in the end you are not convinced by it. This part of the paper might be anywhere from 1 to 2 pages.

The paper should be handed in as an email attachment to your TA. There will be five short paper assignments in this class, and every student must complete four of them.

Grading rubric

Papers will be judged according to the following seven criteria:

(i) in (1), states a view;
(ii) in (2), explains an argument for that view clearly, making explicit all relevant premises as well as the logical relations between them;
(iii) in (2), makes a good case that the premises of that argument are plausible;
(iv) in (3), explains an argument against the view in (1) clearly, making explicit all relevant premises as well as the logical relations between them;
(v) in (3), makes a good case that this argument is unsound;
(vi) in accomplishing one or more of the above, makes substantial original points which go beyond material discussed in lecture and discussion sections; and
(vii) is free of grammatical and spelling errors.

An A paper accomplishes all 7. A typical A- paper would accomplish (i)-(v) and (vii), but not (vi); 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.