

# Paper topics

Assignment #2

Philosophy 415

**Due date: Friday, November 7.**

Papers should be five pages or less in length, double-spaced and with reasonable margins and font sizes. You may choose from one of the following five topics, or come up with a topic of your own. If you do the latter, you must come see me about the topic and have it approved.

You should feel free to ask for my help in the writing of this paper. You can do that either by coming to talk to me before the paper is due, or by giving me a draft of the paper to look over and discuss with you. *If you would like me to look at a draft of the paper, you must give me the draft a minimum of one week before the paper is due.* In the case of this paper, that means that you should give me the draft by Friday, October 31. Rewrites will not be permitted.

If you are unsure what the rules for plagiarism and use of other sources are, I am supposed to direct you to <http://www.mcgill.ca/integrity/>, where you can find the appropriate guidelines. Let me also suggest, again, that you make use of the guides to writing a philosophy paper which you can find on the teaching portion of my web page.

## *Topics:*

1. Kripke gives three main arguments against the view that the meanings of names are given by the descriptions associated with those names by speakers. Discuss two of these arguments, and consider possible responses to them on the part of the descriptivist. Are the arguments ultimately convincing?
2. Kripke claims that 'Stick S is one meter long' is an example of the contingent a priori. Why does he think this? Is his argument for this conclusion convincing? Why or why not?
3. Kripke claims that true identity statements involving two proper names are examples of the necessary a posteriori. Why does he think this? What is rigid designation, and how does it figure in the explanation of the necessity of identity statements? Is Kripke right about the necessity of such identity statements?
4. Kripke notes near the beginning of *Naming & Necessity* that the classical description theory explains how the reference of names are fixed. What does Kripke think is wrong with that explanation? Later, Kripke offers an alternative explanation. State Kripke's preferred explanation, and say whether you think that it is preferable to that given by the descriptivist. Support your judgement with arguments.
5. State Grice's analysis of meaning<sub>nn</sub>. Come up with an example which poses some difficulty for the analysis, then say how Grice's analysis might be revised in response to your counterexample. Is some version of Grice's theory likely to be true?