

Paper Guidelines

PHI 375/SPM 375

The Thesis Statement

On November 12th you need to turn in a thesis statement. It is due by 5 pm. The thesis statement is what you will aim to show in your paper. It needs to be in the form 'I will argue that _____ because _____.' For example, Dancy might have had the following: 'I will argue that the acting for a reason relation is non-causal because some motivating reasons are false and false propositions can't cause anything.'

At minimum you have to give me a sentence with that form. You may also include the first paragraph. This is not a bad idea since your thesis needs to be in the first paragraph of your paper. Given the length of the final paper, it is important for your thesis statement to be specific. You need to find a debate you can make some contribution to. The thesis statement tells me what that contribution is and briefly explains why you think it is true.

This will be worth 20% of your rough draft grade (so it is equivalent to one argument analysis/reading reflection). Turning it in is not sufficient for getting full credit. You'll only get full credit if you give me a thesis that is ready to use in the paper. So if it is obviously flawed, too ambitious, or not ambitious enough, you will not receive full credit.

The Rough Draft

On November 26th you need to turn in a complete rough draft. By complete, I mean it must meet the length requirements and have a beginning and an end (see the next section for the length requirements). The paper must include a thesis statement (not necessarily the one you turned in on the 12th, although you must get approval for the thesis statement). The thesis statement must be clearly stated in the first paragraph. There must be a clearly laid out argument for the thesis statement. You must have a conclusion where you summarize the argument. You also need to upload it to SafeAssign on Blackboard so I can monitor plagiarism (also: Don't Plagiarize!).

The rough draft plus the earlier thesis statement assignment is 15% of your grade (thus, the rough draft itself is worth 12%). I would pretend that it is worth much more, though. If you work hard on the rough draft and get a good rough draft, your chances of getting a good grade on the final paper go up a lot.

The Final Draft

On December 13th you need to turn in the final draft of the paper. It needs to be at least 2500 words, which is roughly 10 pages. It needs to be double-spaced, have 1" margins, and be set in a regular font in 12 pt. I will check the word count, so don't think you can sneak under the length limit through tricky formatting. All of the requirements for the rough draft apply to the final draft.

If you would like comments on the final draft, you need to tell me. You also need to tell me how you will get the graded version back. If you want it before the Spring term starts, please give me a self addressed stamped envelope.

The final draft is worth 40% of your grade. I will take into account improvement from the rough draft. I will also take into account the extent to which you respond to my comments from the rough draft.

Tips

The paper needs to be organized around the thesis. So each part of the paper needs to somehow advance your cause, so to speak. It will likely be helpful for you to split the paper up into different sections (that are labeled as such). This will make it considerably easier to outline. You should make an outline once you have your thesis statement set. Think of everything you have to do in order to establish your thesis, including setting up the debate that you are entering into.

It is often helpful to have a roadmap sentence at the beginning where you tell me what your plan is. There is no reason to surprise the reader. Tell me what you're going to do at the beginning so I know what to expect.

Spend time writing a good conclusion. It is important for you to give a good recap of what you've done. This will likely clear up confusions or misinterpretations of earlier parts. Given how important it is to be clear, it is essential to have a clear conclusion.

I would also go see the writing tutors. Again, clarity is key. The writing tutors—and especially the philosophy tutors—can greatly improve this aspect of the paper.

If you cite something we've read, you can use parenthetical citations (including the page numbers when relevant). If you cite something we haven't read, please put a full citation, either in a footnote or in a bibliography.

For more tips, see the following pages on how to write philosophy. I highly recommend reading through both of these, especially if you've never written a philosophy paper of this size before. Keep in mind that I'm not committed to agreeing with everything that is said (this is especially relevant when they discuss grading). I am in broad agreement with both, though.

<http://www.jimpryor.net/teaching/guidelines/writing.html>

<http://www.public.asu.edu/~dportmor/tips.pdf>