

**Additional Guideline for Your PHIL100 Paper**

- **Keep in mind its length is 5-10 pages. This requires you to choose your topic with care. (Think “statue,” not “cathedral.”) It should be narrow and specific enough so that you can successfully complete the exercise adhering to the structure explained below.**
- **Above all else, the writing should be crisp, and brisk. Clear, concise prose. Avoid direct quotes, unless absolutely necessary. (And if quote you must, explain the quote in a few sentences below it.) You should, however, cite (paraphrase) any sources you use. (You will use at least one source..whether the textbook, the lecture notes [mine or Odell’s or both], etc., since a philosophy paper, no matter how original, must be an *informed* paper—that is, clearly situated among the issues you lay out.**
- **Above all, this is an *exercise* in engaging the particular tools of critical reasoning of analytic philosophy. **Keep in mind that that your grade for the paper will be an automatic ZERO if you do not hand in a rough draft by the due date!****

**There are fundamentally two different kinds of paper you could write, as explained below:**

	<b>Referee or Critical Review paper (where you adjudicate among two or more different positions)</b>	<b>Position paper (where you articulate and defend or critique a particular stance and/or position)</b>
<b>Introduction (approx. 1-1½ pages)</b>	Explain (in max 3 paragraphs) what the basic issues are you will be refereeing/critically reviewing. (For example, if the issues involve existence of God arguments, give a concise description of these and explain what you aim to do...”I aim to show that...design arguments [can/cannot] be accommodated with causal arguments to [support/negate/neither] arguments for the existence of God	Here, the model of a lawyer arguing before a judge <i>really</i> comes into play. You’re about to advance some pro/con argument. Allow your introduction to serve as an ‘opening statement[s]’ you’re making to the reader (the judge and jury). So here, you need to briefly: a) Explain the ‘scene’ (or context), b) Say in a sentence or two what you will be advocating for/against, c) Explain in a sentence or two why your argument is important, or your critique worth engaging in.
<b>Body (approx. 3-8 pages)</b>	Here, it’s best to pick what you consider is the <i>weakest</i> portion of the argument(s) you’re critically reviewing and compare/contrast it with the strongest points. (Avoid picking too many)	Here, whether or not you’re arguing pro or con some particular issue, for your argument to carry maximum strength, you should give your critical target the most <i>charitable</i> reading possible. (See Compendium of Argument Fallacies posted on my sections webpage.) Example: Suppose you’re advancing a critical position against some theory or popular opinion. You must first explain the theory or opinion in the most charitable light (Consider phrases like: “It’s understandable why such a view would be advocated, nevertheless it falls short because...” [Here you can engage in both a critique of the position’s internal consistency or coherence, or

		its external role it plays to the rest of history and culture.]
<b>Conclusion (approx 1 page)</b>	You don't want to just summarize your critical review above...here you can editorialize, insofar as it's coherent within the context of your discussion. Here you want to address questions the reader might naturally ask (that you didn't already explain in the introduction) like: what is the merit of the review you undertook? (For example in the case of refereeing existence of God proofs, do they: a) Talk past each other, indicating no underlying fact of the matter? Or b) Could the best elements of the proofs you critically reviewed be combined so that the relatively most robust argument could in principle be advanced? Or c) Do even what you consider are the strongest aspects of the arguments you surveyed contain such serious defects that <i>no</i> rational argument could be advanced? Why or why not?	Here you might want to briefly take stock of the limits and limitations of your own position, i.e., what questions it can and cannot answer. Avoid re-hashing. State the 'punchline' like a lawyer who would offer his or her closing statements to a judge and jury.

### Possible Topics

There's really an inexhaustible list of topics you could write a cogent 5-10 philosophy paper on, provided you adhere to the rules of the game here. Form follows function. If you're having trouble narrowing in or deciding on a topic, consider some particular issue, not necessarily what we've studied in class so far, that you'd consider could be subject to the above exercise. (You should first consult with me, however, if the topic is too far from what is suggested, or too specialized, from the recommended topics listed below which include:

#### Metaphysics/Religion

- S J Odell's naturalistic theory of religion
  - Pascal's Wager
  - Aspects of Hume's Theory of Religion
  - Aspects of Kant's theory of religion
  - Modern-day design arguments (for example physics/cosmology: the Anthropic Principle)
  - Aspects of Moses Maimonides' theory of reference to divine attributes
- Etc...

#### Epistemology/Skepticism/Logic

- Thomas Reid's arguments against skepticism

- **Aspects of Buddhist epistemological and/or metaphysical skepticism compared/contrasted with Hume's**
  - **Gettier's arguments against orthodox definitions of knowledge (as justified, true belief)**
  - **What is the chief distinction from ancient from modern (Descartes and after) skepticism? (Discuss just one essential aspect)**
  - **Aspects of Wittgenstein's theory of language**
  - **Aspects of Moore's arguments against skepticism**
- Etc..**

### **Ethics/Value Theory**

- **Aspects of Kant's Categorical Imperative Contrasted with Mill's Utility Principle (Applied to Prisoner Dilemma thought-experiments)**
- **Aspects of existential ethics (either Sartre or Kierkegaard or Simone Weil)**
- **Aspects of Contemporary Feminist Ethics**
- **Etc...**