

**PHIL02**  
**Introduction to Philosophy: Morals and Politics**

**First Paper Assignment**

Provide a clear and concise response to **one** of the following questions in a 3-5 page paper (750-1250 words):

1. An evil dictator has captured Emilio and ten other people. The dictator hands Emilio a gun and presents him with the following choice: Emilio may either kill one prisoner of his choice, or the dictator will kill all ten. These are the *only* options available to Emilio. What do you think Kantian ethics require of Emilio in this case? What do you think Mill's utilitarianism requires? Your discussion should address the following considerations:
    - How do Kantian and utilitarian systems generate moral evaluations?
    - Will Kant and Mill agree or disagree about this case? Why?
  2. Nietzsche argues that conventional moral values are ultimately arbitrary. Kant and Mill offer different responses to this challenge. Discuss their respective responses. Your paper should address the following considerations:
    - How does Nietzsche's challenge arise?
    - Does Kant think that moral values are arbitrary? Why or why not?
    - Does Mill think that moral values are arbitrary? Why or why not?
  3. In the *Apology*, Socrates famously says that "the unexamined life is not worth living". (38a) Describe what Socrates means by this, and what he challenges us to do in order to lead a good life. Focus on his reasons for issuing this challenge. Then describe at least two potential problems that his challenge faces from our reading (Nietzsche's challenge, the challenge from prudence, or cultural/moral relativism). Why do these problems threaten the Socratic project? Your discussion should address the following considerations:
    - What, specifically, is the "special wisdom" that Socrates possesses?
    - What does Socrates think is "the greatest good" for human beings? *Why* does he think this?
    - Why exactly might this view be threatened by the problems you've chosen?
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**ASSIGNMENT AIM:** This paper is assigned as an exercise in bringing competing philosophical views together in a critical discussion. You should maintain a high level of expository rigor while developing your discussion in such a way as to allow your reader to clearly see the areas in which the two philosophers you discuss agree and/or disagree. *You need not develop your own arguments here, though you may. Your original views will not factor into the evaluation*—only the extent to which you effectively develop a discourse between your selected philosophers will be considered. I will, however, offer comments on original arguments that you include.

**FORMAT:** The paper must be typed, double spaced, stapled, and submitted to me by the beginning of class on Thursday, May 7. Late papers will be subject to the policy stated in the course syllabus. E-mailed papers will only be accepted with prior approval.

## EVALUATIVE CRITERIA:

### Spelling and Grammar (10%):

It is expected that your paper will be free from all spelling and grammatical errors. You should absolutely use the spell-check and grammar-check of your word processing program, but this may not guarantee that your paper is free of spell and grammar problems. Proofreading is *strongly* recommended.

### Organization, Clarity and Concision (30%):

Your paper should begin with a brief introduction that includes a clear, easily identifiable thesis statement. It may be a good idea to briefly describe the structure of your paper in your introduction (i.e. “In the following I will discuss...”) When reading your paper, it should be clear at all times how your claims address your thesis. Finally, your discussion should be *concise*—you should limit your discussion to what is necessary to achieve your aims.

### Substantive Accuracy (30%):

Your discussion should *accurately* describe the views relevant to the topic you choose. This is particularly important when placing two or more views into critical opposition.

### Critical Comparison (30%):

This paper requires you to demonstrate how two or more philosophical positions relate to one another. The best papers will be those that effectively and explicitly show how the views are similar or different with respect to the chosen topic. This involves more than merely giving expositions of each view—it involves explicitly comparing and contrasting them.

**It is expected that all questions and concerns regarding this assignment will be brought to my attention BEFORE the due date. Please feel free to meet with me at my office as you prepare your papers!**