

PHIL02
Introduction to Philosophy: Morals and Politics

Final Paper Assignment

Provide a clear and concise response to **one** of the following prompts in a 4-6 page paper (1000-1500 words):

1. Philosophical anarchists attempt to persuade us that we have no obligations to the state. While Hobbes, Locke, and Rousseau disagree about several aspects of the state of nature, they agree in their rejection of the account given by philosophical anarchism. First, describe the fundamental disagreement between philosophical anarchists and supporters of the State. Then, *argue* for or against the sustainability of the anarchist version of the state of nature. Your paper should address the following considerations:
 - Wolff argues that “nothing genuinely worthy of being called a state of nature will, at least in the long term, be a condition in which human beings can flourish” (p. 33). Do *you* agree with him? Why? (Here, you’ll want to address Hobbes, Locke and/or Rousseau)
 - Is there any other way in which anarchists might argue that the state is not legitimate? Do these arguments succeed? (Here, you’ll want to address the anarchist arguments discussed in chapter 2 of the Wolff text)
2. In the film *A Clockwork Orange*, Alex is subjected to a peculiar form of punishment for behavior that is deemed unacceptable by his government. First, use at least two of the moral theories we’ve examined to assess the morality of Alex’s behavior in the first half of the film. Then, discuss whether or not you think that his punishment is compatible with a morally legitimate government. Your paper should address the following questions:
 - Should we object on moral grounds to Alex’s behavior? If so, *why*? If not, *why*? You should appeal to at least two of the moral theorists we’ve examined (i.e. Mill, Kant, Nietzsche, etc.) in this portion of your discussion. Be sure to explicitly explain how their moral theory is relevant to your assessment of Alex’s behavior.
 - Is the Ludovico technique compatible with a legitimate justice system? If so, *why*? If not, why not?
 - Why might someone disagree with your view? Can you address their objections?

ASSIGNMENT AIM: This paper is assigned as an exercise in developing an original philosophical response to a problem from our readings. You should maintain a high level of expository rigor (the emphasis of the first paper) as well a clear critical comparison of all relevant views. This paper differs from previous assignments, in that you are *required to construct an original argument for your own view*.

FORMAT: In order to receive comments on your paper, the final version of your paper must be typed, double spaced, stapled, and submitted to me no later than the date of our final exam (3/21). Because this date marks the end of our course, late papers will not be accepted for comments.

HOWEVER: I will accept papers via email until **noon** on Thursday, 3/22 for full credit. I will not receive comments of any kind, but they will be thoroughly read and graded. **THIS IS A FIRM DEADLINE—I WILL NOT ACCEPT ANY PAPERS AFTER THIS TIME.**

EVALUATIVE CRITERIA:

Organization, Clarity and Concision (20%):

When reconstructing a complex philosophical position, effective *organization* is essential. Your paper should begin with a brief introduction that includes a clear, easily identifiable thesis statement. When reading your paper, it should be clear at all times how your claims address your thesis. You should conclude with a brief restatement of the key points from your discussion.

Your prose should be *clear*, such that your reader has no difficulty understanding you. One effective strategy for ensuring this involves giving your paper to a friend to read. If they can follow your discussion from start to finish, even without knowing anything about your topic, then your paper is likely clear and well-organized.

Finally, your discussion should be *concise*. One of the key skills involved in this paper is determining what is necessary to convey the argument, and what is not. As much as possible, limit the scope of your discussion to what is necessary to answer the question asked. That being said, it is entirely possible to include *too little* in your discussion—make sure that you have completely answered the question. You might feel like you are repeating yourself somewhat—this is not necessarily a problem for philosophical writing.

Substantive Accuracy (25%):

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 (25%):

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.

Original Philosophical Response (30%):

Each of the above topic options requires you to provide an *argument* for an original view. It will not suffice to simply state your *opinion* about the question asked. You must support your view by providing *reasons* why your reader should accept it. The best papers will anticipate possible objections, and address them. You will not be evaluated according to the particular view that you endorse, but rather according to how well you argue for the view that you choose.

It is expected that all questions and concerns regarding this assignment will be brought to my attention BEFORE the due date.

*****A note on spelling and grammar:** It is expected that your paper will be free from all spelling and grammatical errors. Stylistic errors will not carry a penalty, but they may affect your grade to the extent that they compromise the clarity of your prose. It's a good idea to use the spell-check and grammar-check of your word processing program, but this may not guarantee that your paper is free of stylistic problems. Proofreading is *strongly* recommended.