

**PHIL01**  
**Introduction to Philosophy: Knowledge and Reality**

**First Paper Assignment**

Provide a clear and concise response to **one** of the following questions in a 2-4 page paper (500-1000 words):

1. In his *Meditations*, Descartes argues for a skeptical position regarding the existence of objects in the external world. Discuss the motivation behind Cartesian skepticism, and explain how Moore addresses the problem. Your discussion should address the following considerations:
    - Describe the two skeptical scenarios that Descartes discusses, and explain why one of these scenarios motivates a more widespread skepticism than the other.
    - How exactly does Moore argue against skepticism about the external world?
    - What is the fundamental difference between the approaches that Descartes and Moore take toward the nature of knowledge?
  2. When taken in conjunction with empiricism, the sense data theory of perception threatens to give rise to deep forms of skepticism. Explain why this is, and describe how Mitchell S. Greene attempts to defeat the sense data theory of perception. Your discussion should address the following considerations:
    - What exactly is empiricism? What exactly is the sense data theory of perception?
    - What about the conjunction of the two views leads Hume to conclude that we cannot know the external world exists?
    - Why exactly does Greene reject the sense data theory of perception?
  3. Imagine that Luke Skywalker wants to know whether he is morally justified when, on the basis of religious faith, he decides to turn off his tracking computer in the climactic battle scene in *Star Wars*. He consults Joseph Long and William Clifford for the respective opinions. How might they advise him differently, and what might they say about each other's views? Your discussion should address the following considerations:
    - What is Clifford's position on the morally status of faith? What is Long's position?
    - Why does each philosopher hold the view that he does?
    - Does either philosopher provide reasons for rejecting the other's position?
- 

**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 the date specified on course syllabus. 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:

### Organization, Clarity and Concision (33%):

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 (34%):

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 (33%):

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.**

---

**\*\*\*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.