

PHIL01
Introduction to Philosophy: Knowledge and Reality

Final Paper Assignment

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

1. Dualism presents a view of the world according to which at least two fundamental, incompatible types of things comprise the entirety of the universe. Monists reject this picture of the world, claiming that the universe is fundamentally comprised of one substance. Critically discuss dualism in comparison with one monist view (either materialism or idealistic monism), and argue for the superiority of one view over the other. Your paper should address the following questions:
 - Why do dualists think that there are two types of fundamental substance? Are their arguments legitimate?
 - Why does the monist view you have chosen think there is one type of “stuff” in the universe?
 - Which of the two views do *you* think is more plausible? Why?
2. In *Blade Runner*, we are presented with replicants. These are characterized as being “designed to copy human beings in every way except their emotions.” If the design is successful, replicants pose a serious threat to materialist theories of the mind. Discuss the consciousness (or lack thereof) of replicants, and argue for whether or not you think they defeat materialism. Your paper should address the following questions:
 - What characterizes a materialist theory of the mind?
 - Why would replicants/philosophical zombies raise trouble for materialism? (The Chalmers paper may help you here)
 - Do you think that the replicants in the film show that materialism is false? Why?
3. The film *Memento* raises difficult problems for theories of personal identity. In a critical discussion, address arguments for and against the claim that “Leonard” is (metaphysically) the same person throughout the film. Develop an argument of your own in defense of one of these views. Your paper should address the following questions:
 - What kinds of philosophical theories might say that Leonard is the same person throughout the film? Are there problems with these theories?
 - What kinds of philosophical theories might say that Leonard is *not* the same person throughout the film? Are there problems with these theories?
 - What is *your* view on the matter? Do *you* think that Leonard is the same person throughout the film? Why?

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 the first essay, 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 (8/5). Because this date marks the end of our course, late papers will not be accepted for comments. Comments will be provided by mail—if you want comments, attach a self-addressed envelope with sufficient postage.

HOWEVER: I will accept papers via email until **9:00 a.m.** on Sunday, 8/8 for full credit. These papers 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:

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 (20%):

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. You should conclude with a brief restatement of the key points from your discussion.

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 (20%):

Your discussion will require you to bring multiple philosophical views together in a coherent manner. This involves more than merely giving expositions of each view—it involves explicitly comparing and contrasting them.

Original Philosophical Response (25%):

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.