

PHILOSOPHY 100

Fall 2023

2nd Essay Assignment

Due: Monday, November 6

General Instructions: Upload either a Word or pdf file to Laulima. Use the following format to title your file: **lastname #2**

Write a 3-4 page essay on one of the following topics.

Descartes and the Quest for Certainty

Explain the reasons why Descartes sets out on a quest for certainty in his *Meditations on First Philosophy*. Explain the demolition phase of Descartes's project that is his *First Meditation*. What is the one thing that Descartes finds to be beyond doubt in the *Second Meditation*? Is he right about this? What is the epistemological problem that results from this starting point of modern philosophy? How important is it to have certainty in knowledge?

Descartes vs Hobbes on the Mind and Body

What is meant by the metaphysical *dualism* that Descartes argues for in the *Sixth Meditation*? What are the three main motivations for dualism? What is the argument Descartes makes for dualism? What are some of the problems with this view? How does Hobbes's materialism challenge Descartes's view? What are some of the problems with Hobbes's view? Who would you agree with more? What is the relationship between the mind and the body? What are we anyway?

Descartes vs Hobbes in the film "Blade Runner"

How does the science-fiction film *Blade Runner* explore the philosophical problems brought out in the disagreement between Descartes and Hobbes? Will humanity ever be able to make a machine that can really think? Will these artificial humans or "replicants" as they are called in *Blade Runner* deserve any moral consideration? How might this science-fiction film about replicants in the future get us to think about our relationship with animals?

Hobbes vs Locke on Political Philosophy

What is meant by ideas of the "state of nature" and the "social contract"? Explain the basic differences between Hobbes and Locke on the "state of nature" and the "social contract." Why is Hobbes's "state of nature" necessarily a state of war? How does the image of the *Leviathan* illustrate Hobbes's idea of government? What is the main purpose of government for Hobbes? What is the main purpose of government for Locke? What do you think about this difference on the purpose of government?

Locke vs Rousseau on Political Philosophy

Why does Rousseau think that Locke's social contract is a swindle by the rich? What is the famous argument that Locke makes to explain how private property is acquired? How does Locke at first suggest limits on private property but then go on to justify unlimited wealth? Should there be limits on private property? How does Rousseau's idea of the purpose of government challenge Locke's view? How is this relevant today?

Empiricism

What did John Locke mean by the *tabula rasa* and how did he use this notion to establish the starting point of empiricism? How did Locke then try to solve the epistemological problem? What was the problem with Locke's solution? Is Locke right about the *tabula rasa* hypothesis? What is meant by "Hume's fork"? How did Hume come to skeptical conclusions that threatened to undermine the optimism of the Enlightenment? Is Hume right that all matter of fact statements need to be based on sense evidence?

Grading Rubric

Writing 20%

Grammar and spelling, composition and style. Your essay should be well organized. There should be an introduction, development of a theme, and a conclusion.

Philosophical Content 50%

The essay should reflect an adequate understanding of the texts. Your exposition of the text should include *at least two quotations* from the primary text material. All quotes should be properly marked within the text and must include a reference to the text cited.

Commentary 30%

Your own thoughtful reflections on the topic.

