PHILOSOPHY 100

Fall 2026

2nd Mid-Term Essay Assignment

Due: Tuesday, November 10 (11:00 AM)

You must complete this assignment if you did not turn in the first assignment. If you are content with your grade on the first assignment you may skip this assignment. You may be able to improve your mid-term grade if you do this assignment. I will drop the lowest grade. All papers must be properly word processed or typed with 1" margins on the top, sides and bottom. Use double-spacing and no larger than 12pt font. Turn in by uploading to Lamakū as a pdf file. Type your name on the top of the first page. Use the following format to title your file: lastname Phil 100 #2. Do not use AI to do this assignment.

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?

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? How does Rousseau's idea of the purpose of government challenge Locke's view? Should there by limits on the acquisition of wealth? Should government also be about protecting the common good of the people? 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? How did Hume arrive at skeptical conclusions which put into doubt the quest for objective knowledge?

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.

Handling Citations

There are a number of ways of handling citations in your papers. One could just use footnotes or endnotes. An example of using footnotes is like the following: According to Socrates, "the unexamined life is not worth living."[1] If you are citing the same text a number of times you can also just include the text reference in the sentence like this: According to Socrates, "the unexamined life is not worth living" (Plato 2000, 38a). Notice the format of the punctuation here. The period goes after the text reference—otherwise the reference is stuck in no-sentence-land between two sentences. If you use this format then you would have to include the text information, which otherwise was included in the footnote, in a bibliography at the end of your paper. Notice the difference in format of the footnote and bibliography. The difference between footnote and bibliography format is not as clear in citing Plato, since he has only one name. Let's say I wanted to cite our textbook where Magee finds it "doubtful whether any philosopher has had more influence than Socrates."[2] If I wanted to include the text reference in the sentence it would look like this: Magee finds it "doubtful whether any philosopher has had more influence than Socrates" (Magee 2001, 23). Then, of course, the reference information goes into a bibliography.

Now let's say you want to cite a longer quotation. In order to save valuable space, you could then indent the quote and use single spacing. What seems most outrageous is that Socrates refuses to simply just shut up, which might perhaps have been enough of a counter-penalty to save his life. Socrates, however, has a good reason for this:

> Now this is the most difficult point on which to convince some of you. If I say that it is impossible for me to keep quiet because that means disobeying the god, you will not believe me and will think

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[1]Plato, *The Apology*, trans. G.M.A. Grube, in *Readings in Ancient Greek Philosophy: from Thales to Aristotle, 2nd. ed.* (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 2000), 38a.

[2]Bryan Magee, *The Story of Philosophy: A Concise Introduction to the World's Greatest Thinkers and Their Ideas* (London: Dorling Kinderesley Limited, 2001), 23.

Notice in a footnote, first name comes first followed by last name, then the title of the text, and then publisher information (Location: Publisher, publishing date) comes in parentheses.

> I am being ironical. On the other hand, if I say that it is the greatest good for a man to discuss virtue every day and those other things about which you hear me conversing and testing myself and others, for the unexamined life is not worth living for man, you will believe me even less. (Plato 2000, 37e-38a)

You could, of course, use a footnote for this citation. If you include the reference within the body of the text as illustrated above, then note the difference in punctuation here as opposed to the earlier example. Notice here you don't use quotation marks around the citation because it is obvious what is being cited. Also, the text reference stands outside the period of the last sentence. Here are examples of bibliographic entries:

Bibliography

Magee, Bryan. 2001. *The Story of Philosophy: A Concise Introduction to the World's Greatest Thinkers and Their Ideas*. London: Dorling Kinderesley Limited.

Plato. 2000. *The Apology*, trans. G.M.A. Grube, in *Readings in Ancient Greek Philosophy: from Thales to Aristotle, 2nd. ed.* Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company.

Notice in a bibliography the last name goes first, then a comma followed by first name. Then a period and then year of publication, then the title of the text. Always use italics or underline whenever referring to the title of a book. Notice there are no parentheses in a bibliographic entry. Bibliographies are organized alphabetically.