

Comments and Suggestions for Papers

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1. You are expected to write on ideas discussed in class and from the texts we read for this course. You are responsible for the class discussions on the text; any further insight you may bring from the readings that we may have not discussed in class will raise your grade. You do not need to use secondary sources. If you do, however, make sure that you give proper references to these sources
2. Do not give historical information in your papers. A paper should develop an argument (or respond to a question or a series of questions). Your paper should go beyond summarizing the texts. This means: You have to explicate and interpret the text, something like "The author says this or that, and it means this, and has such implications... etc."
3. Do not use ordinary dictionaries (i.e., American heritage) to explain philosophical concepts. You are obviously free to look up words in dictionaries, but you are supposed to learn concepts through a discussion of philosophical texts.
4. You are responsible for making copies of all your papers. Even if I lose your paper, and you do not have a copy of it (on disk, for example), then, unfair as it may seem, you are responsible.
5. To be fair to students who pass in their papers on time, late papers will be graded down one notch for each day late (including weekends). Papers must be turned in at the beginning of class on the day they are due. There is no advantage, therefore, in skipping class to finish typing your paper.
6. You are required to write your papers alone without any help from any other student in this course. You may (and indeed should) discuss ideas with your classmates, but you must write your paper by yourself.
7. Plagiarism, [i.e., copying or paraphrasing the ideas and language of others (without acknowledging the source) from a book, from an article, from the Internet, etc., and thus implicitly presenting them as one's own] will not be tolerated. You will receive an F for that assignment, and may be subject to academic disciplinary action. For further clarifications on plagiarism, read The Student Handbook under "Procedures and Penalties for Academic Violations." Plagiarism can be deliberate or accidental. It is your responsibility to know what plagiarism is and avoid it. If you are not clear about plagiarism you should discuss it with me.
8. However, you have to make sure that someone proofreads your work. Look up or ask about all words and rules of punctuation of which you are uncertain. Spelling, grammar and punctuation errors affect the clarity and readability of your papers, so papers may be graded down if they are not carefully written. If you use a computer, it will be easier to correct these errors.
9. Your papers must be double-spaced and typed. Use 12 point font! There should be approximately 250-300 words per page.

Your essays will be graded according to the following criteria:

An 'A' is reserved for truly excellent work that shows you have understood the concepts and the texts well, reflected upon them, and composed your work thoughtfully and carefully with some attempt to incorporate your own voice.

A 'B' grade indicates a very good understanding of concepts and texts that does not capture all their complexity or that does not critically reflect upon them.

A 'C' grade will be given to work that is satisfactory and shows a basic comprehension of the material but which simplifies or misunderstands significant points and makes little effort to organize thoughts around a central argument.

A 'D' grade indicates less than satisfactory work that shows very little comprehension of the texts and ideas and serious misunderstanding of major points.

An 'F' will be given to work that is unacceptable because it shows no comprehension of the material at all, and to plagiarized papers.