

PHIL 201 | KNOWLEDGE AND REALITY | HUNTER COLLEGE  
**ASSIGNMENT ONE**  
SECTIONS 01 + 03 | FALL 2015 | DANIEL W. HARRIS

Length: about 750 words.

Due Date: Tuesday, Sept. 29th. (Bring a paper copy to class.)

For your first writing assignment, your goals are (a) to briefly explain one of the philosophical positions that Russell holds in *The Problems of Philosophy*, (b) to explain how Russell reasons for the position, and (c) point out a flaw in that reasoning.

Some guidelines:

- **Choose a small point and be thorough in your explanation and critique of it.** This is a short essay, and so you don't have space for a big, sweeping criticism of Russell's whole philosophical system. Your paper will not be graded harshly for seeming too nitpicky, but its grade may suffer if it is too vague or if it attempts to do more than can be done well in 750 words.
- **Focus on Russell's argument.** The most important thing I'll be grading you on is your ability to understand Russell's argument (i.e., the reasons he gives for believing his position), and your ability to criticize that argument. Explaining Russell's position is important only insofar as that is what Russell's argument designed to support.
- **Don't merely argue that Russell's position is false.** The difference between showing that Russell's position is false and showing what's wrong with his reasoning for that position is very important. You should do the latter, not the former.
- **Write clearly in order to communicate your argument.** I don't care about grammar and spelling for their own sake, but your essay can be persuasive only if it is clear and easy to understand; good grammar, proper spelling, and a clear structure are important ingredients in clear, easy-to-understand writing.

For more more advice, check out these excellent guides on philosophical writing:

- Peter Horban's "Writing a Philosophy Paper"  
<http://www.sfu.ca/philosophy/resources/writing.html>
- Jim Pryor's "Guidelines on Writing a Philosophy Paper"  
<http://www.jimpryor.net/teaching/guidelines/writing.html>