

PHILOSOPHY 364 | HUNTER COLLEGE | SPRING 2019

CRITICAL PAPER ASSIGNMENT

INSTRUCTIONS

For this assignment, you'll write a single essay, **approximately 3500–4000 words** in length, in which you will summarize and take a side on a live debate in the philosophy of language. A live debate is one that is unsettled—an issue about which at least some of the experts disagree. The debate you choose can be either one that we have touched on this semester, or a debate that is indirectly related to one of our central topics. Your job is to make a convincing case for your side of the debate by making the best argument for it that you can in the space allotted.

You should try to choose a relatively narrow topic. It would be better to focus on a single argument for a position, rather than on the position as a whole, so that you can go into some detail without spreading yourself too thin. For example: “Why Wittgenstein was right” is too big of a thesis to defend in a single essay. A better thesis would be, “why we can't give a rigorous theory of the meanings of natural kind terms”. This would allow you to give a more comprehensive overview of your topic. When in doubt, you should choose depth over breadth of topic.

RESEARCH REQUIREMENT

Part of your job on this paper is to do independent research that goes beyond what has been assigned in class. You needn't have a comprehensive grasp on all of the literature that is relevant to your topic, but you should demonstrate an understanding of the major relevant debates and arguments. If you give an argument without taking note of and responding to a widely known and highly influential response to this argument, I will take that to be evidence that you have not done enough research.

Some good places to start this research would include the Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy and the Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy. But it's important that you don't merely rely on encyclopedia articles. Rather, you should treat them as a first step toward tracking down original research. Think of an encyclopedia article as a guide to what you should be reading, not as a source in its own right. You should also learn to use philpapers.com. And, of course, you can also ask me for recommendations.

DUE DATE

The essay is **due on Tuesday, May 21st, 2016**. You should email me a copy by midnight on that day. The subject of your email should be “PHILO 364 Paper”. No extensions will be granted except under extraordinary circumstances, and there will be no make-up assignments. Late assignments will be penalized at the rate of one letter grade per three days.