

Argument Analysis Assignment

Phi 335 Epistemology

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Students will write 8 weekly 1-page papers on the reading assignments. The primary purpose of these papers is to cultivate skill in (i) recognizing the main arguments in a piece of philosophical writing and (ii) analyzing (reconstructing) those arguments.

Due Dates

The papers are due at the beginning of class on Monday the week of the given reading assignment. Late papers will not be accepted for a grade. The readings are *'d on the reading schedule on the syllabus.

Mechanics

The papers are to be at least one (1) page in length, using single spacing and normal font and margin sizes. The papers are to be polished for organization, spelling and grammar. The brevity of the papers will require you to focus on exactly what you take to be the most central thesis the author is presenting and the most essential parts of the argument the author gives for that thesis.

Content

In a 1-pager you are to focus in on the main issues and arguments in the reading assignment and give a detailed analysis of those issues/arguments. The following guidelines may also help to elucidate the expected content of these papers:

- Criticism. Critical comments (e.g., “I think Hempel’s argument fails because ...”) should not be included in the papers. The goal is to get to a clear presentation of some argument or concept, not an assessment of the author’s work.
- Quotation. Direct quotation from the assigned readings is strenuously discouraged. The papers are to represent your analysis of the assigned reading, and so should be in your own words. Use of the author’s technical terms is perfectly fine, but extended quotes or close paraphrases are contrary to the purpose of the assignment.
- Organization. The arguments you reconstruct should be presented in a logical and intuitive order. This may or may not coincide with the author’s presentation. 1-pagers which slavishly follow the author’s order of presentation tend to include too much (e.g., go over unnecessary arguments) or tend to skip over subtleties (e.g., miss unstated parts of arguments).

Assistance

You are strongly encouraged to seek assistance with your paper throughout the writing process. There are three main sources of assistance readily available to you:

- Me. Yes, me. I have office hours and can make appointments outside office hours to talk about the material for your paper, to talk about your writing ideas, or even to read an early draft of your paper. I’m happy to help any way I can.
- Each other. Sometimes it’s midnight, and I’m not around. But you have peers inside and outside this class. Try your ideas out on them. Get them to read an early draft. Or a troublesome paragraph. You can offer the same service to them in return. Of course, don’t collaborate so much that you turn in a co-authored paper, but you can help each other out in plenty of other ways short of that.
- The Learning Center. <http://learningcenter.hanover.edu> Last, but certainly not least, there is the Learning Center, which offers a variety of assistance for students in their coursework. They’re open 7-11pm, Sun-Thurs, on the first floor of the Duggan Library.

Grading Criteria

23-25	Excellent	Far exceeds standards of basic adequacy. A model.
20-22	Outstanding	Goes well beyond basic standards.
17-19	Satisfactory	Satisfies basic standards in all ways.
14-16	Deficient	Falls short of basic standards in some substantial way(s).
0-13	Unacceptable	Range of serious shortcomings.

Performance relative to the basic standards of adequacy is determined by the following questions: Did you identify the central point of the question and focus on the relevant passages in the text? Did you identify the main supporting argument for any conclusions you needed to discuss? Did you give a correct, thorough, and precise reconstruction of the argument, paying special attention to its premises? Did you give a clear and concise account of the most important points relevant to the question? Did you avoid the pitfalls (e.g., critical comments, quotes, close paraphrases, poor organization)? Are there any errors in spelling, grammar or organization?