



# Week Fifteen Writing Assignment

exploring  
**Mind and Self**  
ID1§13, Fall 2005

Your assignment this time is to produce a *detailed* outline, a road map, of your final paper. I'm anticipating that your final paper will be roughly 7–8 pages, but I don't want you to worry too much about length. It is okay if it is a *little* longer or a *little* shorter (it is not okay if it is a *lot* longer).

Writing this kind of outline is not less work than writing a draft of the whole paper. You are outlining *everything important* that you would include in a draft. After reading the outline, I will have a *complete* picture of your critical thoughts on the topic.

Your outline is due Tuesday, 11/6 at 10 a.m. by email.

## Topics

I had you write abstracts last time to start you thinking about a topic for the final paper. Take the topic which you find most interesting and promising as the basis for your outline. If you're not happy with any of the topics for which you wrote up abstracts, you can devise a new topic, but I hope this won't be the case.

## Depth Over Breadth

What I want to see in the paper is depth of analysis, not breadth. I'd prefer you to talk about one or two objections for several pages rather than have you present a laundry list of objections and one- or two-line replies.

## Sources

Although our last class was a library session on how to do research for your final paper, for most topics, you do not have to consult outside sources for your paper. (Obviously this will depend on your topic. If you decide to write on Descartes's view of the mind, you will have to consult at least one outside source!) I'm fine with – and I even encourage – you grappling with the issues on your own, without worrying about interpreting and incorporating other authors' views.

Because I'm not requiring you to use outside sources, I'll be assuming any uncited ideas in your outline are your own. Thus if you do consult outside sources, and ideas from a source find their way into your outline, you must cite that sources.

This applies to background and exegesis, as well as critical analysis. If you find an on-line article raising an objection to Searle's Chinese Room that you hadn't thought of that you want to discuss in your paper, you should certainly cite the article. But if you find an encyclopedia entry that *lays out* Searle's argument in a particularly clear fashion, and you use that entry to write your bullet point summary of Searle's argument, you should cite that entry as well. (If you'd be uncomfortable about me reading an uncited source right after reading your outline, you should probably cite it.)

In short, I encourage you to think about the issues in your paper on your own. But if you do consult outside sources, I want to know about it. Remember Pomona's academic honest policy! There's a link to the policy on the course website.

If you have questions about what you should and shouldn't cite, by all means come talk to me about it.

## Outline

Your outline should be a crystal clear, bullet point presentation of what you intend to say in your paper. I'll repeat what I wrote at the top of the assignment because it's important:

Writing this kind of outline is not less work than writing a draft of the whole paper. You are outlining *everything important* that you would include in a draft. After reading the outline, I will have a *complete* picture of your critical thoughts on the topic.

I'm looking for a very clear, bullet point presentation of what you intend to do in the paper.

1. Any position or objection you intend to discuss should be concisely described in a sentence or two.
2. Lay out any argument for or against a position you will discuss.

I am looking for more than, e.g., "Describe Searles's Chinese Room argument." I want you to actually lay out Searles's argument in bullet points.

3. Describe your criticism in an equally clear way. You should be able to give a concise description of your criticism that relies only on what is presented by 1) and 2). That is, any premise, principle, or bit of reasoning that you want to criticize should be in a previous bullet point.

Again, I am looking for more than, e.g., "Criticize Searles's premise that the person in the room should know Chinese if running a Chinese understanding program." I want you to actually tell me what your criticism is. The bullet points should fully capture your reasoning.

You are giving me the substance of what would be in a final paper without having to worry as much about the writing. That's why this will be almost as much work as writing a draft. But I hope this will help you write a much better final paper.

Here is a sketch of an example.

- Abortion is the deliberate killing of a fetus.
- Thomson grants (for the sake of argument) that the fetus is a person, and, as such, has rights.
- Thomson argues that abortion is still morally permissible.
- Thomson challenges the assumption that it is never permissible to kill an innocent person.
  - Thomson presents the kidnapped violinist case. [A concise description of the case would follow, something like: "You are kidnapped by the Society of Music Lovers and surgically attached to a world famous violinist. The violinist has a rare blood disorder and needs the use of your kidneys for nine months to survive." Make sure you include all the important features of the case that you'll be discussing later in your outline in your concise description.]
  - Thomson thinks the salient features of violinist case are X and Y. [Of course you'd actually need to say what features X and Y are. X might be: "the violinist is completely dependent on your for

survival.” Note that you will want this bullet point to say *more* than: Thomson thinks the violinist case shows that it is sometimes permissible to kill an innocent person. That’s not terribly informative.]

- Because of features X and Y, Thomson thinks we should all agree that it is permissible to kill the violinist.
- Thomson claims the violinist is analogous to an unborn fetus. The case of a pregnant mother also has features X and Y.
- ...
- I object to Thomson’s argument because I think she has failed to consider Z, the real salient feature of the violinist case.
  - Feature X does not have the significance Thomson attaches to it because...

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