

FIRST WRITING ASSIGNMENT

Please email me your assignment in MS Word format by **Wednesday, September 21 at noon**. Assignments turned in after that are considered late, so plan accordingly! Late assignments are penalized 1/3 grade for each day late.

Answer each of the following questions. I am looking for clear, concise explanations — for most answers, a medium-sized paragraph or so should suffice — **no** quotations. See the guidelines below.

1. Briefly explain the difference between substance dualism and property (or attribute) dualism.
2. What is the principle of causal closure of the physical? What are the grounds for thinking that the physical world is causally closed? What's the relevance of the causal closure principle to the dualism/materialism debate?
3. Explain why dualism would be more plausible if we found “gaps” in the physical causal chain between, e.g., the phone’s ringing and the movement of your hand towards the receiver to pick it up.
4. Explain the causal objection to behaviorism.
5. These three questions concern the Turing test.
 - a. What is the difference between taking the test as *analysis* versus merely *evidence*?
 - b. What is it for an analysis to be circular?
 - c. Explain a few ways in which the test is circular.
6. Recall Descartes’s Sixth Meditation conceivability argument for dualism. Explain how one might argue from the premise

It is possible that my mind exists without my body (a material object)
to the conclusion

My mind is actually right now a distinct thing/substance from my body (a material object).

7. Consider the following passage in which Descartes argues for dualism:

The first observation I make at this point is that there is a great difference between the mind and the body, inasmuch as the body is by its very nature always divisible, while the mind is utterly indivisible. For when I consider the mind, or myself in so far as I am merely a thinking thing, I am unable to distinguish any parts within myself; I understand myself to be something quite single and complete. Although the whole mind seems to be united to the whole body, I recognize that if a foot or arm or any other part of the body is cut off, nothing has thereby been taken away from the mind. As for the

faculties of willing, of understanding, of sensory perception and so on, these cannot be termed parts of the mind, since it is one and the same mind that wills, and understands and has sensory perceptions. By contrast, there is no corporeal or extended thing that I can think of which in my thought I cannot easily divide into parts; and this very fact makes me understand that it is divisible. This one argument would be enough to show me that the mind is completely different from the body, even if I did not already know as much from other considerations. (18-19; see also "Passions of the Soul" #30: 21-22)

- a. What is Leibniz's Law (the indiscernibility of identicals)?
- b. How is Descartes using Leibniz Law to argue for dualism in this passage?
- c. How does this use of Leibniz Law differ from the illegitimate use of it we discussed in class?
- d. Do you think this argument is convincing? Critically discuss.

Guidelines

Please use a large, easy to read font (12 point); double spacing; standard margins; page numbers; correct spelling and grammar.

The questions on this first assignment are quite straightforward. With the exception of the last question, they all concern material we have explicitly covered in lecture, and so it should not be difficult to find the right answer. What I would like you to focus on is *clarity*.

- I want to see evidence that you understand the material. Clear, well-structured writing is excellent evidence of your mastery of the material. In class you sometimes know that you have a thought or question — you know what you want to say — but you can't quite put it into words. In your writing you should aim for **clarity**: aim for finding just the right words.
- The intended audience for your answers is neither me nor the other students in the class — you know we are familiar with the view and the vocabulary in which it is stated. Your aim is rather to make the view, distinction, or argument easily understandable to someone *completely unfamiliar* with the material, like your average college student. If you introduce a bit of new terminology you think your average reader won't know, you should explain what it means.
 - ⇒ You may assume your reader is familiar with basic logical and philosophical vocabulary; e.g., you may assume your reader knows what it is for an argument to be *valid*, or *sound*. Examples of other basic vocabulary: concept, property, necessary & sufficient conditions, implication, evidence. (Of course these terms have a very specific meaning in philosophy, so while you don't need to define them in your writing, you should make sure you use them correctly. Check the Routledge Encyclopedia of Philosophy if you're unsure about a term — see course website for link.)

- By far the best way to show that you genuinely understand the material is to express the view, distinction, or argument **in your *own words***, using your own examples to illustrate them if necessary. If you just paraphrase the lectures or readings, that shows only that you have the fairly low-grade skill of paraphrase, and not that you genuinely understand the material. You may not quote the textbook, readings or lectures.
- Try to avoid loose use of logical language (“therefore”, “thus”, “it follows”, “prove”, “refute”, “false”, “true”). If you mean to say that a point or a claim is *true*, do not say that it is *valid*. Only arguments can be valid. Do not use “thus” or “therefore” or “it follows” to make assertions or state opinions; these words should be reserved for stating the conclusion of a chain of reasoning.

You may find it helpful to consult [Jim Pryor's paper writing guidelines](#) (see the course website for link). Even if done a great deal of philosophical writing, you'll benefit from reading these guidelines.