FINAL PAPER

Your next and last assignment is to turn your outline into your final paper. I hope writing your final paper will not feel like a huge task, since you've already done a good deal of the work by outlining your position and arguments in detail.

Your final paper should be roughly seven to eight pages. Please email me your paper by 5 p.m on Friday, December 2.

Three recommendations:

1. Share your paper with a fellow student from the class. You'd be amazed at what a new set of eyes will spot.
2. You'd be even more amazed at what a *trained* set of eyes will spot. I strongly recommend that you take a draft of your paper to the Writing Center (Smith Campus Center 212, Sun-Thu, 2-5 and 7-10; you can make an appointment online at writing.pomona.edu/writingcenter/index.shtml). The Writing Fellows are particularly good at helping you identify and improve the structure of your arguments.
3. Consult Jim Pryor's guidelines on writing a philosophy paper. Even if you've written many philosophy papers in the past, you'll benefit from reading Pryor's guidelines.

   www.princeton.edu/~jimpryor/general/writing.html (link on our website)

Guidelines

Bear in mind the guidelines and feedback from the first three writing assignments. An A paper should read like a series of A answers to assignment questions (What is property dualism? What is Jackson's Mary example? How does Jackson use his example to argue for property dualism? Etc.).

Note: the style I expect in a philosophy paper may differ from what you're used to from other classes. (E.g., in some classes you learn to *write without a thesis*. While that can make for great writing, it will be extremely difficult to pull it off here.)

If this is your first philosophy paper, I think you'll find reading through Pryor's guidelines helpful.

Clarity

Clarity should be your paramount concern. The most common problem with student papers is not that they say something incorrect; it's that it's hard to understand what they are claiming or how they are arguing for that claim.

Remember, I am looking forward to hearing your *considered thoughts* on your topic. In casual conversation and in class discussions, you sometimes have a point or question — you have a rough idea of what you want to say — but you can't quite put it into words. While this is fine for conversation, in your formal writing I expect see a *carefully crafted presentation* of your considered thoughts. You shouldn't have to explain to me, "what I meant by this was…": what you've written should make it crystal clear what it is you mean.

Though clarity is most important, you should also aim to be concise and thorough. It may seem like these goals conflict; in a sense, they do. But it's still possible to achieve all three at once; the best papers will do just that.

- 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.

Structure and Signposting

Your paper should have an easy-to-follow structure, and you should convey this structure to your reader with extensive signposting. (This is a difference between philosophical writing and some other styles of writing. In a philosophy paper you are going to be *very explicit* about what you are saying and how you are arguing.) Signposts make a big difference to the readability of a paper. Consider two paper fragments from Pryor's guidelines:

> …We've just seen how X says that P. I will now present two arguments that not-P. My first argument is…
>
> My second argument that not-P is…
>
> X might respond to my arguments in several ways. For instance, he could say that…
>
> However this response fails, because…
>
> Another way that X might respond to my arguments is by claiming that…
>
> This response also fails, because…
>
> So we have seen that none of X's replies to my argument that not-P succeed. Hence, we should reject X's claim that P.

> I will argue for the view that Q.
>
> There are three reasons to believe Q. Firstly…
>
> Secondly…
>
> Thirdly…
>
> The strongest objection to Q says…
>
> However, this objection does not succeed, for the following reason…

As Pryor notes, the structure of these papers is transparent. Try to make sure your reader is never struggling to understand why you are saying what you saying. (E.g., your reader should never wonder, "Hmm, how does the point in this paragraph fits in with Lewis's objection to Jackson?")

Language

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.

Be particularly careful with terms like 'idea' and 'concept'. If you write a sentence like, "Descartes discusses the idea of X…" ask yourself whether Descartes is really discussing *the idea of X* rather than *X itself*. Ideas are "in the mind" or "in the head," whereas X is "out there," in the world. Most of the time we aren't talking about our ideas, we're talking about things out there in the world. If we were to debate the Eagles loss in Monday Night Football, we would be discussing *football*, and *the game*, not the idea of football, or the idea of a game.[1]

There is no need to include dictionary definitions in your paper ("Webster's dictionary defines 'evidence' as …"). If this term is one under philosophical scrutiny, the dictionary's authority will not settle the matter. If it is not a philosophical term, you may assume that your audience already understands the meaning of the term. You may assume your reader is familiar with basic logical and philosophical vocabulary that isn't under scrutiny; e.g., you may assume your reader knows what it is for an argument to be valid, or sound.

Views, Arguments, and Critical Discussion

A *view* is distinct from the *argument for that view*. A view is a thesis, or position, like: dualism fails to account for the causal influence of the mental; or justification supervenes on factors accessible to the subject "by reflection alone"; Terrell Owens was justfiably suspended because, as a team player on a team sport, he simply wasn't good at his job. Stating a philosopher's view can be fairly straightforward, though you may have to explain unfamiliar vocabulary (e.g., 'supervenes' in the second example). An argument is a reason to believe the view. A philosopher may offer many reasons to believe her view.

When you explain a philosopher's argument, you are *extracting* the argument into premise-conclusion form, making explicit premises that X or Y leaves implicit. This is almost never the same task as summarizing an author's entire article. In many of the readings, the author does not present the argument all in one place, or in the clearest way possible, and authors almost never explicitly state all of the premises for their argument. If you just paraphrase readings, that shows only that you have the fairly low-grade skill of paraphrase, and not that you genuinely understand the material.

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[1] Another reason to avoid sentences like "Descartes brings up the idea of X": as topic sentences, they are unhelpfully vague. Rather than just noting that Descartes "brings up the idea," tell the reader *what Descartes thinks* about X. E.g., vague: "Descartes bring up the idea of the will," better: "Descartes argues that the will is perfect but the understanding is imperfect."

In your critical discussion, I am looking for more than your opinion on the matter. I want to be *persuaded* that your opinion is the right one, so I'm looking for your *reasons* for holding that opinion (your reasons for rejecting a premise of an argument; your reasons for thinking a conclusion doesn't follow from the premises; or your reasons for rejecting a particular principle; etc.).

Style

It is perfectly acceptable to use the first person ("I argue…" rather than "It is argued…" or "One could argue…").

You are writing a fairly very short paper. You may assume that your reader is interested in philosophy of mind, so your first paragraph should get right to the point. *Please* avoid rhetorical flourishes like "Throughout the course of human history, we mortal creatures have been mystified by everything from thunder to drought to the meaning of life, and have consistently turned to God for explanation and solace."