Philosophy 445: Topics in Social and Political Philosophy: Philosophy of Economics

Meeting time and location: Tuesday-Thursday 3:00-4:20 A-5 Frelinghuysen Hall;

Instructional mode: Face-to-face

Prerequisites: Junior Standing and 3 credits in philosophy or economics

LEARNING OUTCOMES
1. Ability to interpret complex texts accurately and analyze their arguments logically.
2. Ability to communicate precisely and in a logically organized way in writing and speech.
3. Familiarity with basic concepts of economics, their logical relations, and their empirical grounding.
4. Familiarity with basic concepts of philosophy of science and ethics and their application to questions concerning economics.
5. Ability to think carefully, logically, and respectfully about controversial institutions and policies and about one’s own views and responsibilities.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS AND GRADING
The course grade depends on the papers (50%), the midterm (10%), participation (15%) and the final examination (25%). The assignments will be assigned numeric grades, which will be converted to a final letter grade according to the following rubric:

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<th>A</th>
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<td>Points</td>
<td>90-100</td>
<td>85-89.9</td>
<td>80-84.9</td>
<td>75-79.9</td>
<td>70-74.9</td>
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LECTURES
My hope is to avoid lecturing to you too often. Instead, I hope for collaborative discussion of the issues raised in the readings, relying heavily on your doubts, questions, and hunches. My goal is for everyone to participate. Whether it is achieved depends of course on you as well as me. I hope to create an environment in which you can try out ideas and ask anything about the course without fear of embarrassment. Please bring with you to class copies of the readings we are discussing that day.

INTRODUCTORY PAPER The introductory essay should be no more than 1000 words in length. It counts for 10% of your semester grade. It is designed to give you an opportunity to try your hand at writing a philosophy essay without the anxiety of having much of your grade depend on the result.

TERM PAPER The term paper counts for 40% of your semester grade. It should be about 2000 words and it is due in class on Tuesday, November 9. The term paper is due fairly early in the semester in order to make it possible for you to rewrite it and to submit a revised version, if you choose. Revising the paper is optional. The optional revision is due on Thursday, December 2. If
you submit a revised version, your grade will be a weighted average of your grades on the two versions with the first version counting for 5/8 of the grade (25 out of the 40 points) and the revised version counting for 3/8 (15 out of the 40 points). If you do not submit a revised version, I will record the same percentage grade for both the original and the revised version.

*MIDTERM:* The midterm (which counts for 15% of your semester grade) tests mainly your familiarity with the lectures and readings, unlike the papers, which test mainly your philosophical and writing skills. The midterm thus gives you an incentive to keep up with the readings and a reward for doing so. The midterm is scheduled for Thursday, October 21.

*PARTICIPATION:* Each student should come to class with a well-formulated question concerning either the reading for that class or loose ends from the previous class. I will take attendance, and your participation grade will depend on the quality of your questions, your attendance, and your general engagement in the course.

*FINAL EXAMINATION* The final examination will count for 25% of your semester grade. It will be cumulative, with some emphasis on material covered after the midterm.

**TEXTS:**
- A few articles available on the Canvas site for this course.

**CLASSROOM ETIQUETE**
Students must be respectful of each other. This means that you should not interrupt students when they are speaking or fail to give polite attention to what they are saying. Please turn off your cell phones before class begins.

Please do your part. Inappropriate behavior interferes with your own learning and distracts and demoralizes others.

**Laptop Policy:** Research demonstrates that note-taking on a laptop hinders learning of conceptual material and distracts other students. You may think you are an exception, and perhaps you are, but the use of computers also distracts others and interferes with their learning. Laptops should not be used unless you have a learning issue that requires their use.

**ACADEMIC INTEGRITY**
By enrolling in this course, each student assumes the responsibilities of an active participant in Rutgers’ community of scholars in which everyone’s academic work and behavior are held to the highest academic integrity standards. Academic misconduct compromises the integrity of
teaching and research. Cheating, fabrication, plagiarism, unauthorized collaboration, submitting a paper or a portion of a paper written for another class, and helping others commit these acts are examples of academic misconduct, which can result in disciplinary action. This includes but is not limited to failure on the assignment/course, disciplinary probation, or suspension. Substantial or repeated cases of misconduct will be forwarded to the administration for additional review.

Note that you need not intend to plagiarize in order to do so. If you represent the ideas of others as your own or if you present, as new, ideas you derived from an existing source, you have plagiarized, regardless of intending to do so. A student once offered to me as an excuse for quoting material from the web without attribution that it wasn’t her who did it, but her sister. That excuse did not go over well.

All sources and assistance used in preparing your papers must be precisely and explicitly acknowledged. If you have any questions about what constitutes plagiarism, please come talk with me. Ignorance of what constitutes plagiarism is not a defense. It is your responsibility to be sure. The web creates special risks. Cutting and pasting even a few words from a web page or paraphrasing material without a reference constitutes plagiarism. If you are not sure how to refer to something you find on the internet, you can always give the web address. It is generally better to quote than to paraphrase from material on the web, because in the absence of page numbers it can be hard to find passages that are paraphrased rather than quoted. The minimum penalty for plagiarism in this course -- even of just a phrase -- is a zero on the assignment.

In my experience, plagiarism usually happens because it is 3 a.m. on the morning when a paper is due. Your current draft is going nowhere. You’re exhausted, increasingly desperate and not at your moral or intellectual best. And you’ve come across an obscure web page that says pretty much what you’ve been trying to say. And . . . well you can fill in the rest, including what happens when you get caught. This is the time to stop and go to bed. Much better to talk with me and get some help, take the mild penalty for not handing the paper in on time, and write a paper that gives you some satisfaction and that doesn’t risk severe penalties.

ACCOMMODATIONS FOR STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES
I hope to make this course as accessible as possible to anyone with a disability. Please let me know as early in the course as you can if you need accommodations in the curriculum, instruction, or methods of assessment in order to enable you to participate fully. I will maintain confidentiality of any information concerning your disabilities that you share with me.

DIVERSITY, INCLUSION AND ETHICAL CHALLENGES
Diversity is a source of strength, creativity, and innovation. We should respect the deep and complicated ways that individual’s identities, cultures, backgrounds, experiences, statuses, abilities, and opinions enrich the Rutgers community. The pursuit of excellence in teaching, research, outreach, and diversity are linked goals.
Rutgers can fulfill its public mission only by creating a welcoming and inclusive community for people from every background – people who as students, faculty, and staff serve New Jersey, the United States, and the world.

Recently, immigrants and members of minorities have been threatened, and there has been a greater understanding of both persistent racism and extensive harassment of women. It is worth saying the obvious: such behavior has no place within any classroom (or indeed anywhere else). I want to reassure any of you who feel threatened or excluded that this will be a safe space and to encourage those of you who are not threatened to reach out to those who may be.

At the same time, the “safe-space” terminology suggests intellectual pabulum and censorship of controversial or unpopular views – which is emphatically not what this course aims at. “Safe” doesn’t mean “bland” or “not challenging.” You will read views that may challenge your beliefs. There will be (and should be) lots of disagreement and respectful argument. I welcome and encourage conflict among ideas. Philosophy thrives on disagreement, and this course will probably present you with arguments that threaten some of your convictions. Ignoring views one disagrees with that are espoused by others, rather than arguing against them is insulting. It treats others as unworthy of contributing to and profiting from rational argument. (If others do not challenge us, we will never find our mistakes or the real wisdom in what we already believe.) Disagreement is not disrespect. To take issue with the opinions of others is to treat their views as worth discussing.

**CONTENT INTRODUCTION:**

Over the last few decades economics has undergone a methodological transformation. 40 years ago, the top journals were full of mathematical investigations with little laboratory experimentation, survey research, or field experiments. In contrast, recent issues of the *American Economic Review* are full of essays with titles such as: “The Effects of Pretrial Detention on Conviction, Future Crime, and Employment: Evidence from Randomly Assigned Judges” or “The Economic Consequences of Hospital Admissions.” This transformation of the discipline calls for rethinking economic methodology and for explanation. This semester in Philosophy 445 we will examine the development and transformation of economic methodology in the light of philosophy of science. This semester we will say relatively little about ethics and welfare economics, focusing instead on methodological questions. In the course of the semester, I shall be revising my 1992 book, *The Inexact and Separate Science of Economics* in the face of these changes in economics and developments within philosophy of science.

**DETAILED GOALS:**

The overall goal is to provide students with an appreciation of the methodological peculiarities and puzzles to be found in the work of standard mainstream economics. The ultimate objective is twofold: a better understanding of the problems and accomplishments of economics and a
better understanding of the possibilities and limitations of scientific study of human social life. More specifically, the course aims

1. To provide an introduction to the most important concepts and models that economists rely on, as well as knowledge of how economists make use of them.

2. To provide an introduction to central relevant concepts in philosophy of science, such as testing, confirmation, causation, models, and explanation.

3. To help students develop their abilities to present and criticize arguments both in discussion and, in particular, in writing: Every good essay, regardless of the subject matter, is an argument for some thesis or conclusion. The only thing special about philosophy essays is their focus on the logic of the argument. This course should help you to write more sharply organized and effective essays. Because it is hard to separate bad writing and sloppy thinking, this course also aims to help you to think more rigorously.

The extent to which these course goals can be achieved is largely up to you, but if you cannot see how any particular lecture or reading assignment relates to the goals of the course, ask about it. In abstract matters it is especially important and especially difficult to be clear on what the point is. Keep asking "So what?" Since this course is more concerned with mastering skills than with acquiring information, it demands your active participation.

**WHAT THIS COURSE DOES NOT AIM TO DO:**

This course does not aim to provide a comprehensive introduction to economics. Nor does it address all of the most important basic questions in philosophy of science; and it will have little to say about questions in ethics, political philosophy, or theories of rationality that are relevant to economics. It is selective in the economics it addresses and in the philosophical issues it considers.

**WARNING!! Philosophy challenges complacency and demands rigorous thinking. It’s hard to know what the truth is concerning hard questions like the ones we are addressing this semester.**

**COURSE OUTLINE:** Note: I expect this schedule to adapt to the pace and interests of the class. Please regard it as aspirational rather than as definite.

*Thursday, September 2:* Introduction: Philosophy of science and philosophy of economics
  * Okasha, *Philosophy of Science*, Chapter 1
  * Reiss, Chapter 1

*Tuesday, September 7:* Scientific inference
  * Okasha, Chapter 2
  * Karl Popper, “Conjectures and Refutations” (Xerox available on Canvas)

*Thursday, September 9:* Explanation and Realism
  * Okasha, Chapters 3 and 4
Tuesday, September 14: Scientific change and limits
- Okasha, Chapters 5 and 7

Thursday, September 16: An introduction to economic theory
- ISSE, Preface to the second edition and chapter 1
- Reiss, chapter 3
Introductory Paper Due

Write an essay responding to the question, “Does it matter whether economics is a science?” Obviously, this question is far too large and complex for a very short essay. So you will have to figure out how to pare down the issues you discuss so that you can say something specific. Be sure to think hard about objections to your arguments and be sure to answer any that seem to you crushing. When you are done with the paper, you should be able to state your answer to this question and the reasons for the answer in a clear sentence (which will constitute your thesis). It’s great if you can formulate your thesis before writing the paper, but it is often possible to state compactly what it is that your paper shows only after working hard on the paper.

Some details:
- Papers should not be longer than 1000 words.
- Electronic submission via Canvas.
- Double-space with at least 1.25 inch margins
- Use at least a 12 point font
- Please place a title for your paper at the beginning. It should suggest its contents. “Introductory Paper” is not an acceptable title.
- Please make sure that your papers are correct in their grammar, usage, spelling, punctuation and so forth. Sloppy and badly written papers will be marked down and in some cases both marked down and returned for rewriting.
- Late papers will be penalized unless you speak with me before the due date.
- Be sure to consult the general suggestions on paper writing near the end of the syllabus.

Tuesday, September 21: Demand and Consumer Choice
- ISSE, ch. 2.

Thursday, September 23: Theory of the firm and general equilibrium
- ISSE, ch. 3

Tuesday, September 28: Positive and normative economics
- ISSE, ch. 4.
- Reiss, chapter 12.
Thursday, September 30: Macroeconomics: Paradoxes and Identities
- Paul Samuelson, “The Multiplier and the Paradox of Thrift”
- Brad DeLong, “Is Macroeconomics Hard?”
- Paul Krugman, “Baby-Sitting the Economy”

Tuesday, October 5: Equilibrium theory and macroeconomics
- *ISSE*, ch. 5.

Thursday, October 7: Macroeconomics, Microfoundations, and Measurement
- Simon Wren-Lewis, “Microfounded and other Useful Models”
- Paul Krugman, “The Microfoundation Thing”
- Reiss, Chapter 6

Tuesday, October 12: Stimulus vs. Austerity
- John Cochrane, “An Autopsy for the Keynesians”
- Simon Wren-Lewis, “The Case Against Austerity”
- Robert Barro, “How to Really Save the Economy”
- Gregory Mankiw, “The Macroeconomist as Scientist and Engineer”

Thursday, October 14: Models and theories in economics
- *ISSE*, ch. 6
- Reiss, chapter 7

Tuesday, October 19: The structure and strategy of economic theorizing
- *ISSE*, ch. 7
- Reiss, chapter 8

Thursday, October 21: Midterm exam

Tuesday, October 26: Structure and strategy: a case study
- *ISSE*, ch. 8

Thursday, October 28: Econometrics to the rescue?
- Reiss, chapter 9

Tuesday, November 2: Economics as an Inexact Science
- *ISSE*, ch. 9
- Reiss, chapter 5

Thursday, November 4: Economic methodology and testing
- *ISSE*, ch. 10
- Reiss, chapter 10
Tuesday, November 9: “Unrealistic assumptions” in economics
  • Milton Friedman, “The Methodology of Positive Economics” (Xerox)
Term Paper Due

Thursday, November 11: “Unrealistic assumptions” in economics
  • Milton Friedman, “The Methodology of Positive Economics” (Xerox)
  • ISSE, section 10.4

Tuesday, November 16: Model-based methodology
  • ISSE, chapter 11

Thursday, November 18: Research Programs
  • ISSE, chapter 12

Tuesday, November 23: Economics as Separate and Inexact
  • ISSE, Chapter 13

Thursday, November 25: Thanksgiving

Tuesday, November 30: Criticizing, Defending, and Improving Economics
  • ISSE, ch. 14

Thursday, December 2: The behavioral turn and its limits
  • ISSE, ch. 15
  • Julian Reiss, “Evidence-Based Policy” (ch. 11 of The Philosophy of Economics)
Optional revision of term paper due

Tuesday, December 7: Conclusions and Review
  • ISSE, chapter 16
  • Reiss, chapter 15

Thursday, December 9: Conclusions and Review
  • ISSE, chapter 17

SOME HINTS ON READING PHILOSOPHY PAPERS:
You should aim to master the readings. Here are some detailed hints about how to do so:
1. Use your highlighter sparingly. It is much more useful to pencil in marginal notes
   summarizing or querying specific points than to highlight passages. Actively engaging
   the author is much more valuable than merely trying to assimilate the prose. And if you
   do highlight, only highlight a small percentage of the text. (There is not much point to
   highlighting everything, apart from adding color to the page!)
2. You should plan on reading the assignments at least twice. During the first reading you
   should ask yourself:
a. What is the author's position?
b. What is the general structure of the essay? Is it a collection of separate arguments, or does it aim to make one main argument?
c. What are the author's main assumptions? (Where is the author coming from?)
d. Against whom does the author take him/herself to be arguing? What is the context in which the piece was written?
e. What is the main line of argument (or what are the main lines of argument)?
f. What objections does the author address and how successful is the author in answering them?
g. How does the author's position relate to your views? To what extent does the author reinforce or challenge your views?
h. How do the author's arguments relate to the arguments developed in class and in other reading assignments? What criticisms would the author make of arguments developed in class or in other readings? To what extent is the position of the author open to criticisms made in class or in other readings?

During the second reading of the assignment, you should proceed more slowly and critically. Rather than asking, as suggested above, questions about what the author's purposes, organization, and argument are, you should try to assess all of these and particularly the author's arguments.

GENERAL DIRECTIONS ON WRITING THE PAPERS

1. You are expected to give references when you cite detailed claims or arguments made in the readings, and your papers should, where appropriate, show familiarity with relevant materials from the lectures or reading for the course. But you are expected to write essays, not examination answers. So don't introduce irrelevant matters merely to demonstrate that you have done the course readings. (But you must not ignore relevant supporting arguments and, particularly, objections in the readings.) Cite the readings only when they are relevant. Be sure that your paper is a well organized argument for some clearly articulated thesis.

2. When you quote, paraphrase, or make use of a point made by others, be sure to document the source. Your reference style is not important. What matters is that your references be precise and usable. If you say that Reiss says that models are fictions, it should be clear on what page Reiss supposedly says that. The easiest way to give a reference is simply to put the source and page number in parenthesis. Papers without clear references (where needed) will be marked down.

3. Papers must be typed or printed double-spaced in at least a 12 point font with wide margins (at least 1.25 inches) on all sides, so that there is plenty of room for marginal comments. Be sure to keep copies of your papers. Although papers should have titles, there is no need for a separate title page.

4. Papers for the course must be essentially correct in their writing—spelling, punctuation, grammar, usage, typing, and so forth. Papers with more than 3 or 4 errors per page will be marked down, and if they are very messy, they will be returned for correction before they are graded and also penalized. First versions of term papers that are messy will not be graded at all. Your term-paper grade will then depend entirely on the revised version.
and marked down by 10%. Messy and badly written papers are hard to assess; and it is not unfair to expect you to take responsibility for making sure that your papers are in minimally correct English. Although I will make some allowances for non-native speakers, papers that are not reasonably well written will not receive a grade higher than a C+.

**HINTS ON ESSAY WRITING:**

1. The paper topics are not recipes for writing your essays. You have to decide what you want to maintain in your essays. Do not regard the paper topic as an essay examination question. Although your papers must be on the assigned topic, the point is to write a well-organized and unified argument for some clearly enunciated conclusion.

2. The task of writing a good essay is virtually identical with the task of thinking out a clear thesis or conclusion that you want to defend and then elaborating and defending it. You should be able to say clearly and precisely not only what your paper is about, but also what your paper maintains or shows. Be sure each of your papers has both a thesis—that it asserts something definite—and a logical organization. Once it is clear what you want to show, you will have a criterion to decide what is relevant and the basis for organizing your paper. Can you put your main point clearly in a sentence? Can you say clearly in a sentence what your paper shows or proves? Are all the parts of your paper relevant to your main point? Is the structure of your argument clear? No good essay merely summarizes things you have read and then offers remarks or points of comparison or differences you noticed. Every acceptable essay integrates its remarks into an argument of its own. Exposition of the views of others should always be part of your argument for your thesis.

3. Note that a well-organized paper is not merely orderly. For example, a paper that argues that Okasha argues claims 1, 2, and 3 and that one can defend claim 1 as follows, claim 2 as follows, but not claim 3 is orderly, and it has a thesis. But it would only be well-organized—truly one paper rather than three—if the discussions of the three claims bore some relations to one another and if the paper added up to some unified and substantive thesis. A thesis like "Reiss has some good things to say" is not detailed or substantive enough to hold a paper together.

4. Avoid first paragraphs that say things such as, "First I will discuss the views of Okasha and Popper. Then I will discuss their strengths and weaknesses. Then I will compare their conclusions and formulate my opinion." Passages such as these make it sound as if your argument will begin only on the last page. Exposition of the views of others has to find its place within your argument, not as a preface to your argument. If you think in terms of what you want to establish and outline your paper in terms of stages in your argument, your essay will be much stronger.

5. Try to say exactly what you mean. Pay careful attention to your language. Sentences such as "Okasha is an encompassing philosophy" are unacceptably careless. (Okasha is obviously not a walking philosophy; he’s a person.) Value your words and use them accurately. Avoid putting section headings in your papers. The papers are not long enough to need them. Provide clear transitions at the beginning of paragraphs so that the reader knows where you are going without section headings.
6. Avoid what I call "the chicken passive." Students often write sentences such as "Holding on to a theory after it has been refuted is generally considered to be unscientific." My response is "By whom is it considered to be unscientific? And why should we care about their opinion?" In most cases when students write sentences like this what they mean is "It is unscientific to hold on to a theory after it has been refuted is, but I'm afraid to come out and say what I think."

7. To help in organizing your thinking, you should attempt to answer the following three questions:
   1. What is your thesis--that is, what is it that you are trying to maintain or show or prove? What is your main argument for your thesis?
   2. What is the most important objection to or criticism of your thesis that you need to consider? Formulate that objection or criticism as an argument.
   3. What is your argument in response to the objection or criticism mentioned in answer to question 2?

If you cannot answer these questions clearly and easily, then there are problems with your paper. Do not regard your papers as finished or acceptable until each clearly implies answers to the above questions. (But an essay is, of course, a list of answers to any set of questions.) Taking the task of answering these questions seriously can make a big difference in the quality of your paper.

SOME RECOMMENDATIONS ON HOW TO WRITE BADLY: (adapted from Martin Hassel)
http://lacasahassel.net/cv/martin/howto.htm

1. Begin with a sentence that is clear and direct:
   Karl Popper argues that scientific theories must be testable.
2. Change its verbs, adjectives, and adverbs into abstract nouns:
   Karl Popper's position is in favor of the testability of scientific theories.
3. Make the sentence passive:
   An argument in favor of the testability of scientific theories is made by Karl Popper.
4. Use two words where one would do:
   An argument in favor of the testability and falsifiability of scientific theories and hypotheses and other claims in sciences is made by Karl Popper.
5. Use plenty of 'in regard to,' 'as to' and similar terms:
   In regard to the nature of scientific theories, hypotheses, and other claims in science, an argument in favor of their testability and falsifiability is made by Karl Popper.
6. Sprinkle with words that add little or nothing
   In regard to questions concerning the nature and concept of scientific theories, hypotheses, and other claims in real sciences, an interesting argument in favor of their clear testability and definite falsifiability is made lucidly by Karl Popper.
7. Use negatives:
   In regard to questions concerning the nature and concept of scientific theories, hypotheses, and other claims in real empirical sciences, a not uninteresting argument against their possible untestability or partial unfalsifiability is made not unclearly by Karl Popper.
8. Repeat the preceding steps: How awful can you make the sentence?
SPECIAL CONSIDERATIONS IN WRITING PHILOSOPHICAL PAPERS:

1. In a political debate, the point is to win, and one consequently tries to make the arguments of one’s opponents sound as ridiculous and worthless as possible. In a philosophical debate (or in writing a philosophy essay), in contrast, the objective is to learn the truth. So you should try to make the arguments conflicting with your views as compelling as possible, before you answer them. If there are any objections to your position that you cannot answer, then you cannot be sure that you are right. Work hard at trying to see "the other side". (This is not to say that there are no mistakes and that both sides of every issue are always equally well supported. If the question was, "Should slavery be legal?" it is worth studying what can be said in the defense of slavery, even though there is in fact very little to be said in its defense.)

2. Although many sociological and economic facts are relevant to the issues you are addressing in your essays, be careful to keep your focus philosophical. If you aren’t sure whether your papers are philosophical or not, check with me.

Seeking help:

When working on the final versions of your essays, feel free to come to me for help. You do not need to do further research, but you can consult with me if you want references for further reading.

There are some excellent resources on the web for writing philosophy papers. I particularly recommend:

- [www.sfu.ca/philosophy/writing.htm](http://www.sfu.ca/philosophy/writing.htm) This is brief, clear, and helpful.
- [http://www.princeton.edu/~jimpryor/general/writing.html](http://www.princeton.edu/~jimpryor/general/writing.html) Excellent, but much lengthier.
- [www.unc.edu/depts/wcweb/handouts/philosophy.html](http://www.unc.edu/depts/wcweb/handouts/philosophy.html) For those who are serious about philosophy.
- [www.cofc.edu/~portmord/tips.htm](http://www.cofc.edu/~portmord/tips.htm) Contains lots of references for further study.
- A terrific general source on writing is Strunk and White's *The Elements of Style*. The first edition is available on the web at [http://www.bartleby.com/141/](http://www.bartleby.com/141/)

PAPER GRADING ABBREVIATIONS:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tr>
<td>G or gram</td>
<td>grammatical error</td>
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<td>Awk</td>
<td>awkward expression</td>
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<tr>
<td>Cat</td>
<td>category mistake: “Kant is a difficult theory.”</td>
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<td>P</td>
<td>passive construction (fine, but should not be used too often)</td>
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<td>CP</td>
<td>the “chicken passive,” writing “this is considered to be false, when you mean “this is false”</td>
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<tr>
<td>W</td>
<td>Wrong word, “This change is unpresidented”</td>
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<td>¶ or para</td>
<td>Paragraph break called for</td>
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PAPER GRADING CRITERIA
An "A" paper typically has all of the following virtues, although in exceptional cases papers with five of the six virtues might merit an "A"

1. It has a well-defined thesis and a logical organization.
2. It shows good sense, intellectual honesty and struggle. It defends a defensible thesis and takes seriously objections to that thesis.
3. It is well-informed. If there are passages in the assigned readings for the course that are particularly relevant to the matters under discussion in the essay, these are cited and discussed. The paper shows an awareness of conceptual distinctions and clarifications developed in the course.
4. It is intelligent, logical, and careful. The argument is carefully articulated and developed. Obvious difficulties are anticipated and answered, and gaps are closed.
5. It is significant. The issues discussed, although detailed, are of some importance, and the essay makes their importance clear.
6. The paper is written in a lucid and grammatical style.

A "B" paper has the following virtues:

1. As before.
2. As before.
3. As before.
4. It is logical and not careless. The argument is well articulated.
5. It is not trivial. The essay provides some motivation for its topic.
6. The paper is grammatical.

A "C" paper has at least the following virtues:

1. It is orderly and has some focus.
2. It shows some serious concern with the issues it deals with.
3. It is not uninformed. Where relevant, it shows awareness of the content of the course.
4. There are some definite and cogent arguments in the essay.
5. The paper has some point.
6. The paper is readable and minimally grammatical.

A "D" paper

1. Has some intelligible organization.
2. Shows some concern with the issues it deals with.
3. Shows minimal awareness of the course content.
4. Makes some relevant and sensible argument
5. Has some point.
6. Is comprehensible and minimally grammatical.