Philosophy 107: Introduction to Ethics

This is an introductory course that presupposes no prior knowledge of philosophy. We will be discussing the nature of a good human life, the basic principles of right and wrong, the status of morality, and some topical ethical issues that illustrate the theories we've considered and the subtleties of their application. In addition, there will be a short introduction to the construction, analysis and critique of rational arguments.

Meeting time and location
Thursday-Tuesday 1:00-2:20

Instructional mode: synchronous via Zoom

Instructor title and name
Professor Daniel Hausman dhausman@cplb.rutgers.edu

Office Hours (probably on line)
Wednesday 1:00-2:00, Thursday 11:00-12:00 and by appointment. **Location remote**

LEARNING OUTCOMES

1. Ability to think critically about ethical and meta-ethical issues.
2. Grasp of how ethics can progress via criticizing and refining ethical theories.
3. Ability to apply philosophical reasoning to problems in ethics and your own life.
4. Ability logically to construct, analyze, and criticize arguments
5. Ability to display interpretative charity and intellectual honesty, including appropriate attribution to others of their ideas, and recognition and frankness about the limitations of one's own ideas.

TEXTS

- Russ Shafer-Landau, *The Fundamentals of Ethics* (FE), 5th edition. Oxford University Press Paperback ISBN-13:9780190058333
- David Hume, *An Inquiry into the Principles of Morals.* Hackett ISBN-13: 978-0872201668
- Immanuel Kant, *Grounding for the Metaphysics of Morals.* Hackett. ISBN-13: 978-0872201668
- John Stuart Mill, *Utilitarianism.* Hackett ISBN-13: 978-0872206052
- Articles available on Canvas

COURSE REQUIREMENTS AND GRADING

Grades for the course if it is taught remotely will be based on three papers and five quizzes. If it is taught in person, there will be a final exam in place of one of the papers. Grades will depend on the assignments as follows:

- Quizzes: 30 points, 10 points each
- Paper #1: 10 points

- Papers #2 and #3: 25 points each
- Participation: 10 points

Grades are generally not curved, and there are no opportunities for extra credit.

The assignments will be assigned numeric grades, which will be converted to a final letter grade according to the following rubric:

A	B+	B	C+	C	D	F
90-100	85-89.9	80-84.9	75-79.9	70-74.9	60-69.9	< 60

CLASS MEETINGS: I will take attendance, and your participation grade will depend on regular attendance, *and on your visiting office hours with pertinent questions at least once during the semester*. My expectation is that the students will come to class having done the assigned readings and engaged with the course material. More specifically, I expect students to come to class with a question concerning the readings or the previous class, and I will typically begin by calling on students to ask their questions. **You should bring the texts we are discussing with you to class.**

INTRODUCTORY PAPER The introductory essay should be no more than 800 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. It counts for ten percent of your grade. It is due promptly at the beginning of class on Tuesday, September 21.

PAPERS 2 and 3: Exams do not work well in courses taught remotely. Hence the reliance on papers. These two together count for 50% of your semester grade. They should each be 8 double-spaced pages in length – roughly 2,000 words. Papers #2 and #3 are due in class on Tuesday, October 19 and Thursday, December 2.

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 as an excuse for quoting without attribution material from the web 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 about 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 persistent racism and extensive harassment of women. It is worth saying the obvious: such behavior has no place within any classroom. 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." For example, abortion is a fraught issue, which may be upsetting for members of the class. In addition, you will read views that 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 fundamental convictions. Ignoring views one disagrees with that are espoused by others, rather than arguing against them – even when they appear absurd or repugnant – is insulting. It treats others as unable to contribute to and profit 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:

Morality is commonplace. Every society has values and principles of right and wrong. Yet morality is also weird. How can we find out what is right and wrong? Is there any difference between saying, "That's wrong," and "I don't like that?" Can claims about values and what's right or wrong be true or false? Although one cynical reaction to the world around us is to think of morality as empty words, the actions of individuals and even of whole societies are influenced by moral judgments. (Have you never been influenced by concerns about whether what you are doing is right or wrong? -- and if you have, why suppose that others haven't?) Furthermore (although cynical qualms are possible here), our moral judgments concerning actions and social policies are influenced by reasoning and argument.

This course will provide an introduction both to substantive views of what makes for a good life, of what makes individuals morally worthy, and of what actions and policies are right or wrong and also to philosophical reflection on the nature of morality, whether these substantive views can be true or false and, if so, how we can know. Although the course will be devoted to philosophical reflection on general questions within and about ethics, we will also consider the implications of ethical theorizing for some contemporary moral issues.

DETAILED GOALS:

The overall goal is to enable all members of the class to have a grasp on the central concepts, values, and principles of ethics and to be able to apply these to reflect on their own aspirations and principles. This requires both cultivation of skills of argumentation and criticism and familiarity with different approaches to ethics. More specifically, the course aims:

1. To provide basic knowledge of central moral concepts, ethical theories, and "metaethical" reflections on the nature of these concepts and theories. The moral positions and arguments you will be studying should challenge your convictions or permit you to refine them.
2. To provide an introduction to moral argument: This course should help you to see how rational moral argument works and to appreciate the force and limits of moral arguments. The course should also help you to appreciate what moral theory is, how it can be important in your life and in society in general, how it can be valid and powerful, even though not always capable of producing consensus.
3. To provide an introduction to rational argumentation and to informal logic: To appreciate what can be said concerning morality and its implications, one must be able to tell the difference between good and bad arguments, and one needs to be able to present and criticize arguments effectively. To the extent that this course helps you to make and criticize arguments, it should be valuable for you, quite apart from its subject matter.
4. To help you to develop your abilities to present and to criticize arguments in discussion and, in particular, in writing: Every good essay, regardless of the subject matter, is an extended argument for some thesis or conclusion. The only thing special about philosophy essays is the extent to which they focus on the logic and conceptual rigor and clarity. This course should help you to write more sharply organized, focused and effective essays. It is hard to separate bad writing and sloppy thinking.

The extent to which these course goals can be achieved is largely up to you, but it is important that you appreciate what I am trying to accomplish. 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?" The abstract subject matter of this course demands your active participation.

WHAT THIS COURSE DOES *NOT* AIM TO DO:

This course does not aim to provide pat answers to questions such as "Is capital punishment morally permissible?" It is not Sunday School. I don't intend to preach, and I hope you'll jump on me if I get carried away and start preaching. I have my own strong views about what's right and wrong, what makes for a good life, and what makes for a good person, but my objective is not indoctrination. To the contrary, the course should assist you to clarify your own values. What is important in the course is intellectual honesty and the sort of perseverance that makes one struggle to bring one's convictions and the weight of argument into accord.

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.

HOW TO GET AN A:

Students often ask me to specify a set of tasks which, if completed, guarantee an A. I cannot do that. Succeeding in this course is not like assembling a Lego toy or a piece of IKEA furniture. Following directions meticulously is a good idea, but it does not guarantee excellent work. There is no set of steps such that following each one produces a perfect product. Getting a good grade in this course involves both (1) acquiring a good deal of knowledge concerning ethics and (2) mastering the skills involved in making conceptual distinctions and in drawing on the readings and lectures to make, analyze, and criticize arguments, especially in writing. There is no formula that guarantees a solid understanding of the skills and knowledge this course aims to provide. The syllabus does, however, provide some advice concerning how to read philosophical texts and to write philosophical essays. You will find that advice toward the end of the syllabus.

There is also one general thing that you can do that will both help your grade and at the same time make this course more enjoyable: discuss the issues and concepts in this course with others, both students in the course and, especially, with friends and family who have no direct knowledge of course material. The more that you argue with others about ethics and explain your thoughts and questions, the better your grasp will be of the readings and lectures. Moral argument is serious, and it can be threatening, but it is also deeply satisfying to see more deeply into difficult questions and to make progress via dialogue. In responding to the questions and challenges that others put to you, material from the readings and lectures will become more concrete, and your grasp of it will grow more precise.

Arguing (that is making arguments, not exchanging insults or threats) is the best way to master the material in this course and to make up your minds about the difficult issues we will be discussing.

COURSE OUTLINE:

Thursday, September 2: Introduction: discussion of the goals, structure and requirements of the course; discussion of the notion of what is *morally* right and of the distinction between facts and values.

- Steven Pinker, "The Moral Instinct"
- FE introduction. Skip “Moral Reasoning” section, pp. 9-15

Tuesday, September 7 Logic: Arguments, Validity, Soundness, Rational Persuasiveness

- FE, Introduction (including “Moral Reasoning” section)
- Logic skill sheet

Thursday, September 9: Hedonism: Is happiness the sole intrinsic good?

- FE Chapters 1 and 2

**Tuesday, September 14:* Desire satisfaction: What you want and what is good for you.

- FE Chapters 3 and 4

Thursday, September 16: Morality and Religion

- FE Chapter 5

Ungraded logic quiz

Tuesday, September 21: Natural law

- FE Chapter 5

Introductory paper is due:

1. Read carefully Shafer-Landau's "Social Media" case on pages 59 and 60 and consider the first question he asks, 'Does social media give us a distorted view of what constitutes a good life or what it looks like for someone's life to go well?
2. Think about how you would answer this question *and what reasons (or arguments) you would give for your answer.* In developing your arguments, you should make use of some of the distinctions and arguments in the first four chapters of *The Fundamentals of Ethics.*
3. Write down a brief sketch of your answer, your argument for your answer, and the distinctions or arguments from chapters 1 – 4 of *The Fundamentals of Ethics* that you will draw on.
4. Discuss the question and your answer to the question with a roommate, friend, or family member and see whether you can convince them of your answer. Some things to note:
    a. Do they already agree with your answer?
    b. What arguments do they make for their view?
    c. What objections do they have to your argument? Can you answer their objections?
    d. Have they convinced you that your answer needs modifying?
    e. In what ways (if any) do their reactions show you how to strengthen your case?
    f. What considerations do they bring up that you hadn't thought of?
5. Write an essay that begins by clarifying the question and stating the answer that (after your conversation) you think is correct. Your answer is the thesis of your essay. Your essay should then explain your answer, defend it, and respond to objections both to your answer and to the arguments you give supporting your answer.
6. In addition, your paper should have an appendix, no more than one page in length, describing your conversation.

Note:

- There is no "formula" for writing the paper, but you should provide some <u>brief</u> introduction making clear what the issue is. Think of your audience as another intelligent student, not me. It should be clear what you are arguing and how each paragraph in your paper contributes to developing and defending your point of view.

- In a short paper such as this one, do not use section headings. The beginnings of paragraphs should provide some transition from the paragraph before, so that the reader knows where you are going. A transition can be as simple as a single word or short phrase, such as "Nevertheless" or "In addition," or it can be more substantial.
- The last paragraph should begin with a sentence such as, "In this essay I have established that . . ."

Please make use of the following check list:

- Papers should not be longer than 800 words (excluding the appendix).
- 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.

The point of the introductory paper assignment is to enable you to have a try at writing a paper that makes an argument. Do not be discouraged if the paper assignment is difficult. My job is to teach you how to tackle assignments such as this one. You cannot learn to swim without getting in the water, and I'll keep you from drowning.

I am serious about requiring clear and grammatical writing, probably to a greater extent than you are accustomed to. Although I will make some allowances for those who are not native English speakers, I insist upon clear and grammatical prose that is well organized into paragraphs. *Read your work out loud slowly and listen hard.* (Many computers will read your paper back to you, which is particularly useful.) Papers that are ungrammatical or not reasonably well written will not get a grade higher than 7.7 points out of 10 (i.e. a C+).

Thursday, September 23: Egoism: Psychological and Ethical

- FE, chapters 7 and 8

Quiz on Logic and ch. 1-4 of *The Fundamentals of Ethics*

Tuesday, September 28: Utilitarianism

- FE, chapter 9
- J.S. Mill, Utilitarianism, chapter 1

Thursday, September 30: Utilitarianism

- J.S. Mill, Utilitarianism, chapter 2

Tuesday, October 5: Utilitarianism

- FE, chapter 10
- J.S. Mill, Utilitarianism, chapter 3

Thursday, October 7: Application: Utilitarianism and Capital Punishment

- Ernest van den Haag, "The Ultimate Punishment: A Defense"
- J.S. Mill, "Speech in Defense of Capital Punishment

Tuesday, October 12: Kant and the Categorical Imperative

- Kant, *Grounding for the Metaphysics of Morals*, pp. 7-14 (through marginal #400)

Thursday, October 14: Kant and the Categorical Imperative

- Kant, *Grounding for the Metaphysics of Morals*, pp. 14-32 (through marginal #423)

Tuesday, October 19: Kant and the Categorical Imperative

- Kant, *Grounding for the Metaphysics of Morals*, pp. 32-44 (through marginal #440)

Paper #2 is due.

Thursday, October 21: Kant and the Categorical Imperative

- FE, chapter 12
- Kant, "On a Supposed Right to Lie Because of Philanthropic Concerns"

Tuesday, October 26: Kant, utilitarianism, and abortion

- Mary Ann Warren, "On the Moral and Legal Status of Abortion"

Quiz on FE, ch. 5-9 and Kant

Thursday, October 28:

- Don Marquis, Why Abortion Is Immoral

Tuesday, November 2:

- Judith Thomson, "A Defense of Abortion"

Thursday, November 4:

- Baruch Brody, "Opposition to Abortion: A Human Rights Approach
- FE, chapter 15

Tuesday, November 9: Reason vs. Sentiment

- Hume, *An Enquiry Concerning the Principles of Morals*, chapters 1–3 and Appendix 3

Thursday, November 11: Justice and sentiment

- Hume, *An Enquiry Concerning the Principles of Morals*, chapters 4-6

Tuesday, November 16: Virtue

- Hume, *An Enquiry Concerning the Principles of Morals*, chapters 7-9

Thursday, November 18: Ethical pluralism

- FE, chapter 16

Quiz on abortion and Hume

**Tuesday, November 23:* Virtue Ethics

- FE chapter 17

Thursday, November 25: Thanksgiving

**Tuesday, November 30*: Feminist Ethics

- FE chapter 18

Thursday, December 2: Relativism

- FE chapter 19

Paper #3 is due.

Tuesday, December 7: Nihilism

- FE chapter 20

Thursday, December 9: Ethical Objectivism

- FE chapter 21

SOME HINTS ON READING PHILOSOPHY PAPERS:

Although you will not be able to understand completely the most difficult philosophical texts such as Kant's *Grounding*, 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 or chapter? 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 text 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 lecture 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

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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 should not, of course, 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 Mill maintains that Socrates is happier than a pig, it should be clear on what page Mill 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 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. 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 clear and 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 that your papers have both a thesis--that

they assert something definite--and a logical organization. Once it is clear what you what to show, you will have a criterion to decide what is relevant and the basis for organizing your paper. Can you put your thesis – the conclusion you seek to defend – 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 thesis? Is the structure of your argument clear? No good essay merely summarizes things you have read and then offers your 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 Kant 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 "Hume 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 Warren and Hume. 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 "Hume is a mistaken principle" are unacceptably careless. (Hume is a person, not a principle.) Details matter. The religious libertarian who left out a comma in this dedication to his book wound up saying somethings remarkable, “I would like to dedicate this book to my parents, Ayn Rand and God”. 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 from one paragraph to the next 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 "Letting people starve to death when one has extra food is generally considered to be wrong." My response is "By whom is it considered to be wrong? And why should we care about their opinion?" In most cases when students write sentences like this what they mean is "It is wrong to let people starve to death when one has extra food, but I'm afraid to come out and say what I think."
7. Read your papers out loud to yourself or, even better, have your computer read your paper to you. Native speakers will hear many problems that they would otherwise miss.
8. 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 not, 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:
Don Marquis vigorously condemns abortion.
2. Change its verbs, adjectives, and adverbs into abstract nouns:
Don Marquis presents a vigorous condemnation of the acceptability of abortion.
3. Make the sentence passive:
A vigorous condemnation of the acceptability of abortion is presented by Don Marquis.
4. Use two words where one would do:
A vigorous and strong condemnation and critique of the acceptability or permissibility of abortion is presented by Don Marquis.
5. Use plenty of 'in regard to,' 'as to' and similar terms:
A vigorous and strong condemnation and critique in regard to the acceptability or permissibility of abortion motherhood under some circumstances is presented by Don Marquis.
6. Sprinkle with words that add little or nothing
An interesting and quite vigorous and reasonably strong condemnation and forceful critique in regard to the acceptability or permissibility of abortion under some circumstances is compellingly presented by Don Marquis.
7. Use negatives:
A not uninteresting and quite vigorous and not unreasonably weak condemnation or too timid critique in regard to the unacceptability or impermissibility of abortion under some circumstances is not uncompellingly presented by Don Marquis.
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 may be relevant to 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 This is brief, clear, and helpful.
- http://www.princeton.edu/~jimpryor/general/writing.html Excellent, but much lengthier.
- www.unc.edu/depts/wcweb/handouts/philosophy.html For those who are serious about philosophy.
- 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/

PAPER GRADING ABBREVIATIONS:

"G" or "gram"	grammatical error
Awk	awkward expression
Cat	category mistake: "Kant is a difficult theory."
P	passive construction – an error only if overused
CP	the "chicken passive," writing "this is considered to be false," when you mean "this is false"
W	Wrong word, "This change is unpresidented"
¶ or para	Paragraph break called for

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.