

Criteria for good writing – Philosophy (modified 2/11/10)

1. Essay demonstrates an understanding of the material: The student has correctly grasped a philosophical problem or question, has explained it accurately, and on the basis of a substantially correct interpretation of any texts involved. Key terms are used correctly. The essay shows evidence of the student's independent thought, and is written in his/her distinctive voice. Quotations are used, when appropriate, to support the writer's analysis, and an explanation or discussion is offered for each quotation.

2. Essay has clear and coherent argument: For a paper on a single topic: There is a clearly stated thesis, and support for this thesis in the body of the paper. Each paragraph contributes to this argument, and follows logically from paragraphs before it. The argument presented is persuasive and logically sound.

For an assignment consisting of essay question: Each answer is stated clearly, and supported. It is clear from the writing which question, and which part of the question, is being answered at each point. Each paragraph contributes to the answer to the question and to the argument the student is making, and follows logically from what has come before. The argument presented is accurate and persuasive (logically sound).

3. Essay fulfills assigned task: The essay addresses the entire assigned question or topic, elaborating on important ideas in satisfactory depth, but without bringing in anything extraneous or irrelevant. In the case of a paper on a single topic, the introduction focuses and provides clarity for the paper. Important terms are clearly and accurately defined. Each paragraph conveys a coherent, organized thought.

4. Essay obeys standards for good persuasive writing: The prose is clear, not awkward. The structure of the sentences reflects the relationships between/ among the ideas discussed.

5. Essay is technically correct: The essay has been carefully and thoughtfully proofread. The argument is written in complete sentences, with punctuation that does not mislead the reader. There are few or no mistakes in spelling, grammar, word choice, and punctuation.

Rubric based on these criteria

Work submitted is technically correct:

- Spelling and grammar are correct
- Words are used semantically correctly (that is, with correct meaning)
- Punctuation is substantially correct and not misleading
- Citations are formatted correctly

Work fulfills assigned task:

- Answers all parts of question(s)
- Goes into sufficient depth to answer question(s) and to show why answers are correct
- Does not include extraneous or irrelevant information (information that does not answer the assigned question)
- Does not include incorrect or inaccurate information

Essay demonstrates an understanding of the material:

- Shows an accurate understanding of what the text says
- Shows an accurate understanding of the text's meaning, for example by explaining accurately, and analyzing, what the text says, using the student's own words
- Uses key philosophical terms (if any) correctly
- Refers to text, or cites text, in a way that supports the writer's analysis
- Discusses quotations (if any) to show understanding of their meaning
- Shows evidence of student's own independent reasoning

Work shows clear and coherent argument:

- Supports claims with valid arguments and correct information (hence, with sound arguments)
- There is a clear logical connection between paragraphs on any one part of the question

Essay adheres to standards for good persuasive writing:

- The meaning of each sentence is clear, not vague or very ambiguous
- Structure of sentences and paragraphs reflects the relationships between the ideas or issues discussed