

Paper #3 Instructions

PHIL 452.1001

Spring 2025

Dove and Woodbridge

Due Thursday, May 15 by 11:59pm via WebCampus-Canvas

Topic/Requirement:

Write an essay of between 2000-2500 words that compares and contrasts what you consider the three best accounts from our reading (from Hyman through Walton) regarding the nature of depiction/visual representation. You need to argue for who has the best of these three top analyses of how depiction works by demonstrating how that analysis is better than the other two analyses you consider (and how the other two should be ranked against one another). Please use examples of actual artworks in your arguments.

Paper Writing Stuff:

Only use readings from class. Using, mentioning, citing, or paraphrasing articles, books, or the like that were not assigned in class will result in losing two letter grades on the assignment.

Only *good-faith* attempts will be graded. Papers rejected for not putting forth a good faith effort will not be capable of being revised for a better grade later (i.e., if we judge that you didn't put forth an adequate effort on the paper, you will get an F on the paper and an F in the class).

Word Count: 2000-2500 words. Works Cited/Bibliographies do not count towards your word count; footnotes and endnotes do. Quotations **will not count** towards your word count. If you are significantly under or over the word count, your grade will be decreased by up to one letter grade (and gratuitously short or long papers may be rejected and hence will not be able to be revised later for a better grade).

Grammar, Spelling, Etc.: Grammar, spelling, style, and readability matter. Of course, there can be typos. We all make mistakes. Yet, as mistakes multiply, grades decrease. Why? Because one mistake is understandable, multiple errors show misunderstanding or lack of care or worse.

Naming Convention and File Types: Name your file:

"yourstudentnumber.PHIL452S25.paper3.docx". Obviously, replace "yourstudentnumber" with your student number. Also, this means that only .docx files are acceptable. If you use another writing format, convert it to .docx before submitting your paper. Improperly named documents and files in other formats will be considered unsubmitted/late until a correct file is submitted.

First Page Mechanics:

No title page. Indeed, you don't even need a title; though, you can title your essay if you prefer. Please make sure your student number is at least on the first page on the top, left side. Also make sure that your name does not appear anywhere on the paper (e.g., in a header).

Various Mechanical and Stylistic Elements:

- Lines should be double-spaced.
- All pages should be numbered.
- Use whatever font you prefer, but it should be 12-point.
- Margins should be **no greater than one inch on all sides**.
- Do not use right-justification.
- We don't care what citation style you use, just be consistent. The easiest citation style is name/year/page for in-text citations: (Wollheim 1998, 220), for example; where the cited work appears on a Works Cited page at the end of the document. The syllabus contains full bibliographic details for all of the works, so you can cut and paste from there.
- Keep footnotes/end notes to a minimum (if it's worth writing, it's probably worth putting in the body of the paper—if it seems wholly tangential, then why bother?)
- Your style should be suitably academic. You are trying to explain and defend relatively technical and abstract notions. Hence, you should aim to *simplify* the technical bits to make them understandable, while at the same time you should aim to *apply* the abstract bits to make them relevant. Explicit definitions simplify concepts. Examples illustrate concepts. Make sure you do both. As for examples, feel free to steal (and then cite) cases from our readings. You do not have to find and use new ones; though you can if they are particularly illustrative.
- Aim for good arguments and clear explanations. Some folks seem to think that their essays must contain *novelty* to be good. That's not true. Aristotle argued that people could be taught edifying lessons by watching and discussing dramas, especially tragedies. He also explored many of the problems associated with it. What makes this an enduring philosophical problem is that we find *better*, as opposed to *newer*, ways to explain what's right and what's wrong with the idea that fictional films can aid in philosophical theorizing. Some of our readings are giving arguments that are centuries old, but they are giving them in ways that better explain the problems and prospects. If you can clarify what's at stake, that's virtuous novelty.
- There is no one length for a good sentence. Some can be short. They make their points quickly. Others require many more words with which to make their points, clarify their concept, and justify their conclusions for whatever content they contain. Still, if all of your sentences are short, your paper will read as choppy. And if all of your sentences are long, your paper will read as long-winded, and, perhaps, boring. Longer sentences also are more likely to become ungrammatical. To determine whether you have hit the sweet spot for sentence length, you should read your paper aloud. We also use the computer to read it for us.
- Likewise, there is no set length for a good paragraph. Some are very short—just a couple of sentences cover all that needs to be said. Others are long, perhaps covering a whole page. Still, one sentence (typically) does not a paragraph make. Alternatively, paragraphs covering multiple pages are surely in need of revision and re-parsing. An unbroken paragraph covering multiple pages unnecessarily taxes the reader.

Grades: Whole letter grades (i.e., no pluses or minuses).

We use the following rough rubric:

- An **A** paper is excellent. It contains few, if any grammatical mistakes, spelling errors, or stylistic infelicities. It has a clear and well-defined thesis. It supports its claims with argumentation, which includes considering replies and counter-positions. It explains technical terminology. It stays on topic. It is clear, concise, and complete.
- A **B** paper is very good. It may contain a few grammatical mistakes, spelling errors, or stylistic infelicities. It has a clear and well-defined thesis. It supports its claims with argumentation, which includes considering replies and counter-positions. It explains technical terminology. It mostly stays on topic. It is mostly clear, concise, and complete.
- A **C** paper is average. It probably contains some grammatical mistakes, spelling errors, and/or stylistic infelicities. Its thesis isn't as clear and well-defined as it should be. It supports its claims with argumentation, though the argumentation isn't quite as strong as it should be. It may not explain its technical terminology. It mostly stays on topic. It would be improved if it were more clear, concise, and complete.
- A **D** paper has failed in some aspect of the assignment. Perhaps it contains too many errors to be readable (grammatical, spelling, or stylistic). Or its thesis is too unclear or undefined to be defensible. Or it fails to support its claims with adequate argumentation. Or it fails to define its technical terminology adequately. Or it fails to stay on topic enough to generate a sustained essay. In general, it is not clear enough or concise enough or complete enough.
- An **F** paper has failed in multiple aspects of the assignment. It may be unreadable. Or it may lack a defensible thesis. Or it may lack argumentation. Or it may lack adequate explanations. Or it may not stay on topic. It needs multiple revisions and edits to make it acceptably clear, concise, and complete.

LATE WORK WILL BE SUBJECT TO A SEVERE GRADE DEDUCTION: This assignment is **due by 11:59pm on Thursday 5/15**. [Note that the official course exam date is Monday 5/12.] A submission at 12:00am on 5/16 is a **full letter-grade off**. After 12:00am on 5/17 it is **another full letter-grade off**. And so on for each additional day. No papers will be accepted after Sunday 5/18. Don't screw yourself over—get your paper in on time.

Plagiarism (or academic dishonesty of any kind—including any use of generative AI to write or rewrite any sections of your paper) will result in an F for the paper and for the class as a whole.

Here's a list of things we dislike in papers. These aren't listed in order of aversion.

- (a) Unnecessarily grandiose introductory sentences and paragraphs.
- (b) Poorly formed (or absent) thesis statements.
- (c) Unnecessary adverbs.
- (d) Using "actually" when not talking about modal logic and the actual world.
- (e) Using "seems" and/or "appears" when not talking about appearance vs. reality.
- (f) Run-on sentences; comma splices. [Look them up!]
- (g) Treating an essay like a mystery novel: introduce your conclusion early!
- (h) Changing the topic.
- (i) Wordiness.

- (j) Conceptual confusion.
- (k) Slapdash writing.
- (l) Unnecessary qualification.
- (m) Laziness.
- (n) Unnecessary slang. [If it makes sense and adds to the paper, use it; otherwise, no!]
- (o) Unnecessarily passive constructions. [There is a place for passive constructions!]

Here's a list of things we like in papers. These aren't listed in order of preference.

- (a) Clear and concise introductions.
- (b) Explicit conclusions that are introduced early in the paper.
- (c) Perspicuous argumentation—Identify your premises, conclusions, and inference rules.
- (d) Illustrative examples.
- (e) Simplifying explanations.
- (f) Helpful summaries. This can happen at the end of sections, paragraphs, or even particularly difficult passages, and not just at the end of the entire essay.
- (g) Reader-oriented writing. For example, make the transitions between concepts explicit.
- (h) Dialectical argumentation. This means that you must consider, and reply to, counter-positions, counter-arguments, and alternative interpretations. Failure to do this is dogmatism.
- (i) Cleverness.
- (j) Honest self-appraisal. Some conclusions should be qualified, some shouldn't.

Conclusive arguments—so-called *knockdown* or *destroying* arguments—are rare, and when they do occur, it isn't usually regarding any important concept. Instead, we make incremental progress. You will not be *solving*, e.g., the free-will problem or *demonstrating* the utter foolishness of any famous philosophers.