

Paper Guidelines

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1 On Content

Here are some of the marks of a successful philosophy paper:

Complete response to prompt. The short papers you write each week will always be in response to a prompt. Make sure that your paper answers all the questions asked in the prompt, and presents reasons or evidence supporting each answer.

Clarity. There's a lot that goes into this, but here are a few particularly important features. Your paper should have an obvious logical 'flow'. This means that your paper should argue for some particular point, which you should state early on. It should be obvious how each paragraph supports this point. Your sentences should also be easy to read and understand. Correct spelling and grammar are important.

On-point exposition. Your paper should accurately summarize the specific view in the reading that you want to address. This summary should include explanations of the important philosophical terms and concepts the author employs. You should present enough of the author's view to make your argument, but no more.

Original criticism or defense. After presenting the view you want to discuss, you should go on to criticize or defend that view. Your criticism or defense should be 'original' in the sense that it should originate from you, not from some other author: you should communicate and defend *your* reasons why you think the original view is right or wrong. (It does not need

to be 'original' in the sense that no one else has previously advanced the argument you are making.)

Further advice. Some more helpful advice can be found on Jim Pryor's guide to philosophical writing, here:

<http://www.jimpryor.net/teaching/guidelines/writing.html>

2 On Formatting and Submitting

2.1 Submit via Email

Please submit your papers as attachments via email to my email address: richard.lawrence@berkeley.edu. Please use the subject: Methods paper n , where n is the number of the paper you are submitting.

2.2 Length

The guideline for the course is that your weekly papers should be 2–3 pages, with the assumption that you'll use a standard font and margins, and double-space your lines. This translates into a paper that is roughly **500–600 words**.

2.3 Plain text format

I'm going to try an experiment in this course. I would like you to submit your papers to me as **plain text**, not in a document format like MS Word (.doc, .docx), OpenDocument Text (.odt), RTF, or HTML. You are welcome to use Word, OpenOffice, or another document editor to write your papers, but please export your paper from these programs as plain text, formatted according to the guidelines below.¹

There are several reasons for this. One, I don't want to require you to use any particular software to write your papers; you can edit plain text using a wide variety of programs on any platform. Two, I actually find the papers in the usual 12 point Times New Roman double-spaced format pretty difficult to read and work with. By submitting your papers in plain text, you're making it easier for me to compile them into a format that I

¹There is one exception to this rule: if you need special formatting in your paper, such as logical symbols, please prepare your paper however you would like and submit it to me as a **PDF**. I don't anticipate that this will be necessary, however.

prefer to work with, which means I'll have more time to dedicate to giving you helpful feedback.

Here is how you should format your papers.² An example follows on the next page:

- the first line of text should contain only your title
- the second line of text should contain only your name
- the third line of text should read "Paper n ", where n is the number of the paper you are submitting. (If you are re-submitting a paper, use the same number as the original, and add the word "resubmission.")
- all paragraphs should start at the beginning of a line (i.e., no leading tabs or spaces)
- you should separate paragraphs by leaving a blank line between them
- citations should use (Author, page number) style or something similar
- if you use Word to write your papers, please *avoid* using 'smart quote' characters

If you need to apply some simple formatting, use these conventions:

- surround words or phrases that should be italicized with slashes ('/')
- surround words or phrases that should be in bold with asterisks ('*')
- to make an unordered (bulleted) list, indent each item two spaces and use a hyphen ('-') as a bullet point
- to make an ordered (numbered) list, indent each item two spaces and use a number followed by a right parenthesis (e.g., '2')

²In case you're wondering: these guidelines are a subset of the formatting rules of Org mode for GNU Emacs (<http://orgmode.org>). I'm going to use Org mode to compile your papers using the \LaTeX typesetting system. If you want, you can use any formatting compatible with Org mode, but you're not required to learn it.

3 An example

Here is an example of how I would like your papers to be formatted. (It is not, of course, a good example of the *content* I expect your papers to have.)

Something about Boghossian
Richard Lawrence
Paper 1

Boghossian says we can motivate epistemic relativism by considering that fundamental epistemic principles cannot be justified except by appealing to themselves. I will argue that this claim overlooks one important method of justifying fundamental epistemic principles.

According to Boghossian, /fundamental/ epistemic principles, as opposed to derived principles, are ``those that can be justified, if at all, only by appeal to themselves'' (Boghossian, 68).

Here is an unordered list of things I want to talk about:

- item
- item

And here, I present an argument with numbered premises as an ordered list:

- 1) All men are mortal
- 2) Socrates is a man
- 3) Therefore, Socrates is mortal

[And so on and so forth, for 500 or 600 words...]