

# Writing Essays in Philosophy

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## Introduction

Learning to write essays isn't easy, but it is an essential skill for your University study, and gives you background skills which will be useful in most careers.

There are general requirements which apply in all academic disciplines: addressing the essay question, expressing yourself clearly, using correct English, structuring your presentation clearly, acknowledging ideas and words from other thinkers and writers. But particular disciplines or subjects may also have their own special ways of presenting and discussing ideas.

This booklet contains some advice about how to write essays in the Philosophy Department, from three different staff members in the department. While this advice has in mind particularly students who are just starting in Philosophy, much of it will also be of use to more advanced students. Advice can often make more sense after you have had the experience of writing an essay!

As well as advice on writing Philosophy, this booklet contains the Department's requirements for

- presentation and handing in of essays
- requests for extensions and penalties for late submission
- grading system

and some important University policies about assessment.

### Other guides:

You may find useful Chapter 4 of *College Thinking, How to get the best out of College*, by J.W. Meiland which is available in the Library Short Loan Collection (Information Commons), and the section on writing essays in Writing, Setting and Marking Essays by John Jones and Barbara Grant of the University's Centre for Professional Development, copies available from the Short Loan Collection and the Main Library.

The Student Learning Centre offers assistance with essay writing. See their website: <http://www2.auckland.ac.nz/slc/> (Accessible from the University website for current students, Academic Life, Learning support)

## Writing essays in Philosophy

Jan Crosthwaite

1. Philosophy essay questions are usually of one of the following two types:
  - (a) Specific questions asking you to present your answer to a given question. For example:

*Does the existence of evil in the world show that God does not exist?*

- (b) Topic or discussion questions which ask you to discuss either the position or work of some philosopher, or some philosophical problem or argument which is presented in the question. For example:

(i) *Discuss the hard determinist thesis that no one is morally responsible for what they do because all human actions are caused.*

(ii) *Critically evaluate Descartes' argument 'Cogito ergo sum'.*

**NOTE:** When a question says 'critically discuss' or something like this, 'critically' does not mean that you must find fault. It means that you should consider any objections to, or support for, the position or argument and try to evaluate it rationally in the light of these.

2. You must read the question carefully and answer it. Don't just say, for example, 'Oh, this is a Descartes question' and start writing what you know about Descartes. Think about what the question asks you to do and then do it. (This applies to examination questions as well as to coursework essays, of course.) If the essay is a question of the first type above, then you should give and defend your answer to the question posed. Defending your answer means presenting reasons to convince a rational reader that yours is the right answer to the question (and this includes foreseeing and dealing with any likely objections such a person might raise). If the essay question is of the second type then you need to explain clearly the ideas or arguments you are going to discuss and present and weigh up points in favour and points against.
3. What is required in any philosophical essay is that you present either a reasoned argument for a particular point of view, or a reasoned discussion of the merits or inadequacies of a particular position or argument, or a reasoned discussion of views which might be taken in a particular problem area. It is not enough in Philosophy merely to correctly summarize the main points from some text or lecture material. You must say what you think about the question or topic, having considered the various positions and arguments presented in the literature and the lectures. This means that your essay should contain argument(s), that is, statements or claims which you think are true and the reasons why you think these statements should be accepted. (Sentences starting with 'I think...' or 'It is my view that...' are perfectly appropriate and desirable in a philosophy essay.) There should also be some attempt to answer any objections you can think of to what you are saying.)
4. Marks in Philosophy are based on the understanding which you display of the problems and positions in the subject area, and the quality of the arguments you offer in support of what you say is more important than just the correctness of your conclusions. You will not lose marks for disagreeing with the lecturer or tutor (but you may lose marks for failing to take into consideration the arguments he or she has offered in support of his/her views). You must learn to approach everything you read

or hear (even in lectures) critically, in the sense of looking carefully at whether it is sufficiently well supported by reasons for you to accept it as true. Just because something is in print, or your lecturer says it, doesn't mean it is true or well-argued. Of course, this doesn't mean that you should reject anything, any more than you should accept it, without some good reason for doing so.

5. Be sure that anything you put down in an essay is relevant to answering the question set. Everything you say should have a clear role either in explaining a position, problem or argument, in explaining an objection or response to a position or argument, in giving reasons in support of some claim, or in giving reasons which support an objection to some claim. Avoid spending time on historical details, literary commentary, psychological or sociological hypotheses, and other such digressions, unless you are sure that you need to mention something in these areas in order to clarify or support some philosophical point or argument.
6. Make sure that you don't contradict yourself, and that what you say in the essay is internally consistent. (Two things which could not both be true together are inconsistent. Saying 'Hume's argument against belief in miracles is sound' and a little later 'Sometimes it is right to believe in miracles' is contradicting yourself.)
7. Don't introduce a sentence with words like 'thus' or 'therefore' unless what you are going on to say does follow logically (is supported by, or is a consequence of) what you have said just before it. Don't use 'because' unless you really mean that one thing has been caused by, or is the result of, another. (In general, you need to be very precise and careful about the words you are using, because understanding the connections between claims is part of what Philosophy is about.)
8. Make sure that you know the meanings of any expressions you use (whether they are technical philosophical terms or ordinary language). Your language should be as clear and as precise as possible, so that what you mean to say can be grasped easily by your reader. An elegant prose style is much less important in philosophy essays than is clear and unambiguous writing. It is often acceptable (and indeed often helpful) to set out the points you wish to make in order and number them. (But you should use full sentences, not bullet points, to make your meaning clear.) Correct grammar (and spelling - particularly of philosopher's names and philosophical terms) is an important aid to clarity, and you should check your essay carefully for this before submitting it. Readable writing, or a clear typescript, is obviously a necessary condition for getting your message across!
9. The point of writing an essay is to show the marker that you understand the issues and problems involved in the question asked, and that you know how to discuss or argue rationally about these. You should not assume that your marker/reader knows things which are important to your argument without your telling him/her. Whether or not s/he does know these things, the point is to show that you know them. But don't spend a lot of time labouring the obvious either. Quite often a brief comment (or even a footnote) is all that is necessary. Your time should be spent on the most important and controversial points in your argument. You should try to put yourself in the position of an intelligent and critical reader who is sceptical of your position when working out which parts of your argument (or of your exposition of problems, points and positions) are most in need of careful defence. You should try to make your

argument as strong as possible by presenting and answering any objections you think such a reasonable but critical reader might raise. (If you have a friend who will read your work in such a light, make good use of them! It isn't easy for anyone to see the gaps in their own arguments.)

#### 10 Introductions and Conclusions

It is best to keep introductions brief, and sometimes it is best to write them after you have written the body of your essay and know what you are going to do. It is a waste of words simply to repeat the question in your introduction (you can give the question at the top of your first page without it counting in your word limit), but you might want to explain why you think it is important and how you propose to answer it. Long and rambling introductions will give your reader a bad impression.

Conclusions should also be brief, usually just a paragraph is enough, and should be a clear restatement of the main point you have been making. Nothing should appear for the first time in your concluding paragraph! Anything you say should already have been set out and justified in the body of your essay. Sometimes it can help to write your conclusion first, and then structure your essay so that you have argued for it. (But it is wise to allow for the possibility that you may change your views in the process of your discussion!)

#### 11. Quotation and reference

You will quite often want to include in your essay what other writers have said - perhaps to make or support some point, or to support your account of what someone's view actually is. Other people's words should be placed in quotation marks - and should be an accurate quotation. If you want to quote more than a short phrase, start the quotation on a new line and indent all the lines from the margin so that they are separate from your own writing. (You do not need to put quotation marks around indented quotes.) You must give a reference after all quotations, either in the text itself or as a footnote at the bottom of the page. The reference should give the name of the person being quoted, the work quoted from, and the page number(s) - enough information to enable your reader to find the passage for him/herself. If you put someone else's ideas into your own words (paraphrase) you should still give a reference of this sort, even though quotation marks are not necessary. (See section 5 of this booklet for more detail, and some examples, of how to give references.)

Don't use too many quotations. It is better to put things into your own words to show that you understand what has been said or written rather than to quote directly the other person's words. (Part of the point of writing essays is to show your own understanding.) If you do use a quotation, be sure that it really does make the point you want it to.

**Plagiarism: Using other people's words or ideas without proper acknowledgement and providing references is cheating. It is called plagiarism, and is completely unacceptable.** Plagiarism is presenting material from someone else as if it were your own. This includes summaries or close paraphrase of what someone else has said, as well as pasting in unchanged passages. It does not matter where the material you include comes from, whether it is from the world wide web, a class text, other books, encyclopedias, journal articles, lecture notes, or the essays of other students. It doesn't matter if it is published or unpublished. Anything which you take from someone else and include in work you hand in must be acknowledged, or you will be assumed to be cheating. (See Sections 4 and 5 of this booklet for

information about plagiarism and penalties, and about how to set out references, footnotes and bibliographies.)

You should take care when reading and making notes for your essay that you make clear for yourself what is quotation and what is summary, and make sure that you take note of all the reference details you may need for later use. (The Philosophy Department expects you to give page references for quoted material, not just the text.)

If you find that a large part of your work is quotation or summary of other people's words, you should rewrite it so that it expresses your own understanding of things in your own words. Even if you have acknowledged the material you are using from others, you cannot expect to get marks for work which doesn't show the marker that you understand and have thought about what is being discussed. Other people's words, no matter how clever or apt, don't show your understanding.

12. Your essay should always finish with a properly set out list of the things you have read in preparing the essay. This is called a Bibliography, and how to present it is explained in Section 5 of this booklet. If you include only works from which you have cited material, it is a list of references. But your marker will want to know what you read, not just what you have chosen to make reference to. NOTE: While you are being asked to give your views in philosophy essays, these are expected to be informed by thoughtful and critical reading of relevant work of others!
13. Do read the marker's comments, and make an appointment to discuss these and the essay if you have any problems or questions.

## Some practical suggestions for writing essays in philosophy

*Vanya Kovach, 1996*

There are many ways in which a philosophy essay can be good, and different people can write successful essays in very different ways. Here, however, are some practical suggestions that might help a student making their first attempt at writing philosophy.

### Preparation and Process

Allow yourself sufficient time to go through these steps:

- 1) Understanding the question. Review lecture notes in order to see the essay question in the context of the theory, topic or philosopher that has been presented to you. Try to see why the question is interesting and important, what fundamental concepts or assumptions lie behind it, how it might relate to other aspects of the theory, topic or philosopher you are studying. See if you can break the question into parts; this helps you structure your thinking about it, and may also provide a structure for your essay.
- 2) Read, review and take notes. Read any set or suggested texts, with the question in mind. You may have to read some things more than once. You might find it helpful to read a whole chapter or article first, to get the gist of it, then go back and make notes about the main argumentative moves that are made.
- 3) Think about the topic yourself. In a philosophy essay you are invited to give your own ideas: your assessment of the arguments of others, your own view on the topic in question. Give yourself time to digest the ideas you are dealing with. Talk about them with others; most families and flatmates find philosophical ideas interesting, and the process of explaining ideas to others helps you understand them, sometimes revealing to you what you haven't got clear in your own mind.
- 4) Put something on paper. You could start by mapping out the central ideas you are dealing with, connecting them with each other, and with other ideas and arguments. Try doing this in diagram form. Use this as a kind of brainstorming stage. Look for interesting connections, tensions, inconsistencies, assumptions, and implications both theoretical and practical.
- 5) Make decisions about focus and importance. Don't try to cover too much ground. It is better to consider in detail fewer ideas or arguments than to treat several in a more superficial way. Decide which ideas and arguments are going to be the most important in your essay, and structure your essay around explaining and assessing these. Make sure you have reasons for your ideas and for your criticisms of others. Make a linear outline of the moves your essay will make. Don't set this in stone, but keep revising and improving it. If you are the kind of student who prefers to write essays straight onto the page from start to finish, without pre-structuring, you could try going back and taking notes from your own essay, in order to get clear about the order and content of your arguments.
- 6) Write a draft, wait, and then revise. Don't be too critical about style in the first draft, try to get the structure right. Leave yourself sufficient time to return to your first draft after a few days and look at it with fresher eyes. Ask yourself questions like these: Have you presented the main ideas clearly? Are your arguments convincing? Do the ideas follow logically from each other? Are there other ideas you could incorporate? Is everything you say relevant to the question? What could someone else argue in reply to you? Could you defend your position against them? Make the revisions suggested by the answers to these questions.

7. Write the final draft. Check grammar and spelling, bibliographical information and check that footnotes are used where appropriate. Number the pages of your essay.

8. Make sure you write your name, your tutorial time and your tutor's name on the essay. Make a photocopy of your essay, as a precaution against the unlikely event of it going astray. Attach and fill in the Philosophy Department's cover sheet for essays before handing it in.

## **Content**

1) Your essay should always contain a clear exposition of the theory, idea or argument that you are evaluating. Be concise, but be especially sure to explain those aspects of the theory or argument that you will be addressing in most detail in your essay.

2) As I said above, don't try to do too much at the expense of detailed discussion. Do answer all parts of the question, but where there are several points or arguments that could be relevantly discussed, consider choosing to address fewer and discuss them in depth.

3) It is vitally important that you give reasons for why you hold a particular view or disagree with the view of another. Try to back up every claim that you make – if you find you can't, you need to think about why. Also, try to imagine what somebody who disagreed with you might say, and how you might defend yourself.

4) Use examples to support your arguments, preferably your own. A well chosen example reveals your understanding, and may sometimes be the seed of an interesting new extension or challenge to an argument.

5) Originality is a good thing in a philosophy essay, though you can get very good grades without breaking any new ground. "Originality" in Stage One doesn't mean propounding new philosophical theories (in 1000 words?), but perhaps offering a new slant on an old problem, putting forward your own objections to a particular argument, approaching material from a fresh perspective, or coming up with an especially illuminating example. Use your own thoughts and responses to the material you have studied; we want to know what you think about it.

## **Structure**

1) Structure is an important ingredient in the overall clarity of an essay. As suggested above, spend time on organising the sequence of your arguments before you write your first draft.

2) One very typical structure for a philosophy essay is this: outline a position; consider an objection; offer a reply to the objection; possibly offer a reply to the reply; move to the next objection .... This is not the only way to proceed, but it is likely that at least some of your essay could be presented effectively in this form.

3) Spend minimal time on introductions and conclusions; the important part of your essay is the exposition and assessment of positions and arguments. A useful introduction might explain why the question set is important, set it briefly in the context of a wider theory or topic, or explain and defend the focus you have chosen for your arguments.

4) If you are dealing with a number of problems or objections do not list all them, and then assess them; instead, evaluate each one as you present it.



## Style

- 1) Clarity and conciseness are valued highly in philosophy essays. Do not be so concise that you fail to defend your arguments, but avoid repetition and rambling sentences.
- 2) Some people write with natural clarity. If you don't, an easy way to achieve more clarity is to write in short sentences. (It is impossible to waffle in short sentences). Another good idea is to make only one point per paragraph. This helps you to be precise about what it is you are trying to say, and to be more aware of how the points you make follow one another.
- 3) Try to write simply and directly. Some departments do not encourage the use of the personal pronoun. In philosophy it is perfectly acceptable to say "I think ..." or "My objection is ..."
- 4) Use "signposts" to let the reader know what you are trying to do. You can say things like "One objection is ...", "A possible reply to this is ...", "What this example shows is ...", "This point is important because ...", "What X is assuming here is ... and this is an unwarranted assumption because ...". Be explicit about what you are arguing, and why.

## Finally

Writing essays in philosophy is an excellent way to acquire analytic skills that are useful in many contexts; you learn to respond critically to ideas, to test and modify them and to write about them in a clear, detailed and accessible form.

In writing an essay you nearly always extend and refine your understanding of the topic concerned. During the process of essay writing, you will find yourself thinking more carefully and deeply, and sometimes surprise yourself making connections and having ideas you didn't expect to have. Essay writing is both an analytic and a creative process.

One of the pleasures of studying philosophy is the chance to engage with fascinating and often important ideas to a depth that is unusual in everyday life. If you put in the effort, you will find that thinking about and writing philosophy is rewarding and also a lot of fun.

## Common pitfalls in philosophy essays

*Robert Wicks*

### **Lack of Critical Discussion.**

One can provide a purely expository account of a certain position or argument, without offering any critical discussion. In this case, one ends up with an excellent exposition of a philosophical position, while having ignored the evaluative question of why anyone should or should not accept the view. Since the aim of the essay, ultimately, is to determine whether or not the view under consideration is seriously believable on rational grounds, a significant portion of the essay should include evaluative, critical discussion.

### **Dogmatism.**

One can disagree strongly with some position or argument, but simply assert an opposing view without offering any substantial supporting reasons. This often arises when one believes that the opposing view is obvious or self-evident, and that there is consequently no need to defend one's own outlook. (i.e., It once might have been common to assert: "It is obvious that the earth is flat, that the earth stands still, and that the sun and stars revolve around the earth. Stand here for awhile on this solid ground and watch them move above us!") Given situations like this, where what appears to be obvious and true turns out to be false – since the fact is, planet earth is like a merry-go-round, and we are the ones who are moving/spinning/rotating – it is essential to explain as clearly as possible, exactly *why* one disagrees with some position or argument, as implausible and incredible as the view might at first appear. Since many philosophical views run contrary to common sense, and since many commonsensical views are inconsistent, one needs to attend carefully to the reasons which support any particular viewpoint.

It is a good idea to check periodically within one's writing, whether emotional and rhetorical expressions ever tend to prevail over reasonable and logical expressions. When this happens, one needs to reflect. Often enough, these are the times when one is not offering a consistent line of reasoning, since the presence of strong emotions can lead one to jump to conclusions or lose track of one's logic.

### **Disorganization or Lack of Focus.**

This arises when the various segments of one's essay do not eventually yield a clear conclusion or position. Often the essay moves from one point to another, without integrating the individual points or observations towards a logical end. Sometimes this happens because one is not sure which side of the issue is the more reasonable one. To remain organized and focused in one's essay, however, it is not always necessary to defend one view as opposed to another, as if one were engaged as a lawyer in a courtroom battle.

One can also be quite clear by setting out the opposing views, the specific reasons in support of each view, and conclude that although neither view is fully convincing, both views are plausible for different reasons. Most philosophical questions are complicated and multidimensional, and it is reasonable to set forth the complexities of the situation without arriving at a completely definitive, final answer. A rationally-balanced and insightful perspective need not yield a definitive philosophical solution. Recall that many philosophical issues have been under discussion for thousands of years.

**Excessive use of Jargon.**

Some philosophers create their own vocabulary, or use familiar words in an unfamiliar or strange way. This is often because they are struggling to express an alternative view of the world that conflicts with our ordinary ways of understanding things. Although such non-standard language may sometimes be unavoidable within a philosophical discussion, it is usually possible to express the views under consideration without an excessive reliance upon the technical vocabulary. Whenever possible, it is advisable to formulate the arguments and views at hand in language which is straightforward, unambiguous, precise and familiar. Strive for extreme clarity of expression, avoiding jargon.

**SO:**

- (1) Be sure to include a critical discussion of the topic
- (2) Try not to be dogmatic; give each side a sympathetic hearing
- (3) Keep things well-organized; know where the essay is going
- (4) Avoid needless jargon; speak simply and straightforwardly

## Plagiarism and Cheating

All students need to consult the University's document "Guidelines: Conduct of Coursework", which can be found at:  
[http://www.auckland.ac.nz/uo/about/teaching/plagiarism/plagiarism\\_home.cfm](http://www.auckland.ac.nz/uo/about/teaching/plagiarism/plagiarism_home.cfm)

or through the webpage for Current Students <Academic Life>, <plagiarism>  
 Other advice on this site may also be helpful.

**Plagiarism** is taking and using as your own the work or thoughts of another person. The University and the Philosophy Department regard plagiarism as completely unacceptable. Wherever you make use of work or ideas of other people, published or unpublished, these must be properly cited and acknowledged. This includes material obtained from the World Wide Web. Acknowledgement is usually done by providing a reference (either in a footnote or in brackets in the text) to where the material can be found. Failure to fully acknowledge the work of others in your essays will result in a mark of zero for the offending essay, and may also result in a mark of zero for the entire coursework component of the relevant course. Students who plagiarise will not receive the benefit of plussage in courses which offer that option: the calculation of their final mark will include the mark of zero given for the coursework component.

If you prepare for essays by copying out sentences or passages from texts and references, you must make sure to keep a clear record for yourself of where the material comes from, and of what is quotation and what is your own summary or comment. Anything that is quoted should be indented or appear within quotation marks.

Simply pasting together passages, or close summaries of passages, from things you have been reading (whether these are texts, suggested reading, or lecture handouts) can amount to plagiarism. Even if you give references in footnotes and in your Bibliography, and are not intending to deceive the marker into thinking that you have thought and said these things yourself, you will be penalised for this sort of essay preparation. A marker cannot give you a grade for your ability in the course unless you can put things into your own words, to show your own understanding of what is being said.

### Submitting the same work twice

It is a University regulation that 'Work submitted for credit towards the result in any course may not be resubmitted in respect of any other course.' (*Calendar*, Enrolment and course Regulations (General).) That is, you cannot submit the same work twice for marks for two different courses.

## Footnotes, Bibliographies and Reference styles

### Footnotes

These are notes which you place at the bottom of the page, separated from the main text of your essay. They can be collected at the end of the essay instead, in which case they are called 'Endnotes'. They are used either to give the reference for material which you quote or refer to in the text, or to make a point or explain something which would break up the flow of the main text too much. They are connected into the main text by a number in the text that corresponds to the number of the footnote. (Footnotes, and endnotes, should be numbered consecutively throughout the essay, rather than starting the numbers afresh on each page. It is preferable to use Arabic numerals '1, 2, 3 ...', as roman numerals and other symbols become difficult to read and keep track of after the first few.)

An example of the different uses of footnotes (from p.362 of Jan Crosthwaite, 'Moral Expertise: A problem in the professional ethics of professional ethicists', *Bioethics*, v.9.5, 1995, pp.361-379)

Philosophers have been called to serve on public commissions of inquiry into areas which are seen as both morally problematic and requiring public policy decisions. For example, Dame Mary Warnock chaired the 'Committee of Inquiry into Human Fertilisation and Embryology' in the UK (1982-4).<sup>1</sup> In NZ, the Bioethics Research Centre at the University of Otago recently produced a report for the medical council on ethical issues in reproductive technology and genetics.<sup>2</sup>—

I think the involvement of philosophers, particularly ethicists or moral philosophers, in such decision-making also raises an issue of professional ethics for philosophers.<sup>3</sup> The question I'm interested in is what role a moral philosopher's own moral perspective or judgements should play in the advice she gives, or the contribution she makes to the decision-making, on an ethical problem of public concern—.

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1. 'The Warnock Report on Human Fertilisation and Embryology', reprinted in Mary Warnock, *A question of Life* (Oxford and New York: Basil Blackwell, 1985).

2. 'Biotechnology revisited: Ethical and Legal Issues', a report prepared by the Bioethics Research Centre, University of Otago, for the Medical Council of new Zealand.

3. I realise that describing philosophy (or any academic discipline) as a profession is tendentious, but I don't think the interesting debates over how to define a profession really affect the issue I am addressing. Even if philosophy is not precisely a profession the moral issue I am raising is strongly analogous to what are recognisably questions of professional ethics.

### Bibliographies

An explanation of bibliographies and referencing can be found in the Library's training and help services, at <http://www.library.auckland.ac.nz/instruct/ref/ref.htm>

A Bibliography is an alphabetical list of works consulted. These may be books or articles, web sites, creative works, published or unpublished. The should be listed alphabetically by first letter of the author's last name.

You must provide a bibliography at the end of any essay you submit. It should include all works you have consulted in preparing the essay, but particularly it must contain full reference information for any works that you have cited, or quoted from, in your essay. Addresses for web sites must be included as well as books and articles. The items should be listed alphabetically by the author's surname.

### Reference Styles

There are several different conventions or styles for footnotes and bibliographies.

The Philosophy Department's recommended style for references (for citing authors and texts) is **Chicago**. A clear explanation of the requirements for this style can be found in the Library's training and help services, at <http://www.library.auckland.ac.nz/instruct/ref/chicago.htm>

You will not be penalised for using a different style from the recommended one (possible alternatives are *Harvard*, *University of Auckland*), provided that you do use a consistent referencing style. Learning to do this is part of the academic writing skills that you need to acquire.

What is most important is that you provide clearly the information your reader/marker needs to identify the work and what parts you have read, and to find the material you cite from it.

A reference list must include:

- (i) name of the author(s). Last name and first name or initials.
- (ii) title of the work. Titles of books and journals are usually put in italics or underlined (for example, if handwritten), and titles of articles, essays, or chapters are put in quotation marks.

In addition you will need to give:

- (iii) for books – the place of publication, publisher, year of publication, and edition if there is more than one. (If you did not read the whole book, you should also give the chapter(s) or page(s) consulted.)
- (iv) for journal articles – the title of the journal, volume number, year.
- (v) for essays/articles/chapters in edited collections – after the author and title of the essay, you should give the full name of the editor and title of the book, and the other information mentioned in (iii).

Web pages: you should give the full and correct address of any web page you consult or take material from. The library provides information about electronic referencing at <http://www.library.auckland.ac.nz/instruct/ref/ref.htm#Citing%20Electronic%20Resources>

### **Example**

Berlin, Isaiah. 'Determinism and Moral responsibility', in May Brodbeck (ed) *Readings in the Philosophy of the Social Sciences*. New York, London, Collier-Macmillan, 1968.

Crosthwaite, Jan. 'Moral Expertise: A problem in the professional ethics of professional ethicists', *Bioethics*, v.9.5, 1995.

Dare, T. Lecture Notes on Rights, PHIL 103, 2001.

Mill, J.S. 'On Liberty', in *Three Essays*. Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1975.

Perry, John. *A Dialogue on Personal Identity and Immortality*, Indianapolis, Hackett, c1978.

Waller, Bruce N. *Critical Thinking: Consider the Verdict*, 3rd ed., Upper Saddle River, NJ, Prentice Hall, 1998.

Wicks, Robert. 'Nietzsche'. *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*.  
<http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/nietzsche/#2>

**NOTE: When you cite references in footnotes, you must give the page number(s) for your cited material.**

## Handing In Essays

### Department requirements

1. The Philosophy Department does not accept essay submissions by email or by fax. Essays may be sent by mail, to arrive by the due date. The address for mail is:

Arts 1 Reception  
14a Symonds St  
University of Auckland  
Auckland 1010

2. Essays posted will be accepted as on time provided that they have a post office date stamp no later than the due date; otherwise they will be treated as late.

3. Some courses may require submission of essays to Turnitin.com. If this is required in a course, you will be told all about what you have to do in the coursebook or in a document on CECIL.

Turnitin.com is an electronic plagiarism detection service that is used by dozens of universities world-wide. When a student's assignment is turned in to the system it is matched against millions of Internet pages, databases and a constantly increasing database of all previously and concurrently submitted assignments. Teaching staff receive a report from Turnitin that can be used as a resource to assist staff in making a judgement as to whether a student's work is plagiarised.

4. Essays should be typed or printed from a computer word-processor or written legibly on one side of the paper only, leaving at least a 5 cm left margin for comments. Number each page at the top in the centre and print your name legibly at the top right hand corner of each page.

5. A bibliography is to be given at the end of the essay listing all works consulted in preparation of the essay. Full reference to web sites must be given for any material obtained from the web.

### **Assignment Cover Sheet and Submission Process**

From semester 1, 2013 there will be a change to how undergraduate students access assignment cover sheets and submit their assignments.

- Under the new process, students will use the generic university assignment tracking (cover) sheet, located in CECIL, and submit their assignments to the Arts 1 reception centre on Level 3. The deadline for assignments is set at 4pm. Essays received the next day will be penalised (see below). This deadline applies to all courses unless otherwise specified by the lecturer.
- Essays will be returned at your tutorials or in lectures, or can be collected from Philosophy Reception.

### **Assignment Tracking (cover) Sheets**

Located in CECIL, the assignment tracking sheet is an online form that is prepopulated with the student's name, UPI and ID number along with the course name, assignment name and submission date. The student subsequently adds the department name, the tutor's name, tutorial day, group and time. Included into the sheet is a barcode (QR code) that contains all this information. Students are

reminded that if they do not enter the correct tutor's name on the coversheet, their assignment is not guaranteed to be marked (as it may cause great delay in getting the assignment to the correct tutor).

6. With the coversheet on top, and the text uppermost, staple all pages together at the top left hand corner.

7. Students should make a photocopy of each essay before handing it in, and retain all returned and marked essays. (This is for your own protection in case your essay should be lost and in case your grade is mis-recorded.)

### Extensions for Essays

- Students will receive extensions of time to complete essays and assignments beyond the due date without penalty **ONLY ON SERIOUS COMPASSIONATE GROUNDS OR ON GROUNDS OF ILLNESS.**
- If you hand an essay in late because of illness, please attach a medical certificate. (You do not need to obtain a formal extension if you have a medical certificate explicitly covering the time between the due date and when you submit the essay).
- For extensions on other grounds, please see the Course Supervisor (in Philosophy I courses) or the lecturer who set the essay (in Philosophy II and III courses).  
**NOTE: Tutors cannot give extensions for essays.**
- You can consult the Student Health and Counselling services to obtain a medical certificate, or a certificate for compassionate consideration for coursework.

### Penalties for Late Essays

Where an essay is handed in late without a suitable medical certificate or an extension granted by the lecturer or Course Supervisor, penalties will be applied.

In most courses, the following general policy will apply:

1. Essays handed in **less than one week later than the due date** are penalized by one-third of a full letter grade, e.g., from B+ to B, or from B- to C+, etc.
2. Essays **more than one week and less than two weeks late** are penalised by two-thirds of a full letter grade, e.g., from B+ to B-, or from B- to C, etc.
3. **No essays will be accepted more than two weeks late**, unless an extension has been granted.

In courses where a different policy applies, this will be announced by the Course Supervisor, and set out in detail in a handout to all students in the class.

### Grading system

The grading system used in the Philosophy Department is:

Letter Grade	Description	Numerical grades
<b>Pass grades</b>		
A+	high first	90-100
A	clear first	85-89
A-	bare first	80-84
B+	high second	75-79
B	clear second	70-74
B-	bare second	65-69
C+	sound pass	60-64
C	pass	55-59
C-	marginal pass	50-54

### Fail grades



D+	marginal fail	45-49
D	clear fail	40-44
D-	poor fail	0-39
DNS	Did not sit examination	
DNC	Did not complete coursework	

Note: The University accepts and keeps records only of letter grades for final results.

### **Plussage**

“Plussage” in the Philosophy Department refers to assessment procedures which permit a student's examination to count for 100% of the final grade when the examination mark is better than the coursework marks which would normally form a percentage of the final result. It is not available for courses with 100% coursework assessment, and it is only available for some courses at Stage II and III. Where it is available this is made clear in the assessment information for the course. In order to qualify for plussage, students must meet a minimum coursework requirement. This is normally the submission of at least one essay of a satisfactory standard. Students who do not submit an essay, or submit only a token effort, will be penalised by having 10 marks deducted from their final 100% examination result.

Note also that the Department will not recommend an aegrotat or compassionate pass or higher grade for students who are ill or suffer other problems which affect their examination performance, unless the student has handed in all coursework for the course.

### **Grievance Procedure**

If you have any problems, or complaints concerning your work in a particular course, you should take them in the first instance to the relevant lecturer or tutor. If the matter is not satisfactorily resolved in this way, then you should refer it to the Course Supervisor of the course concerned. If your problem is still not resolved then you should refer it to the Head of Department.

Any general problem concerning the running of the Department and Department policy should be referred in the first instance to the Head of Department. Where problems arise concerning a particular course it is often useful to consult the student class representative on the Staff Student Consultative Committee.

The University's Student Charter and Academic Grievance Procedures can be found on the Wave website at <http://www.ausa.auckland.ac.nz/wave/tipsheet.html#charter>

The University has a network of contact people who will help both students and staff who experience harassment in the context of academic life and work. Information about Resolve, the Harassment Support Network is displayed on Department Noticeboards.

### **Note:**

All students need to consult the University's document “Guidelines: Conduct of Coursework”, which can be found at: [http://www.auckland.ac.nz/uoaa/about/teaching/plagiarism/plagiarism\\_home.cfm](http://www.auckland.ac.nz/uoaa/about/teaching/plagiarism/plagiarism_home.cfm) or through the university's website for current students, academic life, plagiarism. Other advice on this site may also be helpful.