

PHL 250 Term Paper - 1st Draft

The goal of the first draft of your term paper is to produce as strong a paper as possible. "First draft" does not mean outline or sketch (that was the point of the term paper outline).

Write a paper in which you argue for a particular answer (your thesis) to the question that is your term paper topic.

The paper will consist of three parts:

- (1) A single, strong positive argument. This is the primary support you provide for your answer (thesis). The goal is to provide strong enough support for your answer that, if there were no objections, it would be good enough reason to accept your answer.
- (2) A single, strong objection to your argument. The objection can either (a) attack one of the claims that you make in support of your answer or (b) support the claim that even if your claims are true, your answer would not follow from them.
- (3) A single, strong response to the objection from (2). The response should either (a) explain why, despite appearances, the objection from (2) does not work or (b) modify or clarify the original argument from (1) in such a way that (2) no longer applies to it.

Aim for 800 - 1000 words. This is not a requirement; it is a guideline.

Tips:

- Avoid making multiple arguments for the same claim. At this level, you are much better off making a single argument as strong and clear as you can.
- Rephrase, rephrase, rephrase. It is sometimes hard to say exactly what you're thinking. Experiment with different ways of stating your claims until you find one that makes it perfectly clear.
- Avoid unnecessary claims. Claims that are neither supporting a conclusion nor clarifying another claim that is supporting your conclusion are doing no work in your paper. They are a distraction. Cut them.
- Make your claims earn their keep. Every last word you put on the page should be doing work. When you're editing, ask yourself: what is this word/claim/paragraph supposed to be doing? Is there a better way to do the same thing?
- Avoid words that you cannot precisely define.
- Explain anything that an intelligent person who hasn't taken a philosophy class wouldn't understand. Imagine that your audience is another college student at UNA. Explain things so that they would be able to understand (a good way to do this is to have another student read your draft and make notes where they are confused).
- Look back at your thesis often. Make sure that you haven't strayed from defending it to defending a different, similar claim. Focus, focus, focus.

	0	1	2	3	4
Thesis (x .2)	No identifiable thesis or thesis shows lack of effort or comprehension of assignment.	Difficult to identify, inconsistently maintained, or provides little around which to structure paper	Unclear, buried, poorly articulated.	Promising, but may be unclear.	Easily identifiable, interesting, plausible, sophisticated, insightful, clear.
Logic & Argumentation (x.5)	No effort made to construct a logical argument. Failure to support thesis.	Little attempt to offer support for key claims or to relate evidence to thesis. Reasons offered may be irrelevant. No objection considered.	Arguments of poor quality. Weak, undeveloped reasons offered in support of key claims. Objections mentioned without response.	Argument is clear and usually flows logically and makes sense. Objection present, though perhaps not addressed fully in response.	Arguments are identifiable, reasonable, and sound. Clear reasons are offered in support of key claims. Objection and response present and strong.
Structure & Style (x .2)	No evident structure or organization. No transitions between major points.	Unclear, unfocused, disorganized, lacking in unity, transitions abrupt or confusing, context unclear.	Generally unclear, unfocused, often wanders or jumps around. Few or weak transitions. Does not provide sufficient information, explanation, and context for readers.	Generally clear and appropriate, though may wander occasionally. May have some unclear transitions or lack of coherence. Does not fully appreciate reader's need for information, explanation, and context.	Evident, understandable, appropriate for thesis. Essay is focused and unified. Words chosen effectively. Excellent transitions between points. Anticipates reader's need for information, explanation, and context
Mechanics (x.1)	Difficult to understand because of significant problems with sentence structure, grammar, punctuation, and spelling.	Several problems with sentence structure, grammar, punctuation, and spelling.	Some problems with sentence structure, grammar, punctuation, and spelling.	Sentence structure, grammar, punctuation, and spelling strong despite occasional lapses.	Correct sentence structure, grammar, punctuation, and spelling.
/4	%				