

Philosophy 203: History of Modern Western Philosophy
Spring 2010
Tuesdays, Thursdays: 9am - 10:15am

Hamilton College
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Second Paper Assignment

1. Your second paper is due on April 27, at 9am. It should be double spaced, approximately five to eight pages (1250 to 2400 words) in a reasonable font, such as 11 point Times, with reasonable (e.g. one-inch) margins.
2. The topic of your second paper may be any topic in the material we have covered from Spinoza, Leibniz, Locke, Berkeley, or Hume. I expect that you will compare and contrast the work of at least two philosophers; one of them may be Descartes. See the reverse for more specific topics.
3. Avoid history and biography. Focus on the arguments.
4. Observe basic rules of grammar and spelling. Avoid jargon. Write simply, and clearly. Proofread your paper. Ask a good writer to read and comment on your paper.
5. A few important, idiosyncratic formatting guidelines: Do not right-justify your paper. Print on only one side of each page. Paginate your papers.
6. Any citation method which allows me easily to trace your sources is acceptable. References to pages in the Ariew and Watkins collection may be indicated, in line: "Few men think, yet all will have opinions" (Berkeley, AW 478). Other sources require a list of references at the end of the paper, along with in-line citations. Internet sources must include a live URL. I must be able to trace the source.
7. Violations of academic integrity, like plagiarism, can and will lead to failing grades. Remember to acknowledge any assistance you have had on your paper, including assistance from the Writing Center. **The Hamilton College Honor Code will be enforced.**

See the First Paper Assignment for some general guidelines for writing a philosophy paper. Links to excellent advice for writing philosophy papers are also available on the course website.

Paper Topics

Here are some themes we have studied across philosophers:

1. What are the fundamental substances of the world? How many substances, or kinds of substances, are there?
2. Does God exist? If so, how do we know?
3. Is there a material world? If so, what is it like?
4. What is the nature of mind? What is the relationship between minds and bodies?
5. What is the self?
6. Is our will free?
7. Are there innate ideas? If so, what are they? If not, do we know the claims that those who defend innate ideas say that we do? If so, how?
8. What are abstract ideas? Do we have abstract ideas?
9. What are the proper methods of science? Can we know scientific laws?
10. Are space and time absolute or relational?
11. Are mathematical claims necessary? How do we know them? What are they about?

Some of these topics are more appropriate for some philosophers than for others. On the nature of self, for example, I would expect that you would discuss Locke and Hume. On innate ideas, I would expect that you would discuss Descartes and Locke. On the freedom of the will, Descartes, Spinoza, Leibniz, and Hume are all relevant; for this topic, I would expect you to discuss at least three philosophers.

For whatever topic you choose, **present a thesis of your own, formed by consideration of the work of the philosophers you will discuss.** You may defend one philosopher's position against the criticisms of another. You may present a thesis critical of more than one philosopher.

For more specific paper topics, Tlumak provides excellent suggestions at the end of each chapter. I encourage you to talk with me about your paper in advance.

You must meet with me to clear your topic if you are planning to diverge from those above.