

Hum9: Knowledge and Reality, Winter 2013  
Assignment 2: outline  
Due between Thursday, Jan 31 and Monday, Feb 4th

Your first major paper assignment will be due Tuesday, Feb 12th. As a preliminary assignment, I want you to write an outline of your own (expected) paper. Then you will meet with me for 15-20 minutes sometime between Thursday, Jan 31st after class and Monday, Feb 4th. During the meeting, I will look at the outline and you will talk me through it. I will then give suggestions on the main thesis, the scope of the paper, and on how to construct your paper.

Your instructions for the longer paper are as follows:

**Instructions:** Write an argumentative paper of approximately 1,500 words (3 single spaced typed pages with generous margins). The general guidelines are as follows. First, your paper must critically engage one or more of the topics we have discussed in the first four weeks of class. If you wish to write about epistemology, you should get a head start on the readings for week 4. Second, your paper should not *merely* summarize the position(s) of some of the authors you discuss; it should in some way locate them relative to each other, synthesize those ideas, criticize them, defend them against important objections, or develop them in your own way. Third, the topic of your paper should be of an appropriate scope given the length constraints.

Your instructions for the outline are as follows:

Your outline should consist of about one page of notes. This page should start with the main thesis of your paper – i.e. one or two sentences which describe the main conclusion of the paper that you intend to write. The rest of the outline should be devoted to 1) spelling out what you take to be the main reasons to believe that your thesis is true 2) describing what you take to be the most serious objection to your thesis (perhaps another thesis which is inconsistent, perhaps a weakness in one of your arguments, etc.) 3) Ideally, a response to why that main objection is not persuasive. This outline is not necessarily tied to exactly how you must write the paper, but it is a good idea to have the paper in mind when you think about supporting reasons. When you write your own outline, keep in mind what kind of outlines of Swinburne's piece were helpful. Try to be as clear as you can on some of the main points of your paper.

Here are some sample theses statements that you might defend:

- 1) There is a sound version of the cosmological argument and so therefore there is a God. [And in the paper, you give it and defend it]
- 2) Paley is correct that it is possible to detect intelligent design in some objects.

- 3) A version of Pascal's Wager shows us that there is a good reason to believe in some type of God or other, but not which God we should believe in.
- 4) Clifford is correct. Our beliefs should always be based on evidence. Just because it might make you happier to believe something you have evidence against does not give you a good reason to believe it.
- 5) While we should typically base on beliefs upon the evidence, theological and moral beliefs are special cases since these beliefs will lead to a better society over all.
- 6) Swinburne's Free Will based Theodicy fails since God could perfectly well create creatures with free will that are just as valuable as us but whose free choices never lead to bad consequences.
- 7) The concept of omnipotence is incoherent.
- 8) Swinburne is incorrect when he claims that we need a theodicy to understand why God would allow the evil in the world. Because we know so little about the future and the consequences of alternative choices, it is not reasonable to claim that the problem of evil is a serious problem without a theodicy defense.
- 9) Knowledge is justified true belief. In the first Gettier case, Jones is not actually justified in believing that the man who will get the job has ten coins in his pocket.
- 10) We can know that we are not dreaming/a brain in a vat/in an experience machine/in the matrix.