

Hum 9 Second Paper Assignment

Instructions: Write an argumentative paper of approximately 2000 words (6 double-spaced typed pages). The general guidelines are as follows. First, your paper must critically engage one or more of the topics we have discussed in class. Any topic from any week is acceptable as long as your first and second papers are not on the same topic. 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.

Due Date: You must submit your paper to me by email before midnight on the evening of Thursday, June 14th.

Grading: This paper is worth 40% of your final grade, and will receive a numerical grade out of 40.

Collaboration: Collaboration on this assignment is encouraged. Students are free to discuss the topics with one another, read each other's papers, and offer suggestions. Any suggestions or ideas contributed by another student must be acknowledged just as you would acknowledge an idea taken from any other source. The only restriction is that each student must write their own paper containing their own ideas and words.

References: All sources used in the writing of your paper must be properly referenced. This applies to material in the course readings, other published material, lecture notes from this class and other classes, material 'published' on the internet, and ideas contributed verbally by other students. Information about proper procedures and formats for references is included in my handout "How not to get BOC'ed," which is posted on the course website. Further information is also available at <http://www.its.caltech.edu/~words/plagiarism/index.html>. Failure to follow these guidelines may result in a lowered grade or even an automatic F in the course; it may also lead to charges being brought before the Board of Control. If you have any questions about these issues, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Advice on Writing a Philosophy Paper: The course website contains links to websites on the topic.

Reading Drafts: I am happy to read drafts of papers, on a time-permitting, first-come, first-served basis. If you get a draft to me Tuesday or before, a decent guess at a turnaround time is 24 hours with no guarantees whatever. I will not look at drafts if they are emailed to me on Wednesday or Thursday (but I will still look at an email with a short question or meet with you in person, etc.)

Topics: The topics offered below are given as suggestions: you may address one of them as is, you may modify one of these topics, or you may create your own topic. Whatever topic you may choose, your essay should have a title that clearly and accurately reflects what the essay is about. If you would like further readings that may be helpful in addressing some of these topics I recommend starting with the Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy. Asking me for advice for what to look at is also a very good idea.

- 1) Can we make sense of having a solution to the problem of induction? What would this mean? If we can't solve it, does this undermine our justification for ordinary scientific inferences?
- 2) Is there an asymmetry between the predicates 'green' and 'grue' with respect to how we confirm hypotheses? What is the source of this asymmetry and is it justified?
- 3) Do our experimental practices in science give us reason to believe that we know the truth of various properties of unobservables such as electrons? Or are scientific theories merely models that make instrumentally useful predictions which we don't have any reason to believe accurately represent the unobservable world?
- 4) Is van Inwagen correct that the Doctrine of Arbitrary Undetached Parts is incorrect? If so, when do larger objects have smaller parts?
- 5) What is the proper solution to the problem of the many?
- 6) Are supertasks genuinely impossible? In what sense? If some kinds of supertasks are possible and others aren't, what is the difference?
- 7) Is passing the Turing test a sufficient condition for possessing the ability to think? If not, could there be such a test?
- 8) Could a machine be genuinely conscious? In what sense of 'machine' and 'conscious'?
- 9) What exactly does Searle's Chinese room thought experiment show, if anything?