

## Content

Treat a philosopher or theme covered in the readings. Below are some ideas. You can, however, write a paper of a different sort. Just be sure to check with me about your topic, regardless of what you choose.

- **Critically analyze a thinker's position on some topic.** Example: Analyze and comment on the skepticism of Nicholas of Autrecourt.
- **Relate the ideas of thinkers back to some contemporary social issue.** Example: Discuss how the medieval synthesis of faith and reason (which holds that reason, properly employed, will not contradict revelation) relates to contemporary discussions of methodological naturalism (which holds that scientific theories can account for natural phenomena without recourse to the existence and activity of an intelligent designer of the universe).
- **Discuss how one philosopher influences another.** Example: Explain how Aristotelian virtue ethics figure into Aquinas's account of happiness.
- **Discuss how one philosopher or philosophical position contradicts another.** Example: Present Aquinas's moderate realism and Buridan's nominalism, then discuss how and why the theories are incompatible.
- **Criticize an account from the secondary literature.** You may believe one of the authors of a secondary source misconstrues some philosopher's position. You can write a paper arguing that this is the case.

## Things not to do

- *Do not* write a biographical paper that discusses the life and the historical period in which a philosopher works. Keep biographical data to a bare minimum.
- *Do not* write a paper that relies on controversial sources (such as religious writings or opinion blogs) to justify its claims.
- Philosophical positions can have ramifications that spill over into other disciplines. For instance, the medieval synthesis of faith and reason supports the biologist Stephen Jay Gould's notion of nonoverlapping magesteria (the theory that religion and science, working within their proper spheres, need not contradict one another). Writing on such topics is fine, but do *not* write a paper arguing that a particular scientific theory (such as evolution) is or is not true. Such papers are better suited for an audience of scientists.

## Style and Format

- Submit via email to [AlexanderHall@Clayton.edu](mailto:AlexanderHall@Clayton.edu)
- Document sources via footnotes or endnotes.
- Note all quoted or paraphrased material.
- Length: 2,000-2,600 words
- Title, name, etc. should go on a title page.
- A bibliography is required.
- The title page and bibliography do not count toward the word count.

### Sources

You need a minimum of 4 peer reviewed secondary sources. The following do *not* qualify as secondary sources: book reviews, magazine articles, television shows, word of mouth, dictionaries, encyclopedia, class notes or newspaper articles. Acceptable secondary sources include (1) Books (written about, not by, the person you are studying) (2) Articles from peer-reviewed, academic journals. We use these sources to learn what scholars have already said about a topic before we start writing. This way we do not have to ‘reinvent the wheel’ and our work contributes to a broader discussion. Be sure to cite the sources in such a way that it is clear you read them carefully and that they had a significant role to play in helping you determine your thesis. Start early as it usually takes several readings to get the complete sense of these writings.

### Turn it in

To receive credit for your work, submit your paper to Turnitin before the end of class on the day that the paper is due. The similarity index should stay below 20%. Create account here: <http://turnitin.com/static/index.html> (Class ID = 4690342; Password = Philosophy).

### Final Note

Your grade will be determined by the extent to which you adhere to the guidelines in this document and on your syllabus, as well as your ability successfully to articulate and defend a thesis in accordance with conventional rules governing syntax, grammar and spelling.