

First Short Essay

Deadline: Monday, 7th February, 9am

(Extended from February 4th at 5pm to allow students to write on the Epictetus.)

Instructions

As you know from the syllabus, three short essay assignments will be provided, and you will need to hand in **two** of them. (It will be your choice as to which, but you may not hand in an essay later than the deadline without an official Dean's Excuse.) To remind you: the deadlines for these papers are as follows:

- Monday, February 7th (9am) First short essay deadline [extended]
 - Friday, March 4 (5pm) Second short essay deadline
 - Friday, April 22 (5pm) Third short essay deadline
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- The stronger of your essays will determine 15% of your grade
 - The weaker of your essays will determine 10% of your grade

Your paper should be handed in on the V*2 server website under Assignments as an attachment.

The paper should be roughly 1000 words in length. (That means nothing shorter than about 800 words, and nothing longer than about 1200 words.)

Policies

- Because this is a large lecture class, it is important to have explicit and uniform policies. Among those policies (as stated on the syllabus) is the following:
 - Essays will be marked down 1/3 of a grade for each 24 hours (rounded up) that they are late. (That is, an A will become an A-; a B+ will become a B; etc.)
 - The only acceptable grounds for extension of this deadline are a Dean's Excuse
- It goes without saying that academic integrity is of the utmost importance in completing this assignment. Please familiarize yourself with the discussion at:
<http://writing.yalecollege.yale.edu/using-sources>.
- At the end of your paper, please include a list of sources consulted (e.g. websites that you visited, reference works that you looked at, etc – this does not need to be in the form of a formal bibliography.)
- At the beginning of your essay, please include the following affirmation. “By submitting this essay, I attest that it is my own work, completed in accordance with University regulations. – [Your name here]”

Advice

- The Yale College Writing Center offers useful advice about writing in general at <http://writing.yalecollege.yale.edu/what-good-writers-know>
- A number of model Philosophy papers can be found at <http://writing.yalecollege.yale.edu/model-papers-disciplines#7>
- I have posted a number of guides to writing philosophy papers under “Resources” on our website. Not all of them are fully applicable to this paper assignment, which permits you to be somewhat more expository than is typical in a philosophy paper. But many of their suggestions are good ones, and I encourage those of you who are taking a philosophy course for the first time to look through at least some of those guides.

Topics

Your paper should address one of the following topics:

- (1) Explain “Glaucou’s Challenge” and offer and evaluate one or two responses to the challenge.

A successful answer to question (1) *might* look something like this. (You do not need to follow this outline as long as you answer the stated question.)

- A short statement in your own words of Glaucou’s Challenge, followed by a short statement of the response(s) that you will be defending or criticizing
 - A paragraph describing how the challenge is presented in its original context (discussing, for example, the three kinds of goods, the story of the ring of Gyges, the story of the just and unjust man, etc.—don’t just summarize here: make it clear that you understand that these are *arguments*, and that you understand what they are trying to show)
 - A discussion of one of these arguments, explaining whether you think it is persuasive and why
 - One or perhaps two (critical or supportive) response (s) to this argument, either one(s) that you yourself devise, or one (s) that draw(s) on one or more of the readings we have done (e.g. Batson, our other selection from Plato, Aristotle, Shay, Haidt , Epictetus, Stockdale, etc.). These may be theoretical responses, or they might be examples or counterexamples that you describe or construct whose connection to the argument you make clear and explicit.
 - An evaluation of this response.
 - A possible retort on behalf of Glaucou to the response(s) that you have presented.
 - An evaluation of this retort.
 - An evaluation of the dialectic (though it’s fine if your paper ends in *aporia*...) [you can look up what *aporia* means in the Blackburn *Dictionary of Philosophy*.]
- (2) Explain what Aristotle means when he says that that “the virtues arise in us neither by nature nor against nature. Rather, we are by nature able to acquire them, and we are completed through habit” (1103a25). Explain (a) how he thinks that such habits can be cultivated and/or (b) in what ways the excellences that result are supposed to be “means between two

extremes.” Offer an evaluation of this outlook in light of one or more of the other texts we have read.

A successful answer to question (2) *might* look something like this. (You do not need to follow this outline as long as you answer the stated question.)

- A short explanation in your own words of the Aristotelian claim(s) that you will be examining, followed by a statement of the grounds on which you will be defending or criticizing the claim(s)
- One or more paragraphs where you describe how the claim(s) are presented in their original contexts (discussing, for example, Aristotle’s views about habit, excellence, and the doctrine of the mean.)
- A discussion of these views, explaining which one(s) seem most/least convincing and why
- One or more (critical or supportive) responses to (or applications of) these claims, either one(s) that you yourself devise, or one(s) that draw on one or more of the readings we have done. These may be theoretical responses, or they might be examples or counterexamples that you describe or construct whose connection to the argument you make clear and explicit.
- A possible retort on behalf of Aristotle to the response(s) that you have presented
- An evaluation of the dialectic (though it’s fine if your paper ends in *aporia*...) [you can look up what *aporia* means in the Blackburn *Dictionary of Philosophy*.]

- (3) Explain how Epictetus’ opening observation that “Some things are up to us and some are not up to us” (section 1) underpins the remainder of his discussion and recommendations. And/or explain Epictetus’ claim that “what upsets people is not things in themselves but their judgments about the things” (section 5) and discuss how he applies this observation in his subsequent (and previous) discussion. Offer an evaluation of Epictetus’ outlook in light of one or more of the other texts we have read.

A successful answer to question (3) *might* look something like this. (You do not need to follow this outline as long as you answer the stated question.)

- An explanation in your own words of the Epictetan view that you will be defending or criticizing, followed a short statement of your grounds for defending or criticizing it
- An explanation of the role that this view plays in Epictetus’ previous and/or subsequent discussion
- One or more (critical or supportive) responses to (or applications of) these claims, either one(s) that you yourself devise, or one(s) that draw on one or more of the readings we have done (e.g. Haidt, Nozick). These may be theoretical responses, or they might be examples or counterexamples that you describe or construct whose connection to the argument you make clear and explicit.
- An evaluation of this response.
- A possible retort on behalf of Epictetus to the response(s) that you have presented.
- An evaluation of this retort.
- An evaluation of the dialectic (though it’s fine if your paper ends in *aporia*...) [you can look up what *aporia* means in the Blackburn *Dictionary of Philosophy*.]