

## Second Short Essay Deadline: Friday, 4 March 2011, 5pm

### IMPORTANT

- ➔ If you did not write the First Short Essay, you must write the Second Short Essay.
- ➔ If you did write the First Short Essay, you may write the Second Short Essay. In that case, you will not be able to write the Third Short Essay for a grade.
- ➔ The Second Short Essay is due by Friday, March 4<sup>th</sup>, at 5pm. (NOT 8pm, NOT midnight.) Lateness policies are described below.
- ➔ Please submit your essay in a form suitable for blind review (details below.)
- ➔ Please include a word count at the end of your essay.
- ➔ If you would like your TF to offer detailed comments on specific (sentence-level) aspects of your paper, please submit your paper in a form (e.g. Word) that will permit him/her to do so. If you submit your paper as a pdf, your TF will only be able to provide you with comments at the end of the paper.
- ➔ If you wrote your first paper on question 2 (Aristotle), you may not write your second paper on question 1 (Aristotle) without explicit permission from your TF.

### 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 the remaining papers are as follows:

- Friday, March 4 (5pm)                      Second short essay deadline
  - Friday, April 22 (5pm)                      Third short essay deadline
- 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. Please submit your paper in a format (e.g. Word) that will allow your TF to provide you sentence-level comments about the content of the paper.

The paper should be roughly 1000 words in length. (That means nothing shorter than about 800 words, and nothing longer than about 1200 words.) PLEASE INCLUDE A WORD COUNT AT THE END OF YOUR ESSAY.

Please submit your paper in a form suitable for blind review (that is: so that your TF can read your paper without knowing who wrote it.) Please put all identifying information (your name and honor pledge) on a cover sheet, and leave such information off of later pages.

# Open Yale courses

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## 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.) Quotations internal to the paper should be identified with quotation marks, followed by a simple (author/book, page) citation. (E.g. (Haidt, 27) or (*Nicomachean Ethics*, 1103a25.))
- On the cover sheet for 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. (Note that if you wrote your first paper on question 2 (Aristotle), you may not write your second paper on question 1 (Aristotle) without explicit permission from your TF.)

- (1) In the *Nicomachean Ethics* – in Book I, Chapter 4 (1105a30-35 and 1105b7-10) and Book I, Chapter 3 (1104b5-10) – Aristotle identifies four conditions that an action must satisfy to count as virtuous. (Roughly, the act must be done knowingly, as the result of the actor having decided on the act because it was virtuous, from a firm and unchanging state, and with enjoyment.) Drawing on the writings of one or more of the following, critique or defend one of these conditions as a necessary condition for an action being virtuous: Julia Annas, John Doris, John Stuart Mill, Immanuel Kant. (If you would like to draw on the work of a different author instead, check with your TF first to make sure that your proposal will work.)

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.)

- Offer a short statement in your own words of the condition that you will be defending or criticizing as necessary for an action to be virtuous, followed by the claim that you will be making about it (e.g. “In this paper, drawing on the work of X, I will argue that Y is (not) a necessary condition for an action to be virtuous.”)
  - Provide a paragraph explaining Aristotle’s reasons for identifying the condition as necessary. (Don’t just quote here: make it clear that you understand how Aristotle’s position here fits into his more general views about the nature of virtue.)
  - Offer a defense or criticism of this condition, drawing on one or more of the authors listed above, followed by your own assessment of this defense or criticism.
  - Offer one or perhaps two (critical or supportive) response(s) to this defense or criticism, either one(s) that you yourself devise, or one(s) that draw(s) 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.
  - Evaluate this response.
  - Present a retort on behalf of Aristotle (or his imagined critic) to the response(s) that you have presented.
  - Evaluate this retort.
  - Evaluate 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) Using two or more of the authors we've read, identify one of the roles that principles might play in the explanation or justification of moral action, and criticize or defend the claim that principles play that role. So, for example, you might discuss Daniel Batson’s suggestion that principles serve primarily as devices of rationalization in light of writings by Robert Nozick, or John Stuart Mill, or Immanuel Kant, or Judith Thomson (or vice versa, for one of the claims of one of those authors.) Or you might consider one or more of the principles that Judy Thomson extracts from her discussion of trolley cases in light of the writings of Cass Sunstein, or Fiery Cushman, or Josh Greene. (If you would like to draw on the work of a different author instead, check with your TF first to make sure that your proposal will work.)

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.)

- Articulate the view about the role of principles in explaining or justifying moral action that you plan to defend or criticize, and briefly articulate the grounds on which you intend to defend or criticize this view.
- Explain your position more precisely, and offer one or more arguments on its behalf: either one(s) that you yourself devise, or one (s) that draw(s) on one or more of the readings we have done. These may be theoretical arguments, or they might be examples or counterexamples that you describe or construct whose connection to the dialectic you make clear and explicit.
- Response to these arguments (again, perhaps drawing on the work of one or more of our authors.)
- Evaluate this response, and offer a retort to it.
- Evaluate this retort.
- Evaluate 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) Drawing on at least two of the authors that we have read this semester, present and defend a view about the morally correct action in one of the following cases: Bernard Williams' Jim case, Bernard Williams' George case, or Judy Thomson's fat man case. Identify and explain at least one implication of this view for one or more of the moral theories we have discussed.

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 articulation of the view that you intend to defend. E.g. "In this paper, I will argue that in the X case, the right thing to do is Y. I will show that this means that moral theory M is incorrect (alternatively: that moral theory N is importantly correct) because it assumes that in X-like cases the correct thing to do is [blah]."
- Offer reasons for your view.
- Explain why someone might hold the opposite view about the case you are considering, and identify the reasoning that lies behind this alternative picture.
- Identify what you take to be a flaw in that reasoning, and explain why you think your alternative account avoids that flaw.
- Evaluate this response, and offer a retort to it.
- Evaluate this retort.
- Explain the implications of your discussion for one or more of the moral theories we have discussed.
- Evaluate 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*.]