

PHIL02
Introduction to Philosophy: Morals and Politics

Final Paper Assignment

Provide a clear and concise response to **one** of the following prompts in a 4-6 page paper (1000-1500 words):

1. In the film *V for Vendetta*, the Norsefire government is depicted as a deeply repressive political regime. Evaluate the Norsefire government from **three** of the perspectives discussed in the second chapter of the Wolff text (social contract theory, utilitarianism, philosophical anarchism, fairness theory). Focus specifically on how each of these might offer its own explanation for the illegitimacy of the Norsefire government, and on at least one significant objection each theory faces. Then select the theory that you believe to best describe our political obligations, and defend it against the objection you have identified.

2. In *Only Words*, Catherine MacKinnon argues that some forms of expression—especially those that involve racist and sexist ideologies—should be subject to governmental restriction:

“Wherever equality is mandated, racial and sexual epithets, vilification, and abuse should be able to be prohibited, unprotected by guarantees of free speech”

Assess MacKinnon’s view in the light of Mill’s Liberty Principle, and in the light of either Marxist or Communitarian objections to Mill’s theory. Then present and defend your own response to MacKinnon’s views, addressing at least one significant potential objection.

3. In the film *A Clockwork Orange*, Alex is subjected to a peculiar form of punishment for behavior that is deemed unacceptable by his government. Discuss whether or not you think that his punishment is compatible with a morally legitimate government, focusing on two distinct questions: (1) *Why* should Alex’ behavior be subject to governmental restriction (here focus on the material from chapter 4 in the Wolff text), and (2) *How* should a legitimate government respond to this sort of behavior? Defend your response to each question against at least one significant potential objection.

ASSIGNMENT AIM: This paper is assigned as an exercise in developing an original philosophical response to a problem from our readings. You should maintain a high level of expository rigor (the emphasis of the first paper) as well a clear critical comparison of all relevant views. This paper differs from previous assignments, in that you are *required to construct an original argument for your own view*.

FORMAT: In order to receive comments on your paper, the final version of your paper must be typed, double spaced, stapled, and submitted to me **no later than the date of our final class meeting (indicated on the syllabus)**. Because this date marks the end of our course, late papers will not be accepted for comments.

HOWEVER: I will accept papers via email until **noon** one week after our class meeting. These papers will not receive comments of any kind, but they will be thoroughly read and graded. **THIS IS A FIRM DEADLINE—I WILL NOT ACCEPT ANY PAPERS AFTER THIS TIME.**

EVALUATIVE CRITERIA:

Organization (10%):

Your paper should begin with a brief introduction that includes a clear, easily identifiable thesis statement. It may be a good idea to briefly describe the structure of your paper in your introduction (i.e. “In the following I will discuss...”) When reading your paper, it should be clear at all times how your claims address your thesis. You should conclude with a brief restatement of the key points from your discussion.

Clarity (10%):

Your paper should be clearly written, such that your reader can easily understand your remarks at all time. You should avoid awkward sentence structure, use appropriate diction throughout your discussion, and eliminate spelling/grammatical errors prior to submitting your paper.

Concision (5%):

Your discussion should be free of irrelevant tangents, redundancies, and platitudes.

Substantive Accuracy (20%):

Your discussion should *accurately* describe the views relevant to the topic you choose. This is particularly important when placing two or more views into critical opposition.

Critical Comparison (15%):

Your discussion will require you to bring multiple philosophical views together in a coherent manner. This involves more than merely giving expositions of each view—it involves explicitly comparing and contrasting them.

Originality of Argument (15%):

You should demonstrate *some* original thought in your argument. This might come in the form of raising an entirely new argument, but it might also come in the form of raising an original objection to an argument that we have addressed in class.

Coherence of Argument (15%):

You should make sure that your conclusion actually follows from your premises. You don't need to present your argument in a formal deductive format, but you'll want to make sure that your reader understands how you've arrived at your conclusion.

Addressed Objection (10%):

Assume that your reader disagrees with you, and that he/she has at least one reason for disagreeing. Try to anticipate his/her objection, and explain why you don't think it defeats your view.

A more thorough grading rubric detailing each of these criteria is available at www.deanza.edu/faculty/ramireztono/paper_grading_rubric.pdf