

Omar Fakhri

Sample Paper Prompts

Short Paper

This paper should be about 3 pages double-spaced with regular margins. This paper requires you to explain a view concisely and clearly, and then critically evaluate it. Both parts are equally important because it would be difficult to properly evaluate a view if one gets the view wrong. The critical part will likely be the most difficult part because it asks you to contribute your own thoughts to the matter. It is important to reflect carefully on the types of criticism we discussed in lecture. Take those as examples of what a critical evaluation might look like.

The following three things are important: First, everything in your paper should assume that the reader or grader of your paper has zero background in philosophy. Do not use a technical philosophical concept, word, or phrase without explaining it by using simpler concepts and examples. Act as if you are teaching a competent friend who has no background in philosophy. Second, try your best not to quote from the text unless you find no other way of explaining it. I want you to put things in your own words. Third, do not use extra sources on this paper; only use the assigned reading in the syllabus.

PROMPT:

This prompt is on Mill's Utilitarianism. First, explain Utilitarianism by answering the following two questions: (1) what things count as good according to Mill's Utilitarianism? And (2) How should those goods be distributed according to Mill's Utilitarianism? Make sure to provide a developed answer. Part of your answer to these questions should refer to consequentialism and hedonism, as we discussed in lecture. Once you have explained the view adequately, you must consider the following objection: The Principle of Utility seems to require moral agents to go through life constantly calculating the pleasures and pains of virtually every action. This seems to be practically impossible. If you're spending all your time calculating, you'll never have time to live your life. What's Mill's response to this objection? You can find Mill's response in the assigned reading on Mill. Explain his response and then critically evaluate it. Do you agree with his response? If so, give a possible objection to it, and respond to this possible objection on Mill's behalf. If you disagree with Mill's response, then why? Explain where and why Mill goes wrong in his response if you disagree with him.