Requirements
You must submit five documents to me: (1) a brief proposal describing the topic you plan to write about; (2) an outline of the paper; (3) a partial draft of the paper, which should be at least 1500 words long; (4) a complete draft of the paper, between 2000 and 4000 words long; and (5) a final draft, also between 2000 and 4000 words long. Note that because this is a paper in the history of philosophy, it will be difficult to do the job well in under 3000 words. I suggest that you aim for a final draft between 3000 and 4000 words long (roughly 10-13 double-spaced pages).

Items (1)-(4) may be submitted either in hard copy or electronically via email. Item (5), the final draft, must be submitted both electronically and in hard copy. All materials you submit should be typed and double-spaced with a standard 12-pt. font, and stapled in the upper left-hand corner.

Due Dates
Brief proposal (150-300 words): 5pm, Friday, February 12th, 2010
Outline: 5pm, Friday, February 26th, 2010
Partial draft: 5pm, Friday, March 26th, 2010
Complete draft: 5pm, Friday, April 16th, 2010
Final draft: 5pm, Friday, April 30th, 2010

These due dates are firm. Assignments submitted late will result in points being deducted from final grade.

Topics
You will write on the topic you select in consultation with me. Basically I will approve any topic in ancient or early modern philosophy so long as it seems suitable to me (not too broad, not too narrow, philosophical significant, etc.). You should be taking, or have already taken, the course that covers the period to which your topic belongs.

In selecting a topic, you should identify an argument in the writings of a philosopher that you will explain and evaluate. The argument can be an argument for or against some thesis. Another possibility would be to pick a topic discussed by two philosophers and defend the one philosopher’s approach over the other’s. Either way, you should be careful to pick a topic that is rich enough to write 3000-4000 words on, but sufficiently
narrow that you can explore the topic in depth in fewer than 4000 words. Finally, note that if you are taking the relevant course now and you select a topic that won’t be covered until later in the semester, you will not reap the benefit of my lectures or of class discussion until it’s too late. So unless you have already taken PHI 301, I would advise against writing on Kant, who is very difficult.

To help fix your ideas, here are some suggested topics, some of which would need to be narrowed. Feel free to come and talk with me about what you’d like to write on.

**ANCIENT PHILOSOPHY**
The nature of courage (*Laches*)
The nature of virtue (*Meno*)
Whether virtue can be taught (*Meno*)
The doctrine of recollection (*Meno, Phaedo*)
Arguments for/against the immortality of the soul (*Phaedo*)
The nature of justice (*Republic*)
Plato’s forms (*Phaedo, Republic*)
Plato’s account of justice (*Republic*)
Plato’s arguments for why philosophers would enjoy the most happiness in Kallipolis (*Republic, Book 9*)
Aristotle on Zeno’s paradoxes (*Physics*)
Aristotle’s philosophy of mind (*De Anima*)
Aristotle’s ethics (virtue, friendship, happiness, the life of study, etc.) (*Nich. Ethics*)
Lucretius’ atomism (*On the Nature of Things, Books I-II*)
Lucretius on the fear of death (*On the Nature of Things, Book III*)
Arguments for skepticism (*Outlines of Pyrrhonism*)

**EARLY MODERN PHILOSOPHY**
Descartes’ arguments for the existence of God
Descartes on error
Descartes’ arguments for mind-body distinctness
Leibniz’s thesis that this is the best of all possible worlds (*Discourse on Metaphysics*)
Leibniz’s arguments for the existence of God
Leibniz’s thesis that matter is only an appearance
Leibniz on freedom
Berkeley’s rejection of matter
Berkeley on the primary/secondary quality distinction
Hume’s criticisms of arguments for God’s existence (esp. the design argument)
Hume on the problem of evil
Hume’s empiricism
Hume on miracles
Hume’s skepticism about causation