GUIDELINES FOR WRITING LONGER PHILOSOPHY PAPERS

Title (5 points)
There should be a title; it should be appropriate in tone and structure to a philosophy journal; it should be descriptive of the paper; it should get the attention of the intended audience.

Introduction (10 points)
There should be an introduction; it should provide a concise overview of the basic structure of the paper, including a thesis statement; it should make clear the relevance of the paper to the audience.

Presentation of the Central Argument (30 points)
There should be a charitable, properly documented presentation of an argument from some central philosophical source; it should make clear what the premises of the argument are, what the conclusion is, and how the conclusion is supposed to follow from the premises.

Presentation of Alternative Viewpoint(s)(25 points)
There should be a presentation of alternative viewpoints, arguments that oppose the central argument by challenging one or more of its premises or its conclusion, and/or by challenging the reasoning process leading from the premises to the conclusion. The alternative viewpoints will probably include viewpoints from other central philosophical sources but must include the student’s own viewpoint. (This original bit of philosophy is a required part of the assignment.)

1. Viewpoints from other philosophers: Presentation of viewpoints of other philosophers should be a presentation of relevant viewpoints, it should be charitable and properly documented; the presentation should make clear what the premises of the critical remarks are and how they challenge the central argument.

2. Viewpoints from the student: The author’s own viewpoint (which may criticize either the central argument or the alternative viewpoints from other philosophers) should be coherent, well-argued, and based on plausible premises; it should reflect a charitable understanding of the viewpoints being challenged.

Conclusion (10 points)
There should be a conclusion; it should indicate the most important aspects of the paper; it should draw good inferences from the preceding arguments that are pertinent to the thesis and should relate them back to the interests of the intended audience.

Format and Matters of Presentations (20 points)
Papers should use correct spelling and grammar; they should have a coherent organization that facilitates understanding; the papers should conform with any format requirements (e.g., spacing, font size, word minimums/maximums) specified by the instructor; the papers should include a complete list of references.

To receive 90 -100% of the available points in any category, the student must carry out all the recommendations in superior fashion. To receive 80-89% of available points student must make an effort to carry out all the recommendations but may not succeed in carrying out all or may not do so in a superior fashion; all the recommendations must be carried out at least in a competent fashion. To receive 70-79% of available points student must make an effort to carry out all the recommendations but may not succeed in carrying out all or may not do so in even a competent fashion; most of the recommendations must be carried out at least in a competent fashion. If half or more of the recommendations are carried out in an incompetent fashion, then the student will receive less than 70% of the available points.