

Philosophy Writing Seminar

Syllabus

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| Instructors: | MODULE 1: Tudor Protopopescu (tprotopopescu@hse.ru) MODULE 2: Silver Bronzo (silverbronzo@hse.edu) MODULE 3: Ulrika Carlsson (ucarlsson@hse.ru) Aaron Wendland (awendland@hse.ru) |
| Class meets: | TBA |
| Office hours: | TBA |
| Course website: | TBA |

§1. Course Description

This is a course on academic writing in English specifically designed for philosophy majors. It aims to impart general skills for academic writing in English, as well as to introduce students to the formal conventions and expectations of philosophy papers in the English-speaking philosophical community. It is divided in three modules.

The first module focuses on the basics of academic philosophical writing; reading, exposition, and critical analysis. The goals are to 1) practice outlining the views of other philosophers and summarising debates between different positions, and 2) to offer an assessment or critical analysis of these views or debates. We will cover the following topics: the basic structure of an academic paper, strategies and types of arguments, making use of sources, proper citation and quotation, and plagiarism.

The second module focuses on setting forth and arguing for a thesis. Students will practice: different ways of responding to the views of other authors; introducing a thesis and connecting it to the existing literature; introducing arguments in support of the thesis; highlighting the logical connections between the various parts of a paper; dividing a paper perspicuously into paragraphs and sections; anticipating objections; and using meta-commentary in order to clarify one's views and the overall structure of the paper.

The third module focuses on writing a four-page prospectus in English for the bachelor thesis. Each student is expected to submit three drafts of their prospectus. The first draft should be completed in time for our initial meeting in module three, and the second and third drafts should be submitted in week three and week six, respectively. Each draft will receive comments from the instructor, and these comments should be taken into account when revising the text. During class, we will go over excerpts from students' drafts and together suggest improvements in language, structure, and argument. Students will also be encouraged to discuss their drafts with their instructor during office hours.

§2. Course objectives

This course aims to:

- Teach students general skills for effective academic writing in English.
- Teach students how to write philosophy papers that accord with the formal conventions and expectations of the English-speaking philosophical community.
- Teach students how to write a four-page prospectus in English for their BA thesis.

§3. Student learning outcomes

By taking this course, students will learn to:

- Write goal-oriented summaries of the views and arguments of other scholars.
- Select relevant quotations and embed them properly in the text.
- Avoid plagiarism.
- Properly refer to the works of other authors.
- Make sure that their papers have a thesis.
- Introduce their thesis and place it in relation to the views of other scholars.
- Make sure their thesis is supported by arguments.
- Highlight the logical connections between the various parts of a philosophy paper, and make sure they are all tied together.
- Divide perspicuously their papers into paragraphs and sections.
- Anticipate objections.
- Use meta-commentary in order to clarify their views and guide the reader through the overall argument of their papers.
- Write a compelling 4-page description in English of their BA philosophy thesis.

§4. Methods of instruction

Methods of instructions will vary from module to module. They will include: a) lectures on academic writing in English; b) classroom group activities; c) classroom discussion of home assignments; d) one-to-one discussion of assignments during office hours.

§5. Texts

All the readings for this course will be available in electronic form on the website of the course. Two textbooks that will be often used in this course are:

- Gerald Graff and Cathy Birkenstein, *They Say, I Say: The Moves that Matter in Academic Writing*, 2nd ed. (London and New York: Norton, 2010)
- A. P. Martinich, *Philosophical Writing: An Introduction* (Wiley Blackwell, 2005)

§6. Assignments and grade distribution

Specific lists of assignments will be provided by instructors at the beginning of each module. The grade distribution across the three modules is as follows:

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|-----------|--------------------|
| Module 1: | 30% of final grade |
| Module 2: | 30% of final grade |
| Module 3: | 40% of final grade |

§7. Grading system

Grades will be assigned according to the 10-point scale adopted by HSE:

| ETCS grades | | 10-point scale | 5-point scale |
|-------------|--------------|----------------|---------------|
| A+ | Excellent | 10 | 5 |
| A | Very good | 9 | 5 |
| A- | Very good | 8 | 5 |
| B+ | Good | 7 | 4 |
| B- | Good | 6 | 4 |
| C+ | Satisfactory | 5 | 3 |
| C- | Satisfactory | 4 | 3 |
| F | Fail | 3 | 2 |
| F | Fail | 2 | 2 |
| F | Fail | 1 | 2 |

§8. Guidelines for knowledge assessment

In the first module, students will be assessed on the basis of their written assignments. Assignments will be assessed on the basis of their clarity and organisation, on successfully demonstrating an understanding of the relevant arguments/positions, and on the clarity and cogency of their response/critical analysis.

In the second module, students will be assessed on the basis of their classroom participation, classroom group activities, and home assignments.

In the third module, students will be assessed on their final text, their efforts in reworking drafts, and their participation in class.

§9. Plagiarism

To clarify what is plagiarism and how to avoid it is one of the aims of this course. To anticipate, plagiarism is a form of cheating: you commit plagiarism when you take something that somebody else has written and include it in your paper as if it were your own work, i.e. by cutting and pasting. In order to avoid plagiarism, you must properly quote any stretch of text that you take from somebody else—that is, you must place it in quotation marks and indicate its author. Also, you must indicate the author of any stretch of text that you are paraphrasing.

In accordance to the general policy of HSE, plagiarism will not be tolerated in this course. Students who plagiarize will receive a 0 on the relevant assignment. This will seriously lower their final grade, and may even lead to failing the course. Repeated plagiarism may result in disciplinary actions.

§10. Schedule of Readings and Activities

Schedules of readings, activities, and assignments will be provided by instructors at the beginning of each module.